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**Citation for published version:**

Hartmann, J & Heycock, C 2017, Variation in copular agreement in Insular Scandinavian. in H Thráinsson, C Heycock, HP Petersen & ZS Hansen (eds), *Syntactic Variation in Insular Scandinavian*. Studies in Germanic Linguistics, John Benjamins, Amsterdam, pp. 234-275. <https://doi.org/10.1075/sigl.1.09HAR>

**Digital Object Identifier (DOI):**

[10.1075/sigl.1.09HAR](https://doi.org/10.1075/sigl.1.09HAR)

**Link:**

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

**Document Version:**

Peer reviewed version

**Published In:**

Syntactic Variation in Insular Scandinavian

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# Variation in Copular Agreement in Insular Scandinavian

Suggested running head: Copular agreement

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## Abstract

This paper explores the syntax of agreement in Insular Scandinavian in copular clauses with two potential goals for agreement. Data from three production experiments—one in Faroese and two in Icelandic—establish several new facts. First, in both languages agreement with the second nominal (DP2) is possible/preferred. Second, there is considerable variation (both within and between languages, and indeed speakers) in the patterns observed. Third, Icelandic shows a surprising pattern of “partial” agreement with DP2—agreement in number but not person. We discuss the implications for current theorising about agreement, proposing that in these languages, at least, agreement is downwards, and that the available agreement options depend in part on the syntactic position of DP1 when agreement is established.

Keywords: Icelandic, Faroese, copular clauses, agreement, phi-features, inversion

## 1. Introduction: agreement with low nominatives in Insular Scandinavian

One of the well-known syntactic features of Insular Scandinavian—discussed most for Icelandic but also attested for Faroese—is the possibility for the finite verb to agree with a nominal that is not in the “canonical” subject position high in the left periphery of the clause (the specifier of TP under some assumptions), but rather somewhere lower in the structure, to the right of the finite verb.<sup>1</sup> Sigurðsson (2004) cites the following four cases in Icelandic:

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<sup>1</sup>Thanks to Zakaris Svabo Hansen and Sigríður Mjöll Björnsdóttir for their extensive help with preparing the materials for the Faroese and Icelandic experiments, respectively; to Robin

1. Late subject agreement: agreement in number<sup>2</sup> with indefinite subjects occurring in a low position, with (optionally) an expletive in clause-initial position.

- (1) a. *Það hafa komið hingað þrír málvísindamenn.*  
 EXPL have.3PL come here three linguists.NOM.PL  
 ‘There have arrived three linguists here.’
- b. *Þess vegna komu hingað stundum þrír málvísindamenn.*  
 therefore came.3PL here sometimes three linguists.NOM.PL  
 ‘Therefore, three linguists sometimes came here.’

2. Nominative object agreement: agreement in number (but not person) with the nominative object of a verb where the subject is lexically assigned non-nominative case.

- (2) a. *Henni hafa alltaf leiðst bræður sínir.*  
 her.DAT have.3PL always bored brothers.NOM.PL her.REFL  
 ‘She has always found her (own) brothers boring.’
- b. *Henni líkuðu sennilega ekki athugasemdirnar.*  
 her.DAT liked.3PL probably not comments.DEF.NOM.PL  
 ‘She probably didn’t like the comments.’

3. D/NcI Agreement: agreement in number (but not person) with the subject of a non-finite clause (either a “small clause” with only a non-verbal predicate, or an infinitival clause).

- (3) a. *Henni fundust bræðurnir gáfaðir.*  
 her.DAT found.3PL brother.DEF.NOM.PL intelligent  
 ‘She considered the brothers intelligent.’

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Hörnig for considerable help with the statistical analysis of the Icelandic data; to the organisers of the NORMS dialect syntax workshop and fieldwork in the Faroes in August 2008; and to all the speakers who took the time and trouble to participate in our investigations. This research has been partially supported by the German Research Foundation (DFG) via the grant to SFB 833, project A7 (PI Jutta Hartmann and Susanne Winkler), and also by a grant to the two authors from the British Academy / Leverhulme Trust.

<sup>2</sup>As Sigurðsson indicates, because “late subjects” are constrained to be indefinite, pronominals are ruled out, hence the possibility of person agreement does not arise in this case.

- b. *Henni mundu virðast bræðurnir hafa verið*  
 her.DAT would.3PL seem brothers.DEF.NOM.PL have been  
*gáfaðir.*  
 intelligent  
 ‘The brothers would seem to her to have been intelligent.’

4. Reverse Predicate Agreement: agreement in number and person with the postcopular DP in clauses with either a demonstrative or the singular neuter form *það* in subject position.

- (4) a. *Það/Þetta erum (bara) við.*  
 it/this are.1PL (only) we.NOM.PL  
 ‘It/this is (only) us.’
- b. *Voruð þetta þá ekki (bara) þið?*  
 were.2PL this then not (only) you.NOM.PL  
 ‘Wasn’t this (only) you, then?’

Of these cases, it is the second and third that have probably attracted the most attention, particularly because of the “intervention” effect that the placement of the lexically case-marked DP may have on the possibility of agreement with a plural nominative object (see in particular Holmberg and Hróarsdóttir 2004, and the rather different picture presented in Sigurðsson and Holmberg 2008, supported by subsequent results from the IceDiaSyn project, reported in Thráinsson et al. 2015, as well as Ussery (this volume). There has also been much interest in the effect of person (see among others Sigurðsson 2000, 2004, Boeckx 2000, Sigurðsson and Holmberg 2008). In contrast to 3rd person nominatives, agreement with low non-3rd person nominatives is never possible in the constructions in (2) and (3) above, but the two constructions differ as to the consequences. In the biclausal construction in (3), non-3rd person nominatives are possible as long as the verb appears with default<sup>3</sup> (3rd

<sup>3</sup>What we call here “default” agreement may also be considered “non-agreement;” we will use the term “default agreement” as a convenience, not intending to convey a particular theoretical commitment.

person singular) agreement; while this is true for some speakers also in the simplex construction in (2), for other speakers no form of agreement makes such cases possible, and it is necessary to resort to periphrasis (Sigurðsson and Holmberg 2008, Thráinsson et al. 2015).

In this paper, however, we focus on what might be considered a variant of the last case above—what Sigurðsson refers to as “Reverse Predicate Agreement.” Examples such as (4a,b) above are instances of what are referred to as *identificational* copular constructions in the literature on copular clauses deriving from the work of Higgins (1979). It is most commonly assumed that the postcopular DP in this kind of construction is in fact a referring expression, rather than a predicate (see for example Mikkelsen 2005, 2011); for this reason we will not follow Sigurðsson’s terminology, but adopt the more neutral term *DP2 Agreement* to describe this case.

The particular interest of cases like (4a,b) is that there appear to be two nominative DPs that could potentially control agreement on the finite verb: DP1 (here the demonstrative or the singular neuter pronoun) and DP2. This then raises immediately the question of how this situation is resolved when these nominals differ in their  $\phi$ -features. In Sigurðsson (2004), Sigurðsson and Holmberg (2008), it is argued that in fact there is only one possible agreement controller; the initial DPs in such identificational sentences are “void of all featural content, except for [their] phonological features, [their] D-feature, and [their] demonstrative force,” with “no values for ‘true’ person, number and gender” (Sigurðsson 2004: 28). As a result, these neuter demonstrative/pronominal DPs are simply invisible to any head seeking to agree in such features. As supporting evidence for this view, Sigurðsson and Holmberg (2008: 14) cite the contrast between the obligatory person and number agreement with DP2 in (5a) with the obligatory person and number agreement with DP1 in (5b), where in the latter case the subject is a plural DP containing

a contentful noun.

- (5) a. *Þetta höfum/\*hefur líklega bara verið við.*  
this have.1PL/\*has.3SG probably only been we.N.1PL  
'This has probably only been us.'
- b. *Þessir menn hafa/\*höfum líklega bara verið við.*  
these men.NOM.PL have.3PL/\*have.1PL probably only been  
við.  
we.N.1PL  
'These men have probably only been us.'

The idea is that in (5b) the initial DP does have  $\phi$ -features; given that this DP is (by hypothesis) higher in the structure than DP2, it is a closer target for agreement (it “intervenes” between the agreeing verb and DP2) and hence is the only possible agreement controller. The pattern in (5), Sigurðsson & Holmberg state, does not show any inter-speaker variation in Icelandic (footnote 17).<sup>4</sup>

In this paper we hope to show, however, that copular clauses in Insular Scandinavian with two nominative DPs deserve closer attention. We will argue that there is in fact considerable—although far from unconstrained—variation as to which DP can control agreement, both in Icelandic and in Faroese. And we will suggest that such sentences may reveal new insights into the interfaces between morphology, syntax, and semantics.

The structure of the paper is as follows: First, in Section 2 we characterise the kind of copular sentences that we are investigating. In Section 3 we then

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<sup>4</sup>Sigurðsson (1996) cites the following example and again states that the singular agreement is obligatory, although in a footnote he attributes to Jóhannes Gísli Jónsson the observation that—outside the standard language—some speakers accept plural agreement.

- (i) *Frægasta hljómsveitin hefur/\*hafa lengi verið Bítlarnir.*  
most famous band has.3SG/\*have.3PL long been the Beatles  
'The most famous band has long been the Beatles.'

This may however not be a clear cases of DP2 agreement since some speakers allow plural agreement with the names of bands even when these are syntactically singular, as a kind of semantic agreement (Thráinsson et al. 2015, 225).

summarise a previous study of how conflict in number in such sentences is resolved in Faroese. In Section 4 we present and discuss a study of the corresponding configuration in Icelandic; in Section 5 we present a further study in Icelandic which focusses on conflicts in person. Section 6 outlines an analysis and discusses possible alternatives, and Section 7 concludes.

## 2. **Specificational sentences**

The clauses that we investigate here fall under what Higgins (1979) called the *specificational* type. In such clauses, the second DP is a referring expression, but the status of the first DP is much less clear. Higgins likened it to the heading of a list, while the second DP provides the corresponding item; it is sometimes likened to a function, with the second DP corresponding to the value of that function; or it has been claimed that the first DP is actually a predicate, while the second DP is its subject. For extensive discussion, see at least Higgins (1979), Moro (1997), Mikkelsen (2005), den Dikken (2006b), Romero (2005, 2007), Heycock (2012). Examples in English include cases like the following:

- (6) a. The winner of the competition is Anne.
- b. My best friend is Bert.
- c. My favourite composers are Copeland and Debussy.
- d. Our biggest problem is you two.

