

Agreement*

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1. Introduction

10 Slavonic provides remarkable insights
into agreement for two opposing reasons.
On the one hand, agreement in Slavonic
is ubiquitous and 'canonical': that is,
the Slavonic systems fit squarely at the
15 core of any reasonable definition of
agreement. On the other hand they have
in addition some interesting non-
canonical traits. In some instances
there is a high degree of variability,
20 and we can identify several competing
factors which together determine the
choice of agreement form. Not
surprisingly, therefore, the literature
on the topic is extensive. It includes
25 books, often examining a single
language, sometimes broader in scope:
Popov (1964), Vanek (1970), Skoblikova
(1971), Crockett (1976), Corbett (1979a,
1983), Iomdin (1990), Schmidt and
30 Lehfelddt (1995) and Wechsler and Zlatić

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DU	dual	NOM	nominative
FEM	feminine	PL	plural
GEN	genitive	POSS	possessive adjective suffix
INST	instrumental	SG	singular
MASC	masculine	1	first person
N	total number of examples	2	second person
NEUT	neuter	3	third person

(2003). There are also many theses and articles, including recent work by Leko (2000) and Igartua (2004). Slavonic data have an important place in a general
 35 typology of agreement systems (Corbett forthcoming). I have made available a fuller bibliography on the topic, at: <http://www.surrey.ac.uk/LIS/SMG/agr.html>.

40 **2. Canonical agreement**

A good starting point for defining agreement is Steele's notion of 'systematic covariance between a
 45 semantic or formal property of one element and a formal property of another' (1978, 610). We shall call the element which determines the agreement (say the subject noun phrase) the
 50 **controller**. The element whose form is determined by agreement is the **target**. The syntactic environment in which agreement occurs is the **domain** of agreement. And when we indicate in what
 55 respect there is agreement, we are referring to agreement **features** (or **categories**). Thus number is an agreement feature, it has the **values** singular, dual, plural, and so on. Features are
 60 directly reflected in agreement. There can be other factors (like word order) which have an effect on agreement but are not directly reflected like features. Such factors are called
 65 agreement **conditions**.

Corbett (forthcoming) provides twenty converging criteria for characterizing canonical agreement. 'Canonical' represents the best and clearest examples, those most closely matching the 'canon'; they are the ones still included if we take our definitions to their logical end point (and so they will not be frequent). These twenty criteria fall under three main principles: I: canonical agreement is redundant rather than informative; II: canonical agreement is syntactically simple; and III: the closer the expression of agreement is to canonical (i.e. affixal) inflectional morphology, the more canonical it is as agreement. It is evident that substantial parts of the Slavonic systems may be characterized as canonical according to these principles. For further discussion of definitions see Mel'čuk (1993) and Schmidt and Lehfeldt (1995).

3. Broad characterization of agreement in Slavonic

Typically we find agreement within the noun phrase in number and gender. Finite verbs generally agree obligatorily with their subject in person and number. Past tenses are frequently formed with the so-called *l*-participle, which creates a more interesting situation: here the auxiliary verb shows agreement in person and number, while the participle shows

agreement in number and gender. Some Slavonic languages, such as Russian, use a null form for the verb 'be' in its present tense, so that the former participle is the sole form in the past tense; it may be said therefore that Russian verbs agree in person and number in the present, but in number and gender in the past. Various types of pronoun, including the relative pronoun, also show agreement with their antecedents, in number and gender. (Most Slavists readily include the determination of the form of anaphoric pronouns within agreement.)

