No Clash Constraint in Nominal RNR Number Agreement

Zheng Shen

University of Connecticut

In this paper I provide a cross-linguistic overview of the distribution of number agreement in nominal right node raising (RNR) constructions, and propose an account of the patterns observed. Nominal RNR constructions involve co-ordinated nominal phrases, the *sources*, in which one single NP, the *target*, is shared by two determiner elements (demonstrative, numeral, articles, possessor DPs, etc.) In RNR constructions with two conjoined singular DPs, two patterns arise: i) the Singular Pattern—only a singular target is allowed as in the demonstrative condition in (1), and ii) the Plural Pattern—only a plural target is allowed as in the bare Possessor DP condition in (2). Note that it is two <u>singular</u> DPs that are conjoined in both (1-2). The predicate *are a couple* restricts the total number of the students to two.

(1) Singular Pattern:
[this student] and [that student]
a. This and that student are a couple.
b. *This and that students are a couple.

(2) Plural Pattern:
[John's student] and [Mary's student]
a. *John's and Mary's student are a couple.
b. John's and Mary's students are a couple.

As shown in Table 1, cross-linguistically, the predominant pattern is the singular pattern. The Plural Pattern only appears in bare possessor DP constructions (as in (2)) in certain languages. This paper proposes that the singular target results from a closest conjunct agreement (CCA) with the head in the last conjunct, whereas the plural target is a form of semantic agreement with the &P. Based on the cross-linguistic distribution in Table 1, I show the following generalization: semantic agreement is only possible if it does not clash with last conjunct agreement. I express the generalization with a PF constraint in (3).

(3) **NO CLASH CONSTRAINT**: There must be no clash between the number markings on the target and the closest conjunct in morphology.

I argue that the plural target licensed by semantics is in principle possible, however, the morphological constraint in (3) rules out the plural target when the number marking on the head in the closest conjunct clashes with that on the target. In (4a) the closest conjunct *that* and the target *boy* both show SG, there is thus no clash. In (4b) the closest conjunct shows SG while the target shows PL, thus (3) is violated. The Singular Pattern is derived.

(4) a. [&P.PL [this.SG [boy]] & [that.SG [boy]]] [boy] ➔ this & {that.sg boy.sg} ➔ no clash
    b. [&P.PL [this.SG [boy]] & [that.SG [boy]]] [boys] ➔ *this & {that.sg boys.pl} ➔ clash

There are three pieces of evidence for the No Clash Condition in (3): i) agreeing vs. non-agreeing possessives; ii) mismatches between conjuncts.

i. AGREEING VS. NON-AGREEING POSSESSIVES: Slovenian, Serbo-Croatian, and Polish possessives involve adjectival possessives that show number agreement. At the same time Polish allows a prenominal non-agreeing genitive construction. As is predicted by the constraint, the agreeing adjectival possessor only shows the Singular Pattern (5) and the non-agreeing genitive allows the Plural Pattern as in (6).

(5) Polish agreeing adjectival possessive
a. Janowy i Marysiny chłopak spotkali się.
   J's.sg and M's.sg boy met Refl
b. *Janowy i Marysiny chłopcy spotkali się.
   J's.sg andM's.sg boys met Refl
   'J's boy and M's boy met each other.'

(6) Polish non-agreeing genitive
a. *Jana i Marii chłopak spotkali się.
   J.gen and M.gen boy met.pl Refl
b. Jana i Marii chłopcy spotkali się.
   J.gen and M.gen boys met.pl Refl
   'J's boy and M's boy met each other.'

ii. MISMATCH: When the number features in the conjuncts are different, (7a-b) involves no clash between the target and the closest conjunct, (3) is not violated. (7c-d) involve clash in the number features, (3) is violated. As predicted, (7a-b) are accepted and (7c-d) are not.

(7) Mismatch between Conjuncts
a. One tall and {ten short boys} met each other. b. ?Ten tall and {one short boy} met each other.
c. *One tall and {ten short boy} met each other. d. *Ten tall and {one short boys} met each other.

PLURAL PATTERN: Cross-linguistically, only the bare possessor DP condition in (2) shows the Plural Pattern. I argue that the nominal RNR construction in this condition does not involve two coordinated full DPs but instead the conjoined possessor DPs in (8).

(8) [DP[ConjP[PossessorDP1 John's] and [PossessorDP2 Mary's]][poss [boys.PL]]] are both from China.

Table 1	English	German	Dutch	Icelandic	Polish		Slovenian	SC
Dem	SG	SG	SG	SG	SG		SG	SG
Dem+Adj	SG	SG	SG	N/A	SG		SG	SG
Num+Adj	SG	SG	SG	SG	SG		SG	SG
Ind+Adj	SG		SG		N/A		SG	N/A
Def + Adj	SG	SG	SG	SG	N/A		N/A	N/A
Poss DP+Adj	SG	SG	SG	SG	SG		SG	SG
Bare Poss DP	PL	PL	PL	PL	PL	SG	SG	SG

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