As the example above illustrate, in English agreement in these specificational clauses is—at least to a first approximation—invariably with DP1. However, as is well-known, in a number of languages including at least Italian, Spanish, Catalan and German, agreement—for both person and number—is instead with DP2, as illustrated by an Italian example from Moro (1997).

- (7) *Il colpevole sono/ \*è io.*  
 the culprit am.1.s/\*is.3SG I.1.s.N  
 ‘The culprit is me.’

The question that we address here is the agreement found in such cases in Insular Scandinavian.

Note that, for reasons of space, we are specifically excluding from consideration other types of copular clause containing two DPs, including counterfactuals like (8a), cases involving “roles” as in (8b), and cases of (mistaken) identity, as in (8c), which we expect to have different properties (for some discussion, see Sigurðsson 2006, Heycock 2012); we return to such cases only briefly in Section 6.

- (8) a. If I were you, I would tell the truth.  
 b. In this play/in my dream, I was/will be you.  
 c. For a moment there, in the bad light, I thought your sister was you!

In the original taxonomy proposed in Higgins (1979), *specificational* sentences like those in (6) were distinguished from *identificational* sentences where the initial DP is a demonstrative, like the Icelandic examples in (4) and (5a) above, or English (9):

- (9) Who are you pointing at and asking me to identify? Oh, I see now.  
 That’s Belinda, my second cousin.

Some authors, however, have subsequently argued that the latter are just a special case of the former (see for example Mikkelsen 2005, 2011).

### 3. Specificational agreement in Faroese

Heycock (2009, 2012) report an investigation of number agreement in specificational sentences in Faroese, which we summarise here.



### 3.1. Design, methodology, materials, subjects

The data were gathered through a forced-choice production experiment, along the lines of the “fill-in-the-blanks” exercise in Berg’s and Fischer’s studies of English, German and Dutch (Berg 1998, Fischer 2003).

The questionnaires were designed to elicit singular or plural agreement in copular sentences where the first noun phrase was singular and the second plural (disagreement in person was not tested for). As in Berg’s and Fischer’s studies, the native speaker participants were asked to fill in the blanks in a series of sentences, some with a certain amount of context given; they were instructed that there was no right or wrong way to fill in these blanks, but that the investigators were just interested in what words they felt fit best.

Six different structures were tested:

- A. Main clause: DP1 \_\_\_ DP2
- B. Main clause, intervening adverb: DP1 \_\_\_ Adv DP2
- C. Embedded question: ... whether DP1 \_\_\_ DP2
- D. Main clause, Topic (Adjunct) Initial: Adjunct \_\_\_ DP1 DP2
- E. Main clause, modal: DP1 \_\_\_ have-INF been DP2
- F. Embedded question, modal: ... whether DP1 \_\_\_ have-INF been DP2

Examples of these structures are as follows:

- (10) a. *Orsøkin til eldin \_\_\_ tey brennandi kertiljósini*  
cause-DEF of fire-DEF the burning candles-DEF  
*í stovuni.*  
in lounge-DEF  
‘The cause of the fire \_\_\_ the burning candles in the lounge.’
- b. *Orsøkin til eldin \_\_\_ kanska tey brennandi kertiljósini í*  
cause-DEF of fire-DEF perhaps the burning candles-DEF in  
*stovuni.*  
lounge-DEF

‘The cause of the fire \_\_\_ perhaps the burning candles in the lounge.’

- c. *Fyrst spurdi hann, um orsøkin til eldin \_\_\_ tey brennandi kertiljósini í stovuni.*  
first asked he if cause-DEF of fire-DEF the burning  
candles-DEF in lounge-DEF  
‘First he asked if the cause of the fire \_\_\_ the burning candles in the lounge.’
- d. *Eftir mínari meining \_\_\_ orsøkin til eldin tey brennandi kertiljósini í stovuni.*  
in my opinion cause-DEF of fire-DEF the burning  
candles-DEF in lounge-DEF  
‘In my opinion, the cause of the fire \_\_\_ the burning candles in the lounge.’
- e. *Orsøkin til eldin \_\_\_ hava verið tey brennandi kertiljósini í stovuni.*  
cause-DEF of fire-DEF have-INF been the burning  
candles-DEF in lounge-DEF  
‘The cause of the fire \_\_\_ have been the burning candles in the lounge.’
- f. *Fyrst spurdi hann, um orsøkin til eldin \_\_\_ hava verið tey brennandi kertiljósini í stovuni.*  
first asked he if cause-DEF of fire-DEF have-INF been the  
burning candles-DEF in lounge-DEF  
‘First he asked if the cause of the fire \_\_\_ have been the burning candles in the lounge.’

Six different lexicalisations were used, in a Latin square design, so that there were six different variants of the questionnaire, each with one example of each of the structures in A–F, but with a different lexicalisation for each example.

The pairs of DPs were:

- (11) a. *orsøkin til eldin / tey brennandi kertiljósini í stovuni*  
cause-DEF of fire-DEF / the burning candles-DEF in lounge-DEF
- b. *besti partur av framførsluni / dansararnir*  
best part of performance-DEF / dancers-DEF
- c. *hansara serligi veikleiki / skjótir bilar*  
his particular weakness / fast cars
- d. *fyrsti vinningur / tveir ferðaseðlar til Keypmannahavnar*  
first prize / two tickets to Copenhagen

- e. *trupulleikin /foreldrini*  
 problem-DEF / parents-DEF
- f. *orsøkin til at hon flutti / teir larmandi grannarnir*  
 cause-DEF of that she moved / the noisy neighbours-DEF

In addition to the six sentences at issue, each questionnaire had nine fillers. In total 51 speakers completed the questionnaire; they came from a number of localities in the Faroes; of the 38 who provided their personal information, there were 13 men and 25 women; their ages ranged from 20 to 73, with a median age of 49.

### 3.2. Results and preliminary discussion

The results from the fifty-one speakers who completed the questionnaire are summarised in Table 1, which shows the number of cases in which agreement was with the first (singular) and second (plural) DP, respectively, and in the final column the proportion of DP2 (plural) agreement.<sup>5</sup>

[@@Insert Table 1 here.]

After inspection of the results by item, it turned out that there was considerable variation between the different lexicalisations ( $\chi^2(5, N = 267) = 31.31, p < 0.01$ ). In particular, the pair in (11d) above (*fyrsti vinningur / tveir ferðaseðlar til Keypmannahavnar* ‘first prize / two tickets to Copenhagen’) resulted in almost categorical preference for DP1 (singular) agreement. It is not obvious why this should have been the case, but as it seemed to be an outlier a more representative picture may be arrived at by excluding the cases with this lexicalisation (for more detail, see Heycock 2009). The revised results are given in Table 2.

<sup>5</sup>The number of responses is often lower than fifty-one because in some cases subjects picked some other way to complete the sentence than by using the copula (or modal, where relevant). Conversely, there are more than 51 responses for the first case: due to an editing error, an adverb was missed from one of the six questionnaires, so that it had two examples of *DP be DP* and no example of *DP be Adv DP*.

[@@Insert Table 2 here.]

Overall, it is clear that the frequency of the two possible agreement patterns varies according to sentence structure ( $\chi^2(5, N = 222) = 70.36, p < 0.01$ ). The highest rate of DP2 agreement is found in Condition A: main clauses where DP1 is in sentence-initial position, followed by the finite copula, followed immediately by DP2, where the rate of DP2 agreement is 64%. A somewhat lower rate of DP2 agreement is found in Condition C, when the DP1 *be* DP2 order occurs in an embedded *wh*-clause (46%), and in B, when an adverb intervenes between the copula and DP2 (42%). The difference between these three conditions though is not significant (ns) ( $\chi^2(2, N = 120) = 4.63, ns$ ). Then there are three environments where agreement with DP2 is strongly disfavoured: in a nonsubject-initial main clause—Topic/Adjunct *be* DP1 DP2, or in a clause where the agreeing verb is a modal, whether in a main clause (E) or an embedded *wh*-clause (F) (only one plural response in each case).

As well as this intra-speaker variation correlating with the linguistic structures in which the copula is embedded, there was also inter-speaker variation. While most of the respondents (39/51) gave at least one plural response and at least one singular response, twelve respondents showed no variation at all, but gave consistent singular responses (that is, agreement always with DP1, the kind of pattern that we find in English); no one gave only plural responses. There did not seem to be any clear nonlinguistic correlate of this difference between speakers—that is, it did not appear to correlate with age, gender, or hometown. It is important to bear in mind, however, that since each participant saw only a single exemplar of each of the six conditions, we cannot tell whether individual Faroese speakers may exhibit variability *within* a particular condition.

From these results we can see that DP2 agreement for number in specificational sentences is possible in Faroese, although for no speaker is it invariant. We can also see that agreement with DP2 is largely independent of Verb Second (V2), since, in Condition C, DP2 agreement also shows up in embedded *wh*-clauses (a context which essentially excludes V2 in Faroese, as in the other Scandinavian languages). This is important because in a root clause like (10a), just based on the string there is no straightforward way to distinguish between a derivation where DP2 is in the canonical subject position, with DP1 having “topicalized” past it, and a “specificational” derivation where DP2 is not in the “canonical” subject position. That is, in a V2 language a sentence like (12) could correspond either to English (13a) or (12b) :

(12) DP1 is DP2.

- (13) a. DP1, DP2 is <DP1>. (*The most likely candidate, Joanna is.*)  
 b. DP1 is DP2. (*The most likely candidate is Joanna.*)

There are various ways of ruling out the “predicate topicalization” derivation (see Mikkelsen 2002); here this was done by including the embedded interrogative context, where such topicalization is excluded, or at least restricted.

Strikingly, however, we see that this agreement appears to be highly disfavoured—or possibly even excluded—when DP1 intervenes in the surface string between the verb and DP2; that is, in Condition D, a main clause where the initial position is occupied by an adjunct. This is a pattern which has been observed for Dutch and German to a greater or lesser extent in Hartmann and Heycock (2014), for now we defer discussion of this effect until we have looked at the comparable data from Icelandic.

In this paper we will not discuss the other factor that strongly favours DP1 agreement—the presence of a modal (Conditions E and F)—see Heycock (2012), and we will also have little to say about the effect of an intervening ad-

verbial (Condition B), beyond noting the possibly related effect documented for other types of low nominatives in Icelandic in Thráinsson et al. (2015).

#### **4. Specificational agreement in Icelandic: Number**

##### *4.1. Introduction*

As outlined in Section 1 above, despite the large volume of work on agreement with “low” nominatives in Icelandic, there has been very little attention paid to agreement patterns in specificational sentences. In our first experiment on Icelandic we aimed to establish whether or not DP2 agreement is possible, and whether it is subject to the same structural constraints as observed for Faroese.