The three features which are indisputably agreement features are somewhat different in nature. Gender is an inherent feature of the noun. It is found on the target, say the adjective, as a consequence of its presence in the noun (overt or covert). Thus agreement marking of gender on an adjective has nothing to do with the lexical meaning of the adjective. Within gender we can observe the rise of the animate sub-gender (Huntley 1980; Krys'ko 1994; Timberlake 1997). Person is an inherent feature of the pronoun, but not of the verb. Number is more difficult. It is an inherent feature of some nouns: those which are only singular (like Serbian/Croatian/Bosnian *hrabrost* 'courage') or only plural (like Russian

šči 'cabbage soup') impose this feature value on their modifiers. However, a considerable proportion of the nouns in Slavonic languages can be associated with both (or all) numbers. In straightforward examples involving such nouns, the number feature appears to relate primarily to the noun; the property denoted by the adjective is not affected by the change in number.

Traditional accounts of Slavonic languages also include agreement in case. In a phrase like Russian: *v novom avtomobile* 'in a new car', the adjective and noun stand in the same case. Depending on one's view of syntax, this covariance may be seen as differing from that found with gender, number or person. It is less clear that case is an agreement feature, though we should recognize that it interacts strongly with agreement features. There are, however, a few constructions where there is good evidence for agreement in case. Consider Polish expressions like the following (Dziwirek 1990, 147):

(1) Sześć kobiet był-o smutn-ych
 six woman[PL.GEN] be-PAST-NEUT.SG sad-PL.GEN
 'six women were sad'

The verb is third singular neuter 'by default'; the adjective appears to agree in number and gender with the quantified noun within the subject noun phrase. (According to Dziwirek (1990, 158n16),

the neuter singular may be found
 175 instead, in 'informal spoken Polish'.)
 This construction is in any case
 difficult to analyse, but it suggests
 that we have to allow for agreement in
 case.

180

4. The special interest of Slavonic

While many instances of agreement in
 Slavonic fit into well-known systems,
 there are also numerous examples where
 185 more than one agreement form may be
 found. Recall that Steele mentioned a
 'semantic or formal property '. We have
 a rich variety of circumstances in which
 agreement can be determined by the
 190 meaning - **semantic agreement**, or by the
 form - **syntactic agreement**. The choice
 may be influenced by a range of factors,
 as we shall see.

195 4.1. *The effect of controllers*

When there is a choice of agreement,
 this is normally made possible by the
 controller. There are certain controller
 types (within Slavonic and beyond) which
 200 regularly permit agreement choices, and
 we discuss these in §4.1.1. And then
 there are conditions which range over
 different controller types, and which
 favour one or other agreement choice; we
 205 treat these in §4.1.2.

4.1.1. Controllers which induce
 agreement choices

Agreement rules are frequently
 210 formulated as though a controller's
 features were constant, that is, that
 all agreements will be identical. In
 fact, we regularly find agreement
 choices: a given controller allows two
 215 (occasionally three) agreement
 possibilities. The choices arise from a
 mismatch of semantic and formal
 properties of the controller.
 Controllers which allow agreement
 220 choices are of two types. There are
 lexical items, hybrids, which induce
 agreement choices. And second, there are
 constructional mismatches, where the
 form and semantics of the construction
 225 can be at odds. We discuss these in
 turn.

Several lexical hybrids allow
 agreement choices. These may relate to
 number, or gender, or both, and they
 230 arise from a mismatch between the
 meaning of the noun and its
 morphological form.¹ An example of a
 number mismatch is Russian *para* 'man and
 woman, couple', which has the morphology
 235 of a singular, but denotes more than
 one. It takes singular agreements,
 except of the personal pronoun. Another
 example of a number mismatch is provided
 by Old Church Slavonic *družina* 'company'

¹ For additional data and examples of items discussed in this section see Corbett 1983; for titles pp. 23-24, for Serbo-Croat *gazda* 'landlord, master, boss' pp. 14-17 and references there, for Serbo-Croat *deca* 'children' pp. 76-88, for Russian *značitel'noe lico* 'important person' pp. 25-26, and for *vrač* '(female) doctor' pp. 30-39.

