

Numerals and agreement in Megrelian

The familiar Georgian model of agreement between a subject NP with a numeral modifier and the head verb is illustrated below (1). The noun following the numeral is in the singular and so is the verb.

- (1) sami žma čamovida (*čamovidnen)
three brother.SG.NOM here.come.SG.AOR (*here.come.PL.AOR)
'Three brothers came here'

This model is not uncommon among the world's languages, represented by, for instance, Hungarian, Welsh, Basque, Archi (Hurford 2003:584).

In Megrelian we find a somewhat different situation, and in addition to that, considerable variation in this type of construction. In this paper we will explore such agreement patterns on the basis of our Megrelian database.

NP with numeral modifiers

We find two models in NPs with numeral modifiers: with the noun in the singular (2a), as in standard Georgian, and with plural marking on the noun (2b). Plural is marked with the suffix *-ep / -en*, preceding the case marker.

- (2) a. sumi žima
three brother.SG.NOM
'three brothers'
- (2) b. sumi žimal-ep-i
three brother-PL-NOM
'three brothers'

Qipshidze (1914:38) states that the plural form of the noun occurs rarely in phrases like *xuti žimalepi* 'five brothers'. Likewise, Harris (1991:364) notes that quantified nouns are usually in the singular form. The predominance of the singular form of the noun in this construction is supported by our material from the database, although plural forms are not uncommon.

Subject-verb agreement

In subject-verb agreement we find that NPs with a numeral modifier may function either as singular (3a) or a plural (3b) controller:

- (3) a. sumi žima ndiepi oxoransia
three brother.SG.NOM giant.PL.NOM live.SG.PRS.QUOT
'Three giant brothers live there (said he)'

- (3) b. sumi žimal-en-k p'alat'k'epi gak'etes
 three brother-PL-ERG tent.PL.NOM do.PL.AOR
 'Three brothers set up the tents'

The regularity that seems to emerge from these examples is that in the case of a singular noun in the NP, the verb appears in the singular (3a), whereas a plural noun motivates the plural form on the verb (3b). However, the situation is more complicated. For instance, we find examples where the verb appears in the plural (4), whereas the subject head noun is in the singular.

- (4) sumi žima mutunc vartədes
 three brother.SG.NOM nothing do.PL.AOR
 'Three brothers didn't do anything (did nothing)'

The fourth possibility, where a plural NP controls a verb with singular subject marking is also attested (5), however, more rarely:

- (5) sumi mazak'val-ep-k kəṃšapurin
 three witch-PL-ERG here.fly.SG.AOR
 'Three witches flew here'

References

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3. Qipshidze, I. 1914. *Grammatika mingrelskago (iverskago) jazyka s xrestomatiejju i slovarem*. S.-Peterburg: Imperatorskaja Akademija Nauk.