##### *4.2. Conditions and materials*

18 experimental items were constructed, modeled along the lines of the study on Faroese. Items were SCC sentences with the copula replaced with a blank which had to be filled by the participants. Each item was realized in four different conditions, corresponding fairly closely to those described for Faroese in Section 3.1 and exemplified by a sample item in (14). The first condition is the word order of a specificational root clause. The second condition adds an adverbial following the finite verb. The third condition embeds the structure in an embedded interrogative clause. Finally the fourth condition tests the effect of an sentence-initial high adverbial in a root clause, a configuration which forces the finite verb to precede both DPs.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Originally we included two more conditions with a non-finite form of the verb *be* in order to check the influence of modality on agreement, corresponding to Structures E and F in the Faroese experiment. It appeared that the most natural modal for this type of sentence was *geta* ‘may, can.’ However, this modal is followed by the supine form of its complement verb, which is also suitable for perfective forms in Icelandic. As a result, participants filled in both modal verbs and perfective ‘have’. Initial descriptive analysis suggests that there is a difference between these two cases, which we plan to investigate further. However as this distinction between modals and *have* was not a factor in the design, we excluded these two conditions altogether from the statistical analysis, and we will not discuss it any further here.

- (14) A: Root clause: DP1 - \_\_ - DP2 (Main-Reg)  
*Aðalvandamálið* \_\_ *foreldrarnir*  
 main problem.DEF \_\_ parents.DEF
- B: Root clause ADV: DP1 - \_\_ - ADV - DP2 (Main-ADV)  
*Aðalvandamálið* \_\_ *líklega* *foreldrarnir*  
 main problem.DEF \_\_ probably parents.DEF
- C: Embedded question: Q - DP1 - \_\_ - DP2 (Qu-Reg)  
*Sálfræðingarnir spurðu hvort aðalvandamálið* \_\_  
 Psychologists.DEF asked whether main problem-DEF \_\_  
*foreldrarnir*  
 parents.DEF
- D: Root clause with ADV-initial order: ADV - \_\_ - DP1 - DP2 (Main-ADV-initial)  
*Frá mínum sjónarhóli* \_\_ *aðalvandamálið* *foreldrarnir*  
 From my point.of.view \_\_ main problem.DEF parents.DEF

There were sixteen pairs of DPs, listed in (15):<sup>7</sup>

- (15) a. *besti hluti sýningarinnar* / *dansararnir*  
 best part of performance.DEF / dancers-DEF
- b. *helsti veikleiki hans* / *hraðskreiðir bílar*  
 particular weakness his / fast cars
- c. *ástæða refrildisins* / *nokkur úgreiningsefni*  
 cause of argument.DEF / some dispute
- d. *aðalvandamálið* / *foreldrarnir*  
 main problem.DEF / parents.DEF

<sup>7</sup> In the original material there were two additional pair of DPs:

- (i) a. *eldsupptökin* / *kertaljósín*  
 the cause of the fire / candles
- b. *stærstu vonbrigðin* / *öll brostnu loforðin*  
 biggest disappointment.DEF / all broken promises

However, although we intended all the initial DPs to be singular, *eldsupptökin* and *stærstu vonbrigðin* are formally plural in Icelandic. All the responses to these items have therefore been excluded from the analysis reported.

- e. *ástæðan fyrir því að hún fór / háværú nágrannarnir*  
cause-DEF that she left / noisy neighbours-DEF
- f. *það versta við frúð / moskítóflugurnar hræðilegu*  
the worst with holiday.DEF / mosquitos.DEF terrible
- g. *ástæðan fyrir því að honum seinkaði / þessi tvö umferðarslys*  
cause.DEF that him got late / these two traffic accidents
- h. *stærsta ógn siðmenningarinnar / kjarnorkuvopn*  
biggest threat to civilization.DEF / nuclear weapons
- i. *mesti gallinn / hin miklu útgjöld*  
biggest drawback / the great expenses
- j. *aflæiðing of mikils gróðuráburðar / mengaðar ár*  
result too much fertilizer / polluted rivers
- k. *ástæðan fyrir hamingju hennar / gjafirnar frá börnunum*  
cause for happiness hers / gifts.DEF from children.DEF
- l. *ánægjulegasti óvænti atburðurinn / gjafirnar frá vinnufélögum hennar*  
nicest surprise.DEF / gifts.DEF from colleagues her
- m. *það ómerkilegasta við hegðun hans / tilraunir hans til að réttlæta hegðun sína*  
the most underhand with behavior his / attempts his to justify behavior his
- n. *hans aðalhvattning / fjárhagslegu ávinningarnir*  
his main motivation / financial gains.DEF
- o. *hápunktur sögunnar / morðin tvö*  
climax.DEF story / murders two
- p. *mesta framförin / kauphækkarnirnar*  
biggest improvement / pay rises.DEF

#### 4.3. Procedure and participants

The test sentences were distributed across six lists in a Latin Square design, and intermixed with 27 fillers. The experiment was implemented in the On-Exp software and run via the web, with participants recruited on a personal basis and invited to take part in a lottery for internet gift vouchers. Items and fillers were randomized individually for each participant. Participants were



presented with individual sentences on the screen; their task was to fill in the blank in the sentence with a word of their choice. The expectation was that experimental items with two nominative NPs were most likely to be combined with the copula *be*.

#### 4.4. *Data treatment and results*

The words filled in by participants were classified according to their number, and irrelevant (non-)copula entries were excluded (32 missing values out of 864 test cases). In the next step the data was coded as DP1 agreement (singular; coded as 1) or DP2 agreement (plural; coded as 0), or as missing data (everything else). This last option includes cases in which participants provided two options in a single blank, ambiguous forms, or more than one word.<sup>8</sup> The raw results per condition are given in Table 3.

[@@Insert Table 3 here.]

Valid data (1 or 0) were aggregated for each participant (F1) or item (F2) within each condition. As a result of the aggregation, we had relative frequencies of DP1 agreement per participant and item for each individual condition; a value is 1 if the respective participant or person provided DP1 agreement three times, 0 if DP2 agreement was provided 3 times and in-between values (0.33,0.5,0.67) for variation between the two. The resulting relative frequencies of copulas in agreement with DP1 ( $f$ ) were transformed as usual— $\arcsine(\text{square-root}(f))$ —and subjected to repeated-measures ANOVAs with participant (F1) or item (F2) as random factor.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Note that, because we excluded cases where participants had given two options, our counts may underestimate the amount of intra-speaker variability in agreement choice.

<sup>9</sup>A repeated-measures ANOVA calculates whether the differences between several values (here the  $f$ -transformed relative frequencies of a response per participant or item) can be considered to be influenced by the independent variable (here our conditions A-D). If the  $p$ -value is smaller than .05, it is unlikely that the observed differences are due to chance, and the null hypothesis, namely that there is no difference, can be rejected. Results are usually reported by providing  $F$ -values per participant (F1) and per item (F2). This means that the

Agreement is significantly influenced by condition:  $F1(3,204) = 100.22$ ,  $MSe = .173$ ,  $p < .001$ ;  $F2(3,45) = 226.5$ ,  $MSe = .014$ ,  $p < .001$ . We computed three contrasts for planned comparisons within the four-level factor condition. The first contrast tested the influence of an intervening adverbial by comparing condition A (DP1 - V - DP2) with condition B (DP1 - V - ADV - DP2); the second contrast checked the influence of embedding in a non-V2 context by comparing condition A with condition C (C - DP1 - V - DP2); the third determined the effect of a surface word order where the copula precedes both DP1 and DP2 by comparing condition B with condition D (ADV - V - DP1 - DP2). The results for the comparisons are summarized in Table 4 (three participants had to be excluded as they had a missing value for at least one of the conditions).<sup>10</sup>

[@@Insert Table 4 here.]

As can be verified in Table 4 (together with Table 3), the addition of an adverb intervening between the copula and DP2 leads to an increase in DP1 agreement (condition A vs. condition B). If the adverb is in first position in a root clause, forcing an order where the finite copula precedes both DP1 and DP2, the preference for DP1 order is much more pronounced (condition B vs. D). On the other hand, the effect of embedding in a non-V2 context is not significant at the  $p=.05$  level.

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data points are aggregated/averaged by participants or by items per condition before statistical tests are applied. The degrees of freedom are given in brackets. They indicate the data points whose values are free to vary. The first number is the between-group degrees of freedom, the second number the within-group degrees of freedom. The F-value  $F1(3,204)$  below means that we calculated 3 contrasts for 69 participants ( $204=3 \times (69-1)$ ).  $F2(3,45)$  means that there were three contrasts calculated over 16 items ( $45=3 \times (16-1)$ ). Additionally we provide the Mean Squared Error (MSe) which is a measure for the size of the variance in the data we find. The smaller the number, the smaller the average deviation from the mean (less variance).

<sup>10</sup>We provide F-values per participants (F1) and items (F2), as well as Mean Squared Error (MSe) in the table (see footnote 9 for some explanation). Significance levels are indicated as follows: \*\*\*  $p < .001$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*  $p < .05$ ; not significant (ns)  $p > .05$ . Note that the p-values for the contrast for A vs. C are  $p=.07$  for participants (F1) and  $p=.06$  for items (F2).

One important further observation is that we find considerable intra- and inter-speaker variation in the data, as shown in Table 5.

[@@Insert Table 5 here.]

Recall that in this experiment (in contrast to the corresponding Faroese experiment) each speaker saw 3 examples of each condition. We therefore tabulated, for each condition, the extent to which speakers were consistent across the 3 examples of that condition. As can be seen from the table, there is a significant amount of intra-speaker variation even when the syntactic structure is held constant in this way: in each condition (except condition D) about one-third of the speakers produced both DP1 and DP2 agreement. Nevertheless there is a group of 25 speakers—again, about one-third of the total—who consistently showed DP2 agreement in the conditions without an adverb (A and C); of these, 14 also showed consistent DP2 agreement in Condition B. Note, however, that all of these speakers switch to variable agreement or DP1 agreement in condition D, i.e. there is not a single speaker who produced exclusively DP2 agreement in the adverb initial word order. There are only seven speakers who consistently produced DP1 Agreement in conditions A and C, of which six also produced consistently DP1 agreement in condition B.

