

Concord in Altaic languages

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In many languages, attributive adjectives and nouns share values for gender, number and/or case ("concord"). In many others, they do not. A straightforward explanation for this observation is that the mechanism for concord is defined only for those grammars that manifest overt concord.

We claim that this simple explanation might not be the right one. We show that there are some systematic and predictable differences between concord and non-concord languages and that these differences call for a new approach to concord. We suggest that the mechanism for concord is uniform across grammars of the world's languages ("the universality claim"). In a non-concord language the overt realization of concord is suppressed by the intervention of a phasal Noun Phrase ("the phase claim").

In this talk, we first present the universal theory of concord described above. We then take a look at various facts about the nominal syntax of some 'Altaic' languages in order to see if we can find some independent support for "the phase claim".