

The Exploration of Syntactic Links: Subject-verb Agreement Defilement in Sesotho

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Abstract

The grammatical agreement is a significant characteristic in sentence construction. There must be agreement relations between the Noun Phrase subject and the device that links it with the Verb Phrase, as exemplified in example (1) below.

1. *Teboho o bapala bolo.*
1-Teboho 1-Agr Pres-play 9-bolo
Teboho plays a ball.

However, language users seem to violate this agreement relation in their daily talks. This paper explores the nature of the syntactic relationship between the subject Noun Phrase (NP) and the subject concord in a Sesotho sentence. Using the Minimalist Program, conversation-based sentences are analysed to identify the type of NPs that are commonly associated with the non-corresponding agreement device. The paper further investigates factors that contribute to the phenomenon. The findings show that NPs that comprise titles and metaphoric nouns are mostly used in sentences that violate the agreement relation while lack of knowledge of syntactic rules, semanticity of noun classification and negligence are the contributing factors.

Keywords: NP subject, subject-verb agreement, Minimalist Program, non-corresponding agreement