#### 4.5. *Summary and preliminary discussion*

The results from this study show first of all that a comfortable majority of Icelandic speakers do allow agreement in number with DP2 in this type of sentence, *contra* what has been suggested—usually only in passing—in the literature to date (Sigurðsson 1996, Sigurðsson and Holmberg 2008). As was the case for Faroese, this agreement cannot be accounted for as the result of A'-movement of a predicative DP to the absolute clause-initial position, with agreement then being established in the normal way between the finite

verb and DP2 in the “canonical” subject position. As discussed above with reference to (12)–(13), such an account is ruled out since DP2 agreement is equally favoured when the copular clause is an embedded interrogative, a context which generally disallows embedded V2 also in Icelandic. The independence of DP2 agreement and V2 is in fact established even more clearly for Icelandic than for Faroese, given that in Icelandic the planned comparison between root clause and embedded question showed no significant difference in the preference for DP2 agreement (see the comparison between conditions A and C in Table 4 above).

Second, in contrast to what has been reported for DP2 agreement in identificational clauses in Icelandic (copular clauses where DP1 is the singular neuter pronoun or a singular neuter demonstrative; see Section 1), there does however seem to be a significant degree of variation—both inter- and intra-speaker—in the agreement found in these specificational clauses.<sup>11</sup> As can be seen from the results in the last section, this variation is of different types.

- There is *inter-speaker* variation: for example, 14 speakers show consistent DP2 agreement in conditions A–C, while only three show consistent DP1 agreement.
- Not all of the variation visible in the data can be attributed to inter-speaker variation, however: even keeping the syntactic environment constant, in each condition about one third of all participants showed variation in their choice of agreement (one type of *intra-speaker* variation). Thus the variation in the data is not just the result of pooling data from speakers of distinct but invariant dialects.
- As in the Faroese case, we also see another type of intra-speaker variation:

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<sup>11</sup>As far as we are aware, no quantitative data has been reported concerning the lack of variability in DP2 agreement in identificational clauses in Icelandic asserted in e.g. Sigurðsson and Holmberg (2008), so no direct comparison can be made.

*linguistically conditioned* variation. In particular, the configuration in condition D, where an initial adverb forces the finite copula to precede both DP1 and DP2, strongly favours DP1 agreement. As shown in Table 3, the overall rate of DP1 agreement in this condition is 98%; further, even speakers who in all other conditions consistently chose DP2 agreement here chose DP1 agreement for at least some sentences. This replicates what was observed in Faroese; a very similar effect shows up in both Dutch and German (Hartmann and Heycock 2014).

As we have indicated, the way the Icelandic data were collected gives more possibilities for variation to be detected than was the case for Faroese; thus the two sets of data are not strictly comparable. With that caveat, comparing the Faroese results in Table 2 with the Icelandic ones in Table 3 it appears that the two languages show broadly similar possibilities for number agreement in these copular sentences. Overall, agreement with DP2 is strongly evidenced, both in V2 and non-V2 contexts; but in both languages this option is heavily disfavored when the verb precedes both nominals. On the other hand, it appears that in Icelandic the preference for DP2 agreement may be stronger than it is in Faroese.

## 5. Specificational agreement in Icelandic: Person

### 5.1. Introduction

All the Faroese and Icelandic data discussed above concern *Number* agreement only: specifically, configurations where DP1 is singular and DP2 plural.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> An obvious question that arises is what would happen in the opposite case of number disagreement, i.e. specificational sentences where DP1 is plural and DP2 singular. In general it is hard to construct such cases; however it appears that Icelandic has some *pluralia tantum* which could function as DP1 in a specificational sentence with a singular DP2—one example is *upptök* ‘source, cause,’ mentioned already in footnote 7. We learned about these items after we had gathered the data for this paper; we plan to include such cases in future work.

In recent work (den Dikken 2014) it has been argued that agreement in person with a low DP2 in specificational sentences is predicted to be excluded, as a violation of Baker’s (2008) SCOPA generalisation that agreement for person is more local than agreement for number, and can essentially only take place in a Specifier–Head relation:

(16) *Structural Condition on Person Agreement (SCOPA)*

A functional category F can bear the features +1 or +2 if and only if a projection of F merges with a phrase that has that feature, and F is taken as the label for the resulting phrase.

(Baker 2008, 52)

Den Dikken argues that this prediction is borne out in Dutch, where he states that specificational sentences with 1st or 2nd person pronouns as DP2 are simply excluded in all cases where there is distinct agreement morphology for these persons (however, see Hartmann and Heycock 2014 for indications that this is not the case for all speakers). There is already reason to believe that DP2 agreement in Icelandic may follow a different pattern than the one that den Dikken reports for Dutch, however, as clefts and reduced clefts introduced by the 3rd neuter singular pronoun *het* in Dutch do not allow for DP2 agreement in person, while such agreement is fully grammatical in Icelandic (Sigurðsson 1996):<sup>13</sup>

- (17) a. *het* {*\*ben/\*is*} *ik* den Dikken (2014)  
 it \*am.1SG/\*is.3SG I.NOM  
 ‘It is me.’
- b. *het* {*\*ben/\*is*} *jij*  
 it \*are.2SG/\*is.3SG you.SG.NOM  
 ‘It is you.’
- c. *het is* {*hij/zij*}  
 it is.3SG. he.3SG/she.3SG

<sup>13</sup>It is however possible that this difference is due to some distinction between Icelandic *það* and Dutch *het*.

‘It is him/her.’

- (18) *Það erum/??er bara við.* Sigurðsson (1996)  
it are.1PL /??is.3SG only we.1PL.NOM  
‘It is only us.’

In order to investigate the possibility for person agreement with DP2 in specificational sentences in Icelandic, we conducted a follow-up experiment, described below. This experiment also allowed us to follow up on another issue concerning the status of DP1.

One proposal for explaining the possibility of DP2 agreement in specificational sentences is that DP1 is a predicative nominal whose  $\phi$ -features are for that reason inaccessible (see for example Bejar and Kahnemuyipour 2014 for an account based on such a proposal, and discussion in Section 6 below). To the extent that an agreeing head is probing for one or other of such features, DP1 will then simply be invisible (along the lines of the account of agreement in identificational sentences in Sigurðsson and Holmberg 2008 discussed above). In the cases we have discussed so far, DP1 has always been (apparently) third person singular. But it is possible to construct specificational sentences where DP1 is plural:

- (19) {The winners/My favourite authors/Her best friends} are DP<sub>Plural</sub>.

Not all specificational subjects (DP1) appear naturally in the plural. Although we have not pursued the distinction systematically, in English at least there seems to be a distinction between nouns that can easily be construed as collective predicates, such as e.g. *problem, cause, inspiration, hope*, and those that can only be construed as predicates of individuals, such as e.g. *winner, author, friend*. The former preferentially appear in the singular when predicated of plural subjects, while the latter must appear in the plural, as illustrated in (20a,b); and as the subjects of specificational sentences (DP1 in our cases) the

former also resist pluralisation, as illustrated in (21a,b):

- (20) a. Those women over there are  
          {the problem(\*s)/the cause(?\*s) of the strike/our only hope(?\*s)}.
- b. Those women over there are  
          {the winner\*(s)/my favourite author\*(s)/my best friend\*(s)}.
- (21) a. {The problem(\*s)/The cause(?\*s) of the strike/Our only hope(?\*s)}  
          is/\*are those women over there.
- b. {The winner\*(s)/My favourite author\*(s)/My best friend\*(s)}  
          \*is/are those women over there.

As a shorthand, we will refer to nouns like *problem* as COLLECTIVE and those like *winner* as DISTRIBUTIVE. Now, if the subject of a specificational sentence has no accessible  $\phi$ -features, we would predict that there should be no effect of that DP being (apparently) singular or plural. That is, if what we have been calling “DP1 agreement” is actually some kind of default agreement, speakers who do not choose DP2 agreement should choose 3rd person singular agreement in the equivalents of both (22a) and (22b):

- (22) a. The winner \_\_\_\_ you<sub>Singular</sub>.
- b. The winners \_\_\_\_ you<sub>Plural</sub>.

As we have just seen, examples like (22b) can only be constructed with distributive DP1s. We would like to exclude the possibility that these might have some different properties from the collective DPs that have to be used to test for the effects of number disagreement between DP1 and DP2 (e.g. {*The problem/\*the winner*} \_\_\_\_ *my parents*). To check for this, we can in addition make a minimal comparison between cases where DP2 is non-3rd person and DP1 is either distributive or collective:



- (23) a. The winner \_\_\_\_ you<sub>Singular</sub>.  
 b. The problem \_\_\_\_ you<sub>Singular</sub>.

Thus in this second experiment we tested also to see whether there was an independent effect of the first DP belonging to the distributive or collective class.

### 5.2. *Conditions and materials*

The experiment tested the influence of number vs. person mismatch in copular clauses in Icelandic of the type *DP be pronoun*. The main questions we are interested in are:

1. When DP2 in a copular clause is non-3rd person, do we find agreement with it
  - a. always?
  - b. variably?
  - c. never?
2. Is there a difference between number and person agreement?
3. Does the type of noun in DP1 (distributive vs. collective) affect agreement options?
4. Do number and person agreement interact?

In order to test for these questions, we had 5 conditions set out in table 6 and illustrated in (24).

[@@Insert Table 6 here.]

- (24) a. *Hann var að velta fyrir sér hvort aðalvandamálið \_\_\_\_ þeir.*  
 he was wondering if main problem.DEF \_\_\_\_ they  
 ‘He was wondering whether the main problem was them.’

- b. *Hann var að velta fyrir sér hvort aðalvandamálið \_\_\_ þú.*  
 he was wondering if main problem.DEF \_\_\_ you.SG  
 ‘He was wondering whether the main problem was you.SG.’
- c. *Hann var að velta fyrir sér hvort líklegasti sigurvegarinn \_\_\_ þú.*  
 he was wondering if most likely winner.DEF \_\_\_  
 þú.  
 you.SG  
 ‘He was wondering whether the most likely winner was you.SG.’
- d. *Hann var að velta fyrir sér hvort aðalvandamálið \_\_\_ þið.*  
 he was wondering if main problem.DEF \_\_\_ you.PL  
 ‘He was wondering whether the main problem was you.PL.’
- e. *Hann var að velta fyrir sér hvort líklegustu sigurvegararnir \_\_\_ þið.*  
 he was wondering if most likely winners.DEF \_\_\_  
 þið.  
 you.PL  
 ‘He was wondering whether the most likely winners were you.PL.’

The 3rd person plural pronoun in the A condition is always masculine (*þeir*) because only the masculine pronoun does not show Nominative/Accusative syncretism in the plural, and if it had been possible to interpret the pronoun as accusative there might have been many alternatives to the copula for filling the blank (ordinary transitive verbs). The non-3rd person pronoun in the other conditions was always 2nd person (*þú(s)/þið(p)*) because the copula *vera* shows 1st/3rd person syncretism in the singular in both tenses in both indicative and subjunctive, so we avoided using 1st person pronouns.