240 and similar nouns, which most often take
singular attributive modifiers, and
plurals in other positions (see Huntley
1989, 24-25). For gender mismatches we
may take the Czech *děvče* 'girl
245 (colloquial), which takes neuter
agreements, except for the personal
pronoun, which may be neuter or feminine
(Vanek 1970, 87-88). There are also
various honorific titles, which take
250 feminine and masculine agreements in
Polish, neuter and masculine in Russian.
A considerably researched type of
controller is Russian nouns like *vrač*
'doctor', when denoting a female. Since
255 such nouns have the morphology typically
associated with masculines, but denote
females, a complex pattern of masculine
and feminine agreements occurs (Corbett
1991, 183-184, 231-232 and sources
260 there). And then there are nouns which
show gender mismatches in the plural:
Serbian/Croatian/Bosnian *gazda*
'landlord, master, boss' and similar
nouns, which are now established as
265 masculine in the singular, but which
allow masculine and feminine agreements
in the plural; and Polish nouns like
łajdak 'wretch', which take a
combination of non-masculine personal
270 and masculine personal agreements
(Corbett 1991, 233-236 and references
there). A truly remarkable instance is
Serbian/Croatian/Bosnian *deca* 'children'
which takes feminine singular, neuter

275 plural and masculine plural agreements.
All these items show patterns of
agreement which are in accord with the
Agreement Hierarchy (§4.2).

Two general points are worth noting.

280 First, these examples may comprise
individual lexical items (even single
items in the use of a particular
individual, as in the case of the
special agreements found with
285 *značitel'noe lico* 'important person' by
Gogol'), or relatively large numbers of
nouns, as in the case of nouns like
Russian *vrač* '(female) doctor'. In the
latter situation, though the system of
290 agreements may be the same, we must not
assume that the actual frequency of the
different options will be the same from
item to item. Quite the opposite: there
is evidence that *vrač* '(female) doctor'
295 and *buxgalter* '(female) accountant'
behave rather differently. And second,
while the reason for these agreement
choices is to be found in a mismatch
between semantics and morphology, such a
300 mismatch is not a sufficient condition
for an agreement choice. Thus Russian
djadja 'uncle' (like similar nouns)
denotes a male but belongs to the
morphological class whose members are
305 usually feminine. The semantics
overrides the morphology, such that the
noun is straightforwardly masculine; for
agreement purposes it behaves just like
otec 'father'.

310 An important type of hybrid is the
 honorific pronoun, used in address.
 Pronouns like Russian *vy* 'you' used in
 this way produce interesting agreement
 effects. Since the pronoun is plural, it
 315 takes some plural agreements; as shown
 by the verb in this Russian example:

(2) *vy xot-ite ...*
 2PL.NOM want-2PL
 320 'You (polite) want ...'

However, the pronoun is used to address
 a single individual, and some singular
 agreements are found (as usually in the
 325 Russian long form adjective):

(3) *vy segodnja očen' zadumčiv-aja.*
 2PL.NOM today very thoughtful-(LONG.FORM)FEM.SG.NOM
 330 'You are very thoughtful today.' (one woman addressed politely)

We also find constructional mismatches,
 agreement controllers which produce a
 choice of agreement because of a
 mismatch of form and meaning within the
 335 construction. For example, in numeral
 phrases the numeral may not be plural in
 form, though the semantics of the phrase
 would imply a plural. Slavonic languages
 show considerable variation and the
 340 actual quantifier involved has a
 dramatic effect on the agreement found
 (Suprun 1969, 175–187; Corbett 1983,
 220–224).

345 There is an interesting pattern: the
 agreement form which is semantically
 justified (usually plural) becomes more
 likely the lower the numeral. The reason
 is that the groups which we quantify

350 with larger numbers are the groups which
 are less individuated and conversely are
 more likely to be viewed as a unit. For
 this reason they are more likely to be
 encoded grammatically as a noun. And as
 355 a result, when there is a grammatical
 choice, the higher are more likely to be
 treated somewhat more like nouns.

