Subject-verb agreement in Persian
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Experiment 1 - Tense and Thematic Role

Task: Sentence completion
Factors: Tense (past vs. present) and Thematic role (agent, patient, theme, instrument)
Materials: 56 critical items (14/role): Subj (Inanim-PL) - Non-verbal part of trans. complex predicate
Presented in two blocks: Half present tense // half past tense (counterbalanced)
43 filler items varying subject animacy/plurality and verb transitivity
Participants: 44 Persian native speakers, members of UF community (all late learners of English)

Thematic Role | Participant would see, read out loud & complete sentence fragments like... | Proportion of Completions with singular verb
<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agent</td>
<td>aetr-ha</td>
<td>aetr-ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patient</td>
<td>ketab xune-ha</td>
<td>ketab xune-ha</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>lamp-ha</td>
<td>lamp-ha</td>
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<tr>
<td>Instrument</td>
<td>boiandgu-ha</td>
<td>boiandgu-ha</td>
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</tbody>
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Results - Effects of tense and thematic role:
More singular verbs with past tense than present tense (19% vs. 10%)
Almost no singular verb use with agent thematic role (1% - 2%) or instrument (4% - 8%)
Most singular verb use with patient role

Experiment 2 - Object attraction

Task: Sentence completion
Factors: Object Animacy (animate vs. inanimate), Plurality Type (singular vs. plural -/ha/ vs. plural -/an/)
40 filler items varying subject animacy/plurality and verb transitivity
Participants: 45 Persian native speakers, members of UF community (all late learners of English)

Object attraction effects persist in an SOV language with grammatical number mismatch
Object animacy matters - attraction for animate objects only

Results: Greater attraction effect for Animate PL -/ha/ than -/an/
No attraction effect for inanimate objects

Discussion & Conclusions
Tense and Thematic role influence use of grammatical number marking
Greater mismatch with past tense and proto-theme roles
Object attraction effects persist in an SOV language with grammatical number mismatch
Object animacy matters - attraction for animate objects only

Theoretical & Empirical Relevance
This is the first study establishing influences on grammatical subject-verb number mismatch
These results support:
- A Maximalist approach to accounting for agreement phenomena Vigliocco & Frank (1999) in which syntactic and non-syntactic information are used during agreement
- Agreement by Unification (Vigliocco, Butterworth & Garrett, 1998) in which verb number marking is the result of merging the available information in two compatible structures

References

Eberhard, R. M. (1999). The accessibility of conceptual number to the process of subject-verb agreement in English. JML, 41, 560-578.