15 test sentences of the type in (24) were constructed, using the DPs listed in (25).

- (25) a. Collective:  
*aðalvandamálið* ‘the main problem’, *upptök orðrómsins* ‘the source of the rumour’, *aðalstuðningur hans* ‘his main support’, *ástæðan fyrir kvíða hans* ‘the reason for his anxiety’, *besta hjálpin* ‘the best (source of) help’, *innblásturinn að skáldsögunni* ‘the inspiration for the novel’, *umræðuefnið* ‘the topic of discussion’, *aðalatriði greinarinnar* ‘the main point of the article’, *orsök truflunarinnar* ‘the cause

of the trouble’, *miðdepill athygli hennar* ‘the center of her attention’, *aðaláhyggjuefni hennar* ‘her primary concern’, *besta heimildin* ‘the best source’, *ástæðan fyrir því að hann vildi búa hér* ‘the reason he wanted to live here’, *eftirlætis viðfangsefni mynda hennar* ‘her favorite subject to depict’, *líklegasta orsök lekans* ‘the most likely source of the leak [metaphorical]’.

b. Distributive:

*líklegustu sigurvegararnir* ‘the most likely winners’, *hávöxnustu manneskjurnar* ‘the tallest people’, *manneskjurnar sem þau voru að leita að* ‘the people they were looking for’, *einu vitnin* ‘the only witnesses’, *konurnar sem gætu virkilega hjálpað henni* ‘the women who could really help her’, *áreiðanlegustu vinir mínir* ‘my most dependable friends’, *sigurvegarar keppinnar* ‘the winners of the contest’, *hinir raunverulegu sérfræðingar* ‘the real experts’, *líklegustu sökudólgarnir* ‘the most likely culprits’, *ýngstu manneskjurnar í herberginu* ‘the youngest people in the room’, *bestu vinir bróður hennar* ‘her brother’s best friends’, *mennirnir sem líklegastir væru til að vita* ‘the men who were most likely to know’, *eftirlætis drykkjufélagar hans* ‘his favorite drinking companions’, *eftirlætis söngvararnir hennar* ‘her favorite singers’, *fálátustu konurnar* ‘the most taciturn women’.

These sentences were distributed across five lists in a Latin Square design. Thus, every participant was tested for each condition three times, but they all saw each lexicalisation only once. Experimental items were intermixed with 24 fillers and randomized for each participant.

### 5.3. Procedure and participants

As for the previous experiment testing number agreement in Icelandic, the experiment was implemented in OnExp on a server hosted in Tübingen and run via the web. Participants were recruited on a personal basis, and incen-

tivised by a lottery of internet vouchers. 75 self-reported native speakers of Icelandic participated in the study. Participants first read the instructions and provided some details on personal and language background. There were 32 male participants and 43 female (57% female). Participants were between 22 and 79 years old with a mean age of 45 years. Before starting the experiment, participants first went through a practice phase to familiarize themselves with the task. They saw individual sentences with a blank which they had to fill in with a word of their own choice.

#### 5.4. *Data treatment and results*

The results presented here are based on the data provided by 75 participants (15 per list). The words filled in by participants were first classified with respect to the number and person of the copula, or missing value if another word was used. In a next step the data was classified as DP1 agreement (coded as 1), or agreement with DP2 (coded as 0) for conditions A–C and E and everything else as missing data.

Condition D had to be treated separately, as participants turned out to have three options: DP1 agreement, DP2 agreement in person and number and DP2 agreement in number only. A typical example is given in (26).

- (26) *Hann var að velta fyrir sér hvort aðalvandamálið væru þið.*  
he was wondering if main problem.DEF **be.3PL** you.PL  
'He was wondering whether the main problem is you.PL'

Condition D was the only configuration that we tested where there was a mismatch for both person and number. There are a number of possible ways of conceptualising the type of agreement illustrated in (26). Firstly, it could be that the copula is agreeing with DP2 in number and DP1 in person. Second, it could be that it is agreeing with DP2 in number but has default person. Because in specificational sentences DP1 is always 3rd person, these two options

can only be distinguished on theoretical, rather than empirical grounds. Note that if the same phenomenon were to occur in cases where there is *only* mismatch in person, as in conditions B, C (3s–2s) and E (3p–2p) the result would be indistinguishable from DP1 agreement. A third possibility, however, is that what looks like partial agreement is actually the result of syncretism in the morphology of 2nd and 3rd person agreement in the plural. In both tenses, and in both indicative and subjunctive, the 2nd person suffix *-ð* occurs outside the plural suffix *-u*; 3rd person is unmarked:

	Ind. Pres.	Ind. Past	Subj. Pres.	Subj. Past
(27)	2 plural: er-u-ð	vor-u-ð	sé-u-ð	væR-u-ð
	3 plural: er-u	vor-u	sé-u	væR-u

Although we are not aware of any discussion of this kind of syncretism in the literature, the final fricative is frequently absent in speech, as part of a more general phenomenon of voiced fricative deletion (see e.g. Helgason 1993, Árnason 2011, Ch. 14). Further, at least sporadically it is also omitted in texts on the web in cases where the only possible agreement controller is the pronoun (e.g. *þið eru farin* ‘you.PL are/have gone,’ *þið séu byrjuð* ‘you.PL are/have.sbj begun,’ *þið voru á leið* ‘you.PL were on your way,’ *þið væru sprautuð* ‘you.PL were.sbj injected’). Some cases can even be found in timarit.is, the internet corpus of Icelandic newspapers and magazines (both observations due to Höskuldur Thráinsson, personal communication). Unfortunately our fillers did not include any cases of 2nd person plural subjects that were not in the five test conditions, so we have no direct way of knowing whether the participants who gave these forms in condition D show signs of syncretism in other contexts; but see below for some further discussion of these cases.

The raw results are given in Table 7, where “DP2Agr(Nr)” refers to the case just described, which in Condition D is recognisable as having the form

of 3rd person plural agreement.

[@@Insert Table 7 here.]

The percentages of DP1 agreement per condition are given in Table 8. Note that for the calculation of the percentage in condition D, both the cases of DP2 agreement for number only and full DP2 agreement in number and person are coded here as DP2 agreement.

[@@Insert Table 8 here.]

As before, valid data (1 or 0) for conditions A–C and E were aggregated for each participant (F1) or item (F2) within each condition;<sup>14</sup> one participant was excluded as s/he did not have any valid data for condition C–E; the resulting relative frequencies of copulas in agreement with DP1 ( $f$ ) were transformed as usual— $\arcsine(\text{square-root}(f))$ —and subjected to repeated-measures ANOVAs with participant (F1) or item (F2) as random factor (see fn 9 for some explication on the statistical procedures).

The agreement (DP1 versus DP2) of the produced copula was significantly influenced by condition ( $F1(3,213)=7.63^{***}$ ,  $F2(3,42)=5.78^{**}$ ). We computed three contrasts for planned comparisons within the four-level factor condition. The statistical results are given in Table 9.<sup>15</sup> The first contrast tested the influence of number mismatch versus person mismatch. We see in the overall data that there are more cases of DP1 agreement when there is a person mismatch (condition B), than when there is a number mismatch (condition A). The second contrast tested the influence of DP1 containing a collective noun (condition B) versus a distributive noun (condition C) when there is

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<sup>14</sup>Note that we excluded condition D from this statistical analysis as it has in effect three values.

<sup>15</sup>Significance levels are provided as before: \*\*\*  $p < .001$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \* $p < .05$ ; not significant (ns)  $p > .05$ .

a mismatch in person between DP1 and DP2. Here the slight numerical difference is not significant (ns). The third contrast checked the influence of person mismatch in the singular (condition C) vs. plural (condition E), again, we do not see a significant difference between the two.

[@@Insert Table 9 here.]

As with the previous experiment, we observed both inter-speaker and intra-speaker variation: see Table 10. If we investigate the behavior of individuals, we find that there are 8 speakers who consistently show DP1 agreement across conditions A–C and E, and 7 speakers who show consistently DP2 agreement in these conditions (55 participants show variable agreement, 3 missing values).

[@@Insert Table 10 here.]

In order to investigate and model the pattern of variation we find in the data, we divided participants into hypothesized dialect groups based on their responses in condition D, the condition where there was mismatch between DP1 and DP2 in both number and person. The four groups are listed in (28):

(28) *Groups based on responses in Condition D:*

Group I: consistent full DP2 agreement (n = 19)

Group II: consistent full DP1 agreement (n=13)

Group III: consistent number-only DP2 agreement (n=14)

Group IV: variable agreement (n= 26)

Then we subjected the data to a repeated-measures ANOVA with four levels (Condition 1, 2, 3, and 5) and the participant group as between-subjects factor. There is a main effect for condition  $F(1,67)=11.51$ ,  $p < .01$ , for participant group ( $F(4,67)=14.48$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and, importantly, we find an interaction

between the two factors ( $F(4,67)=22.88$   $p < .0001$ ). That is to say, there were differences between the dialect groups in how they responded in at least some of the other conditions also. The details of this interaction can be seen in Table 11, which shows the average preference for DP1 agreement in the individual groups, based on the untransformed means, ie. the higher the value, the higher the number of times DP1 agreement is chosen in that condition by participants in that group.

[@@@Insert Table 11 here.]

The smaller differences in Group II and Group IV do not lead to a significant main effect for the four conditions (Group II:  $F(3,36) < 1$ ; Group IV:  $F(3,72) < 1$ ). That is to say, speakers who consistently chose DP1 agreement in condition 4 (Group II) show a strong, and fairly consistent, tendency to make the same choice in all the other conditions. Similarly, speakers who were variable in their agreement choice in condition D choose DP1 and DP2 agreement at roughly equal frequency (on average) across all the other conditions. The two interesting groups that show more variation are Group I (those who showed consistent full DP2 agreement in condition D) and Group III (those who showed consistent number-only DP2 agreement in condition D).

For group I we see a significant main effect  $F(3,54) = 3.79$ ,  $p < .05$ , which means that there are significant differences between individual conditions in this group. This main effect results from the difference between number (Condition A) vs. person mismatch (Condition B) ( $t(18) = -2.5$   $p < .025$ ). The other relevant contrasts, i.e. singular vs. plural (C vs. E) and concrete vs. abstract (B vs. C) are not significant. As this is the group that showed consistent DP2 agreement in condition D, it is unsurprising that they show very little DP1 agreement in condition A (mismatch in number only). Thus, the surprising effect is that this group has a higher rate of DP1 agreement in Condition B (and C for that matter). There are 3 participants in group I that consistently



provided DP1 agreement for condition B and C. Whether this is true DP1 agreement, or number-only agreement with DP2 is not obvious, as these two options fall together in this condition. Furthermore, it is not clear whether this is linguistically conditioned variation, so that there is a true difference between number and person mismatch for this subgroup of group I, or whether this is part of the more general intra-speaker variation.