Russian *četyre knigi* 'four books' is
 'more plural' than *pjat' knig* 'five
 360 books', and in a sense *tri knigi* 'three
 books' is 'more plural' than *četyre
 knigi* 'four books'; we are better able
 to individuate three items than four.

Slavonic has an unusual associative
 365 construction, indicated only by
 agreement morphology: this is found in
 the Talitsk dialect of Russian (Bogdanov
 1968). In this dialect, a plural verb
 can be used with a singular noun phrase,
 370 to indicate reference to a person or
 persons besides the one indicated
 directly:

(4) Góša pr'ijéxa-l'-i!
 375 Gosha arrived-PAST-PL
 'Gosha and his family have arrived'

This was used when the named person
 arrived with his wife and children; the
 380 fact that more than one person is
 involved is shown in this dialect
 exclusively by the agreement. This
 plural agreement does not extend into
 the noun phrase, and so conflicting
 385 agreements can be found in the same

sentence.

Plural agreement may also be the only indicator of honorific usage, as in this
 390 Russian example of a maid talking in
 turn of her mistress :

(5) Mamen'ka plač-ut ...
 Mother cry-3PL
 395 '(Your) mother is crying ...' (Turgenev *Nakanune*, 1860)

Here the plural verb with singular subject indicates respect for the person referred to. This demonstrates that in
 400 cases like this the controllers cannot be restricted to particular lexical items, but that a range of noun phrases may be involved. (For evidence that this construction follows the constraints of
 405 the Agreement Hierarchy, see Corbett 1983, 24-25, and for sources on the construction in Belarusian, Czech, Polish, Slovak, Slovene and Ukrainian see 1983, 41n8; it is also found in
 410 Kajkavian, Wayles Browne, personal communication.)

An agreement controller consisting of conjoined noun phrases is very likely to
 415 give rise to an agreement option. It may allow agreement with both or all the conjuncts, and it may allow agreement with just one conjunct. The latter type is frequent both in texts and in
 420 naturally occurring discourse. When agreement is with one conjunct it is almost always with the nearest. Here is

a clear example from Cassubian (Stone 1993, 784):

425 (6) Odraz-a i strach czierowô-ł jego postęp-k-ama
 revulsion(FEM)-SG and fear(MASC)[SG] direct-PAST[MASC.SG] his action-PL.INST
 ‘Revulsion and fear directed his actions.’

430 Here the genders of the nouns make it clear that agreement is with the nearer conjunct. The alternative is for agreement to be with all the conjuncts, as in this Slovene example (Lenček

435 1972):

(7) Tonček in Marina sta prizadevn-a
 Tonček(MASC) and Marina(FEM) be.3DU assiduous- MASC.DU
 ‘Tonček and Marina are assiduous’

440 Agreement is with both conjuncts, and the gender and number resolution rules specify the form of the target as dual and, where appropriate, masculine. For
 445 resolution rules see Corbett (2003). For many of the Slavonic languages the number resolution rule simply specifies plural, and in some there is no place for gender resolution since gender is
 450 not distinguished in the plural.

The comitative construction together with alternative agreement possibilities is found in some but not all the
 455 Slavonic languages. We may illustrate it from Belarusian (Bukatevič et al. 1958, 292):

460 (8) Dzed z unukam lavi-ŭ rybu
 grandfather with grandson catch-PAST[SG.MASC] fish
 ‘Grandfather and grandson were fishing’

(9) Brat z sjastroju pajš-l-i ŭ tèatr
 465 brother with sister go-PAST-pl to theatre
 'Brother and sister went to the theatre'

The head noun in the nominative case may control the agreement ((8) – syntactic agreement) or there may be agreement
 470 with the expression as a whole ((9) – semantic agreement. Semantic agreement is less likely with comitative expressions than with conjoined noun phrases.

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4.1.2. Conditions on controllers

These are factors relating to controllers but which range over different controller types. Two are well
 480 established, and their interaction is also moderately well researched.

The first condition is **animacy**.

