

Predicative agreement with quantitative constructions in Russian: a corpus research

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This work presents a research on specialities of agreement of Russian verb with its subject, represented by a quantitative construction. Its main goal was to determine the factors influencing the choice of a certain verb form, depending on different characteristics of aforementioned constructions.

One of the specialities of predicative agreement in Russian is variation in the form of a verb: it can either agree with the subject in number, or be neuter:

- 1) *Пять красивых девушек пришли.*
Five beautiful girls came (pl.)
- 2) *Пришло пять красивых девушек.*
Five beautiful girls came (sg.n.)

G. Corbett suggests in his monograph "Number" that the exact verb form is determined by morphological features of numeral and the words, related to it syntactically. In particular, he points out such factors as animacy of the subject, word order in the sentence and the exact number represented by the numeral.

Corbett's suggestion as stated in the monograph is not supported by definitive statistical evidence. That is why I, using it as a hypothesis, aimed to verify its plausibility on a large corpus of Russian. Another goal that emerged during the research was to compare the behavior of verbs in context of numerals and quantitative adverbs. Using quantitative methods, it became possible to estimate the degree of proximity between the two classes, depending on how well Corbett's criteria work for them.

To achieve these goals, materials of Russian Syntax Treebank, developed by a research group from Moscow State University, were used. I took samples of roughly 100 examples for each class of constructions from the corpus, and evaluated the degree of dependency between verb forms and each of the selected factors. As a result, the hypothesis was proven true for all the factors. The similarity between numerals and quantitative adverbs was also observed.

The general results achieved by my research are as follows:

- The hypothesis, despite being formulated on the basis of a relatively small sample, was proven true on corpus material: the dependency between verb form and animacy of the noun and word order was confirmed to exist;
- The hypothesis of value of the numeral having influence on the verb form was partly confirmed, but further research is required;
- Constructions with adverbs were found to display the same dependency relations as those with numerals, but to a weaker degree.

The last observation allowed me to rank the probability of verb agreeing with its subject in number depending on the part of speech, present in the construction:

small numerals < big numerals < big numerals, governed by an adverb < quantitative adverbs < quantitative nouns.