Group III also shows a significant main effect ( $F(3,39) = 30.74, p < .001$ ). For Group III the difference between mismatch in number and mismatch in person is significant (Condition A vs. B,  $t(13) = -3.68, p < .005$ ), as is the difference between singular and plural (condition C vs. E,  $t(13) = -3.63, p < .005$ ). That is, there is more DP1 agreement when the mismatch between DP1 and DP2 is one of person (DP2 2nd person) rather than number (DP2 plural); and within the cases where DP2 is 2nd person, there is more DP1 agreement when both DPs are plural than when they are both singular.

This result might be surprising on first sight. However, recall that this group's defining feature is that they consistently show number-only DP2 agreement (when DP1 was 3rd singular and DP2 2nd plural, this is the group that provided 3rd plural agreement for all three examples). So in fact this group's almost entirely consistent choice of DP2 agreement in condition 1 (where DP1 is 3rd singular and DP2 is 3rd plural) is as expected. There is no person mismatch, so "full" DP2 agreement in this case is only for Number. Considering the choices in conditions B, C, and E, where there is person mismatch, we should consider what should be expected under the two possible types of interpretation of the number-only pattern that this group showed in condition D—as partial agreement (for number but not person), on the one hand, or as full agreement + morphological syncretism, on the other:

- **3rd person agreement with 2nd person DP2 as partial agreement** (DP2 agreement for number but not person).

Under this hypothesis, the simplest assumption would be that partial agreement should take place in the singular in the same way as in the plural. Since in conditions B, C, and E partial agreement would be indistinguishable from DP1 agreement (and hence coded as such), we would expect the rate of DP1 agreement shown by this group in conditions B, C, and E to be around 100%.

- **3rd person agreement with 2nd person DP2 as full DP2 agreement + syncretism.**

Under this hypothesis, we would expect to find different agreement in the singular conditions (B and C) on the one hand, and the plural condition E on the other. In conditions B and C we should find full agreement with DP2, hence 0% DP1 agreement; in condition E we would again expect to find the syncretic plural form, which in this case would look like 100% DP1 agreement.<sup>16</sup>

As can be seen from Table 11, the prediction that follows from both hypotheses with respect to the agreement that this group will produce in condition 5 is borne out: 100% apparent 3rd person agreement. On the other hand, the results for conditions B and C (50% and 59% apparent 3rd person agreement, respectively) are not consistent with either hypothesis taken on its own: the rate of DP1 agreement is too low if these speakers consistently show partial agreement; it is too high if these speakers consistently show full DP2 agreement, concealed only by syncretism in the plural. In the absence of further data, it appears that the figures are best explained by a combination of the two hypotheses. That is, some cases of 3rd person plural agreement in condition D are due to partial agreement with DP2, and some are due to full agreement disguised by syncretism. Under this scenario, the apparent DP1 agreement

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<sup>16</sup>Of course, this is under the assumption that there is not also syncretism between 2nd and 3rd person in the singular of *vera* 'be' in any tense/mood that was used. As far as we know this has never been suggested, but it is something that should be checked in further work.

that this group produces in conditions B and C reflects true partial agreement; it is not as high as the 100% apparent DP1 agreement in condition E, or this group's rate of partial agreement in condition D (100% —in this case by definition, as this was the criterion for establishing this group) because those figures also include cases of full agreement, disguised by syncretism.<sup>17</sup>

### 5.5. *Summary and discussion*

First of all, these results show that agreement for number and person with DP2 is possible in Icelandic, at least for some speakers. This is an important result, as it contrasts with what is found in nominative object agreement, and D/NcI Agreement (see Section 1).<sup>18</sup> We believe that this kind of agreement is possible also in German; as indicated above, there is some unclarity about the situation in Dutch. Person agreement with DP2 is of particular interest because it poses at least a *prima facie* challenge to Baker's SCOPA generalisation (see Section 5.1). Further, this person agreement is possible for at least some speakers even when DP1 is not only a contentful nominal (as is the case with all the specificational sentences we tested, in contrast to the kind of identificational sentences illustrated in (4) above), but even when it is plural; in fact, our results showed that a plural DP1 is no more or less likely to control agreement than a singular, confirming the hypothesis stated already

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<sup>17</sup>There is of course also the possibility that there are instances of morphological syncretism in the singular. We believe that there is reason to think that even if this is the case, we still cannot account for the patterns in our data without assuming the existence of partial agreement. However, at this point we believe that the correct move is to defer discussion of such a scenario until we have gathered more direct evidence concerning these hypothesized syncretisms, as we hope to do in projected research.

<sup>18</sup>There is one caveat here, and that is that this was a forced-choice production experiment. That is, we cannot directly exclude the possibility that speakers find *all* agreement options in these sentences ungrammatical. To exclude this possibility entirely we would have to supplement this production experiment with a judgment task; such an extension of this work is part of our plan for future research. However, all participants had the option to leave comments at the end of the experiment; some noted spelling errors or commented on other aspects of the sentences, but no one stated that there were cases where there was no possible option for them. Further, a number of speakers who we have contacted informally have corroborated our impression that these specificational sentences with non-3rd person DP2s are indeed grammatical for them.

in Heycock (2012), Hartmann and Heycock (2014) on the basis of data from other languages, that 3rd person singular agreement in these specificational sentences is not a “default.” Similarly, there is no effect of DP1 being “distributive” or “collective.”

Second, we have seen that there is a considerable amount of variation within Icelandic also concerning person agreement in these sentences. Some speakers always produce DP1 agreement, some speakers DP2 agreement, but a large group of speakers shows some variability, albeit often with a preference in one direction or another.<sup>19</sup> Further, we have observed that in fact the choices are not as simple as DP1 agreement vs. DP2 agreement. When DP2 disagrees with DP1 in both number and person, there are three outcomes: DP1 agreement, full DP2 agreement and number-only DP2 agreement. Superficially we observe that a mismatch in person agreement increases the production of DP1 agreement forms (see the planned comparison between conditions A and B, reported in Table 9). However, as we have seen, in condition B it is not possible to distinguish between speakers who show DP1 agreement and those who actually do partial agreement and/or exhibit syncretism, as these options conflate in this condition. Thus the statistically significant result of difference between person agreement and number agreement boils down to the fact that in the person agreement case, there is a distinguishable third option.

Third, we have concluded, albeit somewhat tentatively, that the third pattern just described (apparent agreement in number, but not person, with DP2) is partly due to occasional morphological syncretism between 2nd and 3rd person agreement marking in the plural, but partly due to a true partial agreement option: number agreement with DP2 in the absence of person agreement.

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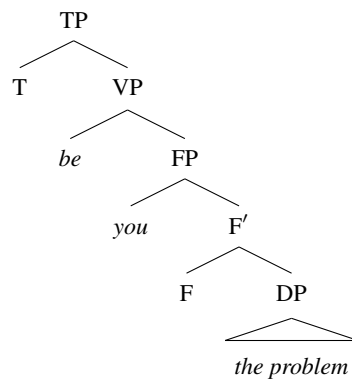
<sup>19</sup>Again, because this was a production task, and each speaker had produced only three tokens for each condition, we cannot reliably distinguish between a strong preference for one option and the lack of a grammatical alternative; we intend to explore this in a planned judgment experiment.

## 6. Accounting for agreement in specificational sentences

### 6.1. Different landing sites for DP1

In Heycock (2012), Hartmann and Heycock (2014), we have argued that DP2 agreement arises in specificational sentences when a language allows DP1 to move directly to a position above Tense, taken to be the locus of agreement. That is, following many researchers, notably Heggie (1988), Moro (1991, 1997), den Dikken (1993, 2006a), Mikkelsen (2005), we assume that the underlying structure of a specificational sentence involves a small clause headed by some functional element F in which the referential DP is the subject, and the DP that will eventually move to initial position (DP1) the predicate<sup>20</sup>, as sketched in (29):

(29)



The characteristic of specificational sentences is that it is the lower DP within the small clause that moves to the subject position of TP, rather than the

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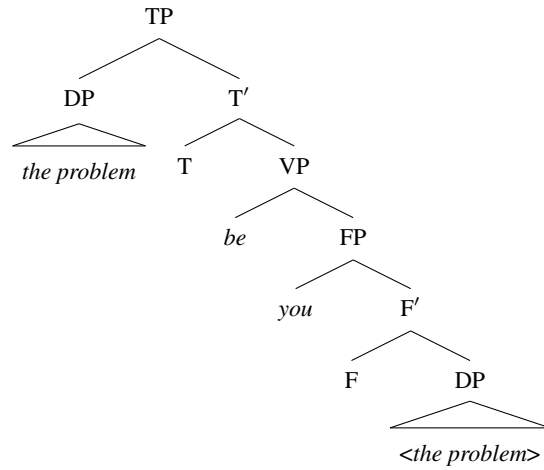
<sup>20</sup>We actually follow Romero (2005, 2007) in taking the non-referential DP to have the type of a concealed question—a noun phrase that is interpreted as (the answer to) a question, rather than a referring expression. This is the type of interpretation that *the winner* receives in (ia), which has a reading similar to (ib)

- (i) a. If you correctly guess the winner, I will give you €10.
- b. If you correctly guess {who won/who is the winner}, I will give you €10.

We also assume, following den Dikken (2006a) that the movement of the lower DP out of the small clause headed by the functional head F is only possible when this (null) head moves to adjoin to *be*; see Heycock (2012) for discussion of both these points, which for reasons of space we do not discuss here.