There is substantial evidence, primarily from text counts but also from work with
 485 consultants, that controllers referring to animates are more likely to take semantically justified agreement than are those referring to inanimates. The evidence comes from different Slavonic
 490 languages, and involves various quantified expressions and conjoined noun phrases (for a survey and sources see Corbett 1983, 110-132, 139, 143-146). To give one example, Patton
 495 examined a large corpus of 19th and 20th century Russian literary texts, and a sample from Pravda, for examples of

predicate agreement with quantified
 subjects. From her data (1969, 35, 63,
 500 148, 160) the following may be
 calculated:

(10) The effect of animacy on
 agreement with quantified expressions in
 505 Russian

	singular	plural	percent plural
animate	790	1293	62
inanimate	1047	740	41

The second condition is **precedence**.
 There is strong evidence that
 510 controllers which precede their targets
 are more likely to take semantically
 justified agreement than are those which
 follow. Again there is evidence from
 different Slavonic languages, and it
 515 involves quantified expressions,
 conjoined noun phrases and comitative
 phrases (Corbett 1983, 107-150 passim).
 To give just one part of the evidence:
 Sand examined a large corpus of
 520 Serbian/Croatian/Bosnian texts
 (literature of the 1960s, non-fiction
 1951-1968 and the newspaper *Politika*
 1969-1970). The largest controller type
 investigated was the numerals from *pet*
 525 '5' upwards. (11) has been drawn up from
 her data (1971, 73-75):

- (11) The effect of precedence on agreement with
quantified expressions (involving *pet* ‘5’ and above)
in Serbian/Croatian/Bosnian

530

	N	% plural
subject-predicate	310	20
predicate-subject	851	2

While it is easiest to show the effect
of precedence in subject-predicate
domains, with different types of
controller subjects, it is also relevant
to controllers of attributive modifiers.

535

We have seen that controllers which
refer to animates are more likely to
take agreement forms with a greater
degree of semantic justification than
are those referring to inanimates.
Similarly, controllers which precede
their targets are more likely to take
agreement forms with a greater degree of
semantic justification than are those
which follow. Since these two controller
factors are independent, we can cross-
classify for them to see the **interaction**

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of these conditions. (12) records
agreement with conjoined noun phrases.
The data are taken from modern literary
texts, from Russian (1930-1979) and from
Serbian/Croatian/Bosnian (a corpus of
short works by Ivo Andrić).²

555

- (12) Predicate agreement with conjoined noun phrases

² Details in Corbett (1983, pp. 105-35 especially p. 130 on Russian, and pp. 139-140 and p. 101 on Serbo-Croat).

word order	subject type	animate		inanimate	
		N	% PL	PL	%PL
subject- predicate	Russian	115	100	67	85
	Serbian/Croatian /Bosnian	21	100	35	91
predicate- subject	Russian	89	84	114	28
	Serbian/Croatian /Bosnian	23	70	62	26

560 Both animacy and precedence exert a
major influence on the agreement
selected. The plural, the form with
greater semantic justification, is more
likely if the subject is animate and if
565 it precedes the predicate. With both
factors are present, Russian and
Serbian/Croatian/Bosnian (in the samples
here) require the plural form. When
either one of the factors is present,
570 the plural form is found in a
significantly higher proportion of the
cases than when neither is present. In
Russian the two factors are of about
equal weight, and in
575 Serbian/Croatian/Bosnian precedence
appears to be the more important factor.
Thus both animacy and precedence have a
substantial effect on agreement choices,
ranging over different controller types.
580

4.2. The effect of domains

We now investigate the considerable
impact of the syntactic domain on

agreement choices. We shall look at two
 585 hierarchies. We begin with the larger
 syntactic domains, where agreement
 options are constrained by the **Agreement
 Hierarchy** (Corbett 1979b; 1983, 8-41,
 81-86; 1991, 225-241):

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attributive > predicate > relative pronoun > personal pronoun

Figure 1. The Agreement Hierarchy

595 Possible agreement patterns are
 constrained as follows:

For any controller that permits
 alternative agreement forms, as
 600 we move rightwards along the
 Agreement Hierarchy, the
 likelihood of agreements with
 greater semantic justification
 will increase monotonically
 605 (that is, with no intervening
 decrease).