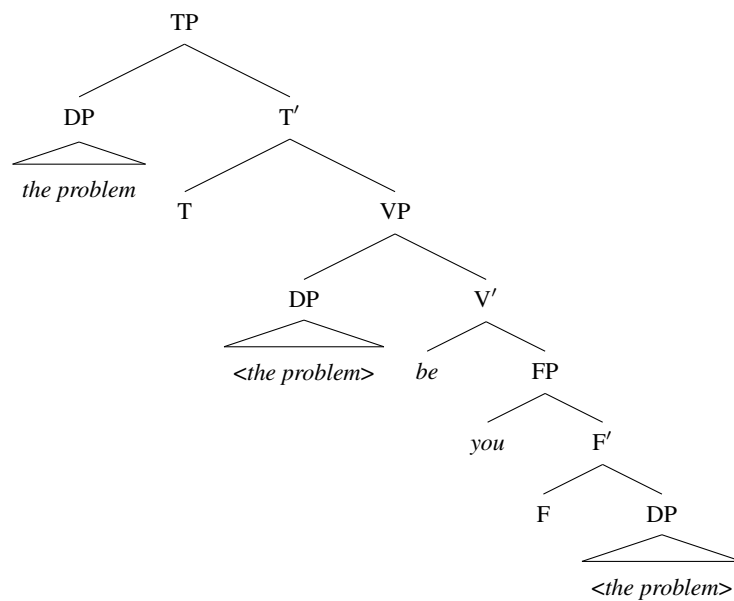
higher (in (30) and following trees, angle brackets indicate traces/copies left by movement):

(30)



We further assume that T looks *downward* for a nominal with which to agree. Given these assumptions, the structure in (30) will always yield DP2 agreement. However, in Heycock (2012) it is suggested that there may also be an intermediate landing site: the specifier of the projection headed by *be*. If the lower DP moves to Spec,TP via this position, it will be the closer of the two DPs to T as T searches down the tree for a DP with which to agree: the result will then be DP1 agreement.

(31)



In English this latter type of derivation appears to be the only option; in Heycock (2012) it is speculated that this is the result of some restriction that limits movement to the specifier of a finite TP in English to items with which T is already in a relation of agreement.<sup>21</sup> In other languages, however, there may be no such restriction. In German and—to a lesser extent—Dutch, phrases may reach this position via a process of scrambling: see Hartmann and Heycock (2014) for discussion. While Faroese and Icelandic do not allow scrambling, we know that Spec,TP is not restricted in the same way that it is in English. For one, in certain circumstances it may remain unfilled (or be filled by a “null/empty expletive”): see Thráinsson (2007), pp. 480*ff.*, Thráinsson et al. (2004), pp. 286*ff.* More importantly, it can be occupied by an element with which finite T does not agree; this is evidenced by the existence of non-nominative subjects in both languages (see Nowenstein and Jónsson, both this volume, and references there), and also by the possibility of stylistic fronting (see Angantýsson and Sigurðsson, both this volume). Thus we take it that a derivation such as that sketched in (30) is available for both languages (although, as we have also seen, the English-type pattern also occurs in the usage of at least some speakers). It was noted in Heycock (2012) that the use of both null expletives and stylistic fronting in Faroese seems to be on the decline; this might indicate a change in the status of the Spec,TP position that is reflected also in the lower rates of DP2 agreement (by hypothesis, requiring the derivation in (30)) compared to Icelandic.

## 6.2. *Agreement features in Comp*

In addition to both allowing DP2 agreement for number—albeit not to the same extent—Faroese and Icelandic are also similar in the striking shift in preference to DP1 agreement when the copula comes to precede both DP1

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<sup>21</sup>We note that this leaves the derivation of locative inversion as an open question, however.

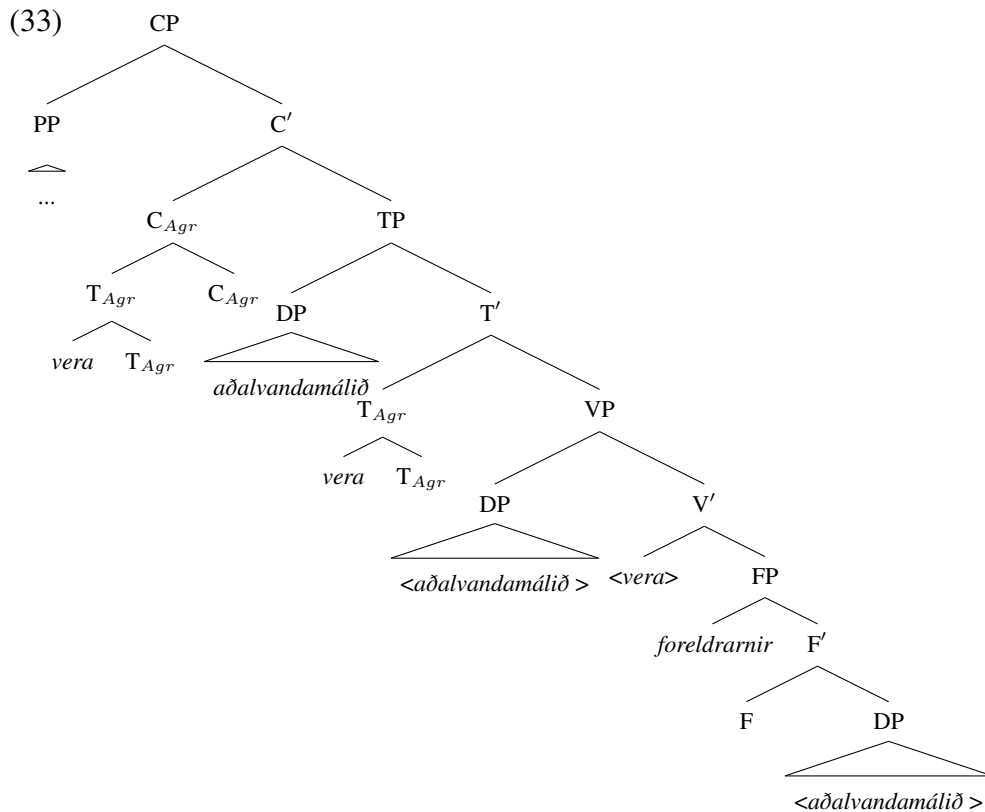
and DP2 as a result of some other constituent occupying the initial position in a root clause. This was the structure tested in Condition D in both the Faroese and Icelandic experiments on number agreement; we repeat two examples here:

- (32) a. *Eftir mínari meining \_\_\_\_ orsøkin til eldin tey brennandi*  
 In my opinion cause.DEF of fire.DEF the burning  
*kertiljósini í stovuni. (Faroese)*  
 candles.DEF in lounge.DEF  
 ‘In my opinion, the cause of the fire \_\_\_\_ the burning candles in the lounge.’
- b. *Frá mínum sjónarhóli \_\_\_\_ aðalvandamálið foreldrarnir*  
 From my point.of.view \_\_\_\_ main problem.DEF parents.DEF  
 (Icelandic)  
 ‘From my point of view, the main problem \_\_\_\_ the parents.’

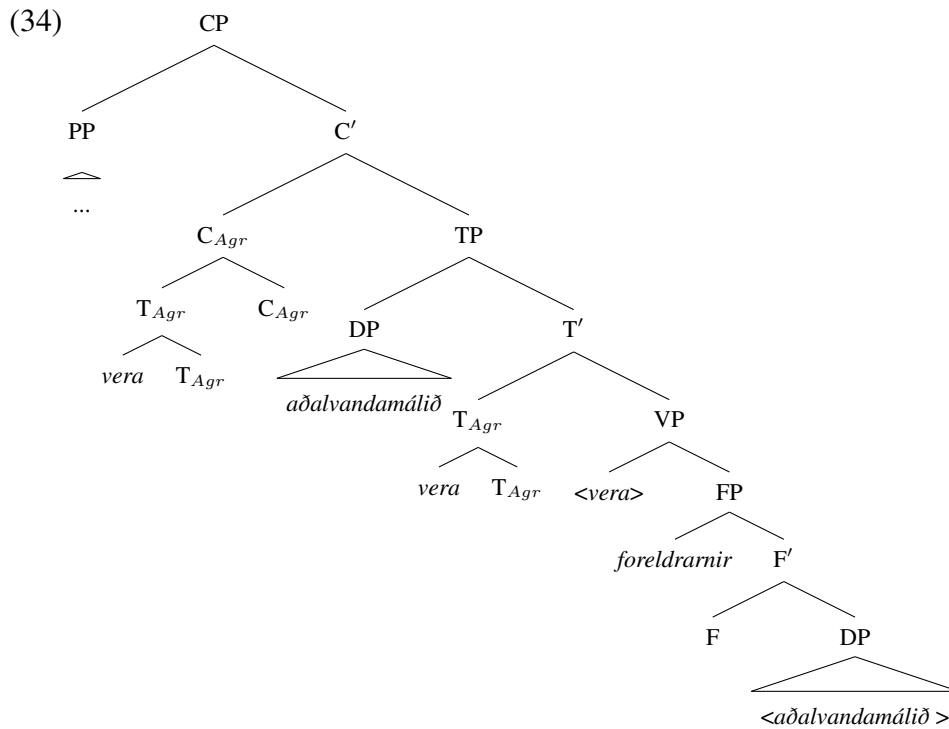
In this structure, the preference for DP1 agreement was virtually categorical in Faroese (see Table 2); in Icelandic DP1 agreement occurred at a rate of 88%, to be contrasted with a clear preference for DP2 agreement in all other conditions (see Table 3). This shift in preferences is consistent with what we have also found in both Dutch and German. In Hartmann and Heycock (2014) we argue that in these Germanic languages there is a second location for agreement (a “probe”) located in the Complementizer position that hosts the verb in a V2 structure. That this is possible is already known from the occurrence of overt complementizer agreement in a number of Germanic varieties (see for example Ackema and Neeleman 2004 and references therein); what we claim is that the phenomenon is more widespread where the agreement is realised on a verb that moves to C, rather than on an overt complementizer. Generally, the nominal that is the candidate closest to T will also end up closest to C, and hence both instances of agreement coincide. This will be the case for some of the copular structures we have been considering also, as long as DP1 moves



to Spec,TP via Spec, VP (the configuration which, we have argued, results in DP1 agreement). (33) shows such a derivation: notice that DP1 (*aðalvandamálið* ‘the main problem’) moves first to a position immediately below T, where it will be the first DP that T finds to agree with; it then moves to Spec,TP, where it stands in the same relation to the agreement features in C.



Suppose, however, that DP1 instead moves directly to Spec,TP—a derivation which we have argued will result in DP2 agreement. In this case DP1 is closest to C, but DP2 is closest to T:



In this case there is competition for which agreement should be realised on the finite verb in C: it appears that although this choice is not determinate (at least for Icelandic, Dutch and German), there is a strong tendency for the morphology to reflect the syntactic agreement between C and DP1.

On the assumption that a root clause where DP1 is in absolute initial position in a V2 language is a CP, the most plausible derivation involves DP1 transiting Spec,TP on its way to Spec,CP.<sup>22</sup> It might then appear that this proposal incorrectly predicts the same high rate for DP1 agreement in structures where DP1 is in absolute initial position in a root clause, as for examples in Condition A in the Faroese and Icelandic experiments on number agreement, illustrated in (35).