As an illustration of the type of data
 covered by the Agreement Hierarchy,
 610 consider agreement with numeral phrases
 in Serbian/Croatian/Bosnian involving
 the numerals *dva* '2', *tri* '3', *četiri*
 '4' and *oba* 'both'. These require a
 special form of masculine nouns, a
 615 survival of the dual number which is
 synchronically a genitive singular.
 Attributive modifiers to such nouns must
 take the ending *-a*; it has been argued

that it should be analysed

620 synchronically as a neuter plural.

However it is analysed, this *-a* form represents syntactic agreement.

(13) dva dobr-a čovek-a
625 two good-NEUT.PL men-SG.GEN
 'two good men'

In the predicate the neuter plural form (syntactic agreement) and the
630 masculine plural form (semantic agreement) are both possible:

(14) ov-a dva čovek-a su dobr-a/dobr-i
635 this- NEUT.PL two men- SG.GEN be.PL good- NEUT.PL/good-MASC.PL
 'these two men are good'

The relative pronoun is also found in both forms:

(15) dva čovek-a koj-a/koj-i ...
640 two men- SG.GEN who- NEUT.PL/who- MASC.PL ...
 'two men who ...'

The personal pronoun must stand in the
645 masculine plural form *oni* (**ona* is unacceptable). We therefore find syntactic agreement in attributive position, both types of agreement of the predicate and relative pronoun, and only
650 semantic agreement of the personal pronoun. There are figures for the relative frequency of the two forms in the positions where there is an option. These are derived from Sand (1971, 55-
655 56, 63) and presented in (16):

(16) Distribution of masculine plural (versus neuter plural) forms in Serbian/Croatian/Bosnian

	attributive	predicate	relative pronoun	personal pronoun
plural (semantic) agreement	0%	18% (N = 376)	62% (N = 32)	100%

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(16) shows a monotonic increase in the likelihood of agreement forms with greater semantic justification.

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We now focus on the predicate, one of the positions on the Agreement Hierarchy. Comrie (1975) demonstrated how honorific plural pronouns may take singular or plural agreement, but that this variation is constrained by what we may call the **Predicate Hierarchy**:

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verb > participle > adjective > noun

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Figure 2. The Predicate Hierarchy

Reformulating Comrie's proposal we may claim that:

680

For any controller that permits alternative agreement forms, as we move rightwards along the Predicate Hierarchy, the likelihood of agreements with greater semantic justification will increase monotonically (that is, with no intervening decrease).

685

In subsequent research I investigated evidence for all the Slavonic languages, for agreement with honorific pronouns, and the results are given in summary form in Corbett (1983, 42-59). Again

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there is great variation, but the overall pattern is very clear and it is fully in accord with the Predicate
 695 Hierarchy.

4.3. Target factors

Conditions on targets range over different target types. It has been
 700 known for some time that predicate type has a role in influencing agreement choices. Robblee reports that predicates form a hierarchy of individuation, which she motivates from phenomena apart from
 705 agreement. There are three main classes, each split into two subclasses; the reader is referred to Robblee (1993a) for justification of these, but the examples in (34) give an indication of
 710 membership. Robblee took a corpus of Russian prose (1976 to 1988) and extracted instances of predicate agreement with quantified noun phrases including either a numeral or one of
 715 *neskol'ko* 'several', *malo* 'few' or *nemalo* 'several, more than a few'.

The results were clear; semantic (plural) agreement is least common with
 720 *byt'* and successively more common with more individuated predicates (Robblee 1993b). However, different predicates more or less likely to appear in particular word orders, and we have
 725 established that word order impacts on agreement. We need, therefore, a count

in which word order is held constant, in order to isolate the effect of the predicate type. Robblee provides this in
730 a later paper.

(17) Semantic (plural) predicate agreement with quantified noun phrases according to word order and predicate type in Russian (from Robblee 1997, 235)

735

	subject-predicate word order		predicate-subject word order		TOTAL	
	N	%PL	N	%PL	N	%PL
CLASS I (‘inversion’) e.g. <i>byt’</i> ‘be’, <i>proizojti</i> ‘occur’	13	15	110	7	123	8
CLASS II (‘intransitive’) e.g. <i>stojat’</i> ‘stand’, <i>krasnet’</i> ‘redden’	43	63	117	44	160	49
CLASS III (‘agentive’) e.g. <i>rabotat’</i> ‘work’, <i>udarit’</i> ‘hit’	55	96	35	71	90	87
TOTAL	111	74	262	32	373	45

Thus of the class I predicates, of the 13 found with subject-verb word order, 15% had plural agreement. Plural
740 agreement is more likely with subject-verb order (15%) than with verb-subject

(7%), and the same is true for each class of predicate (63% versus 44%, and 96% versus 71%). But equally, if we keep
 745 the word order constant and consider the class of predicate (comparing down the columns) then we see that plural is least likely with 'inversion' predicates, more so with other
 750 intransitives and most likely with agentives. Here then we have clear evidence that this hierarchy has an effect independent of word order. Robblee uses predicate type as an
 755 indicator of the individuation of the subject, which links interestingly to typological claims about the role of individuation in agreement systems.

760 The question which remains is how this hierarchy relates to Comrie's Predicate Hierarchy. Robblee's Predicate Hierarchy of Individuation provides a cross-cutting classification, as becomes clear
 765 when we consider non-verbal predicates. A few of these, such as *vidno* 'visible' are inversion predicates (Robblee 1993a, 216), while the majority are lower on the hierarchy (1993a, 230). In Comrie's
 770 Predicate Hierarchy, which has a syntactic and morphological basis, verbs and non-verbs are fully separated. Thus Robblee's hierarchy can be seen as a target condition, ranging over the
 775 predicate types defined in Comrie's hierarchy. When other factors are held

constant adjectives favour semantic agreement by comparison with verbs (Corbett 1983, 163–170).

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4.4. Possessives in Upper Sorbian and Slovak

Perhaps the most remarkable instance of agreement in Slavonic is found in Upper Sorbian, where the possessive adjective can control an attributive modifier, as in this example (from Fasske 1981, 382–383):

790 (18) *moj-eho muž-ow-a sotr-a*
 my- MASC.SG.GEN husband-POSS- FEM.SG.NOM sister- FEM.SG.NOM
 ‘my husband’s sister’

In (18), the particularly interesting form is *mojeho*; this is masculine since *muž* ‘husband’, which is the source of *mužowa*, is masculine. It is singular for the same reason (the formation of the possessive adjective requires a singular referent). Thus we have the possessive adjective as a controller of agreement, taking another attributive modifier as its target, which is a totally unexpected agreement domain. The construction has been discussed in detail in Corbett (1987); for the distribution of the construction in the Sorbian dialects see Fasske (1996, 66–73). This Upper Sorbian construction is indeed remarkable; the only other modern Slavonic language which has it, and to a more limited extent, is Slovak. Control of the relative pronoun by the

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possessive adjective is much more
 815 common, while control of the anaphoric
 pronoun is general in Slavonic (except
 for Polish, where it is limited).

5. Conclusion

820 Research on agreement in Slavonic has
 given us accounts of the different
 agreement systems, and ample evidence of
 the pervasive nature of choices in
 825 agreement systems. We know a good deal
 about individual factors which affect
 agreement choices, but less about how
 they interact. We know something about
 the adult systems, but rather little
 830 about how they are acquired and what
 their function is. There is a good deal
 still to be found out.

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