- (35) a. *Orsøkin til eldin \_\_\_ tey brennandi kertiljósini í*  
cause-DEF of fire-DEF the burning candles-DEF in  
*stovuni.* (Faroese)  
lounge-DEF  
‘The cause of the fire \_\_\_ the burning candles in the lounge.’

<sup>22</sup>If it is assumed that subject-initial root clauses are simply TPs, there is simply no issue here.

- b. *Aðalvandamálið* \_\_\_ *foreldrarnir* (Icelandic)  
 main problem-DEF \_\_\_ parents-DEF  
 ‘The main problem \_\_\_ the parents’

However, it is well-attested that agreement from C typically requires a surface configuration in which the agreeing head is left-adjacent to the goal of agreement (Ackema and Neeleman 2004). This requirement—whatever its source—is satisfied in examples like (32), where DP1 remains in Spec,TP, but not in examples like those in (35), where it moves further up in the structure. Thus the special status of the configuration where the finite verb is in C, immediately left-adjacent to DP1 in Spec,TP, is consistent with our analysis.

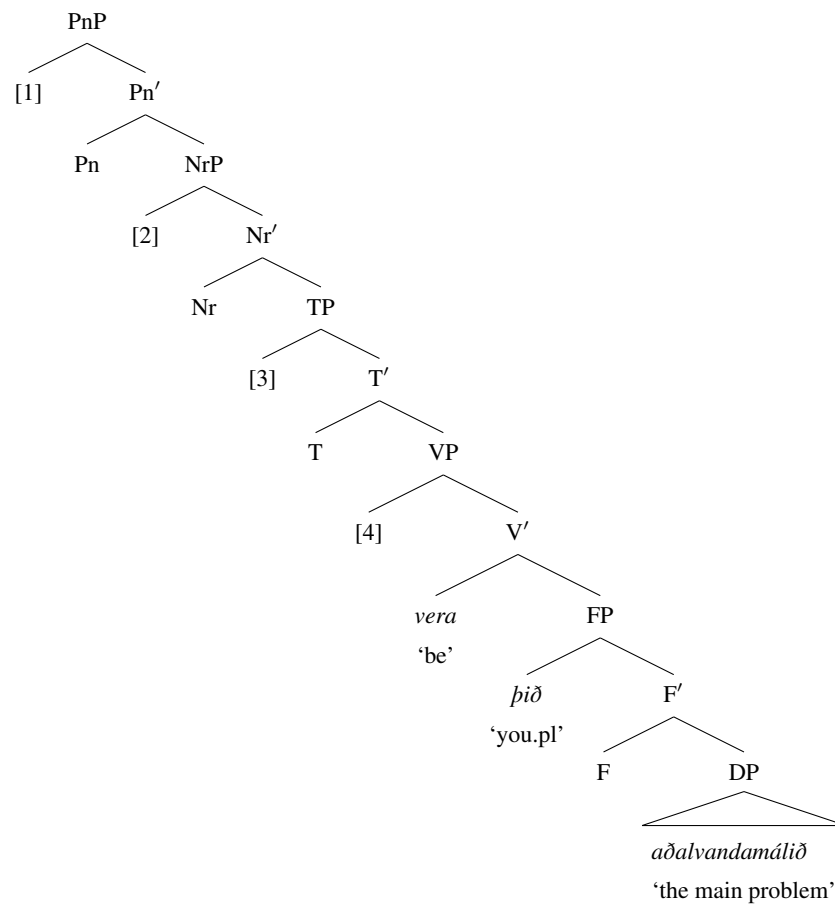
### 6.3. *Partial agreement*

As it stands, the analysis that we have given so far does not offer any account of the possibility for partial agreement that we have suggested above may be possible in Icelandic: that, is, agreement with DP2 in number, but not person. We propose that the most promising avenue to explore here is the proposal made in Sigurðsson and Holmberg (2008) that in Icelandic Person and Number are distinct heads, with Person the higher of the two, and both located above Tense. Sigurðsson and Holmberg (2008) provide the clausal skeleton in (36)—their (20)—for the Dat/Nom constructions that are the focus of their paper:

- (36) [<sub>CP</sub> ... Top ... Fin ... [<sub>TP</sub> ... Pn ... Nr ... T ... v ... DAT ... NOM ]]

Given this proposal concerning Person and Number, there are now multiple positions to which the initially lower DP may move, labelled 1–4 in the schematic tree in (37).

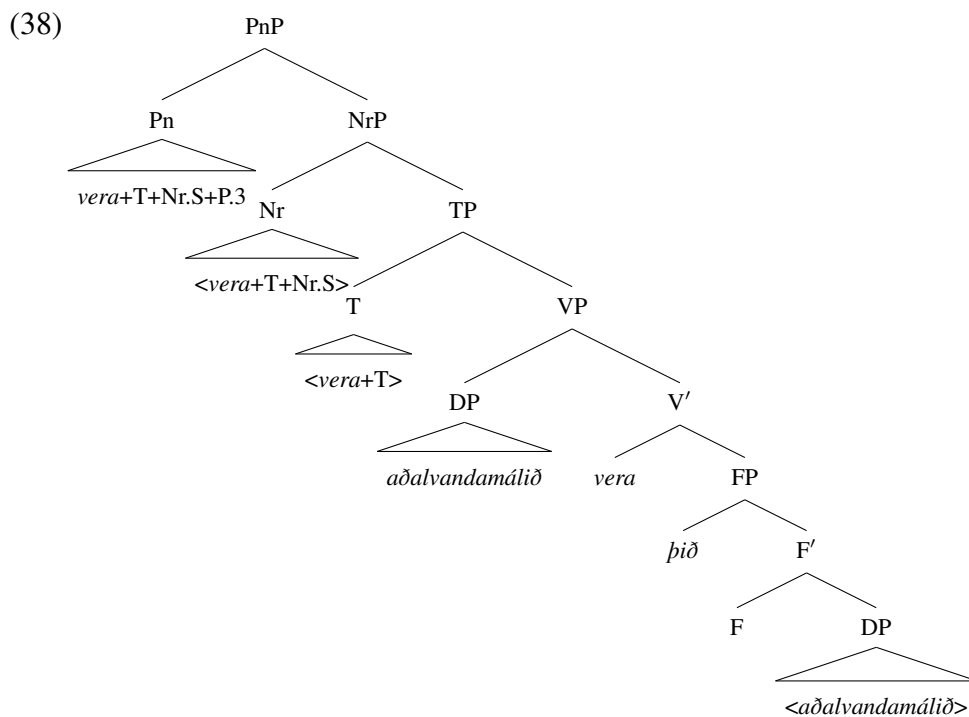
(37)



We further adopt the assumption from Sigurðsson and Holmberg (2008) that Number and Person agreement are established as soon as the Verb+T complex moves to adjoin to the Number and Person heads, respectively (in Minimalist terminology, T probes for Number/Person immediately after T-raising to Nr and T/Nr-raising to Pn, respectively).

If the originally lower DP (*aðalvandamálið* ‘the main problem’ in (37)) moves to either Spec,TP or Spec,VP (positions 3 or 4), it will be the highest DP below the V+T+Nr complex when this is established. This will result in Number agreement with this DP (DP1). The next step in the derivation could be either a subsequent move of DP1 to Spec,NrP (position 2) followed by movement of the V+T+Nr complex to Pn, or just this latter step. Either way, again DP1 will be immediately below the V+T+Nr+Pn complex, resulting in Person agreement also with DP1. Finally, DP1 moves to some position at the

left periphery. The tree in (38) shows a derivation where the initially lower DP (*aðalvandamálið* ‘the main problem’ ) has moved to Spec,VP, and the verbal complex has moved all the way up to P[erso]n. Number agreement with *aðalvandamálið* (indicated as Nr.S) was established already when the verbal complex moved to N[umbe]r; Person agreement with the same DP is established at the point in the derivation depicted in (38) (indicated as P.3); the next step will be movement of the DP to the specifier of PnP.



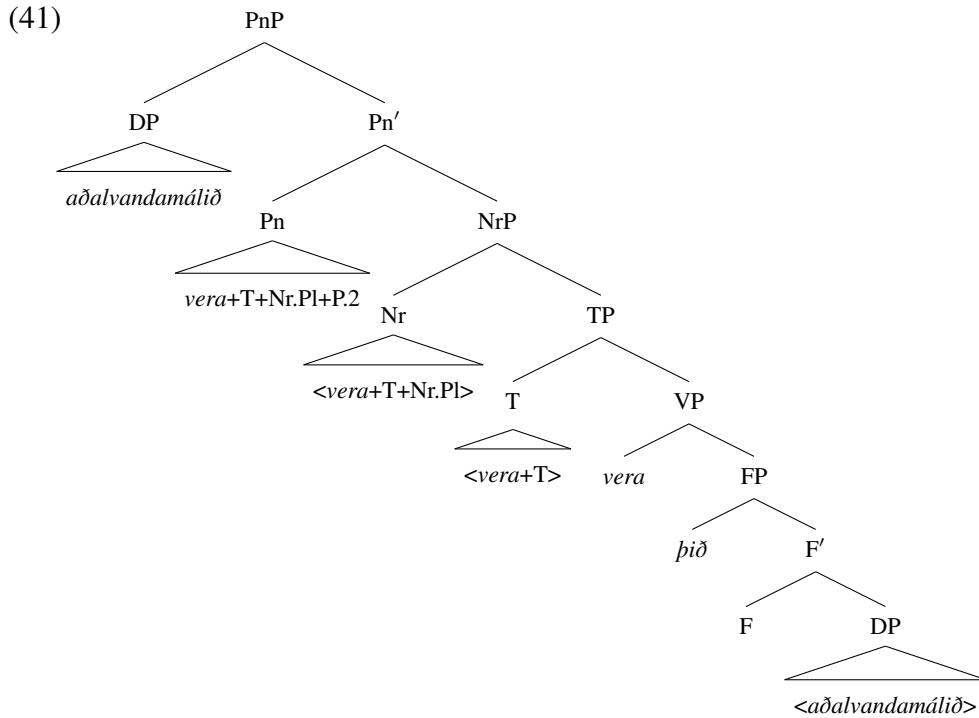
This is a possible derivation for the cases where speakers produce DP1 agreement, for example 3rd person singular agreement in examples like (39):

- (39) *Hann var að velta fyrir sér hvort aðalvandamálið væri þið.*  
 he was wondering if main problem.DEF **be.3SG** you.PL  
 ‘He was wondering whether the main problem is you.pl.’

2nd person plural agreement (full DP2 agreement), as in (40), is produced by a derivation where the initially lower nominal moves directly to a position above both Pn and Nr, as shown in (41). This is the equivalent, in this more

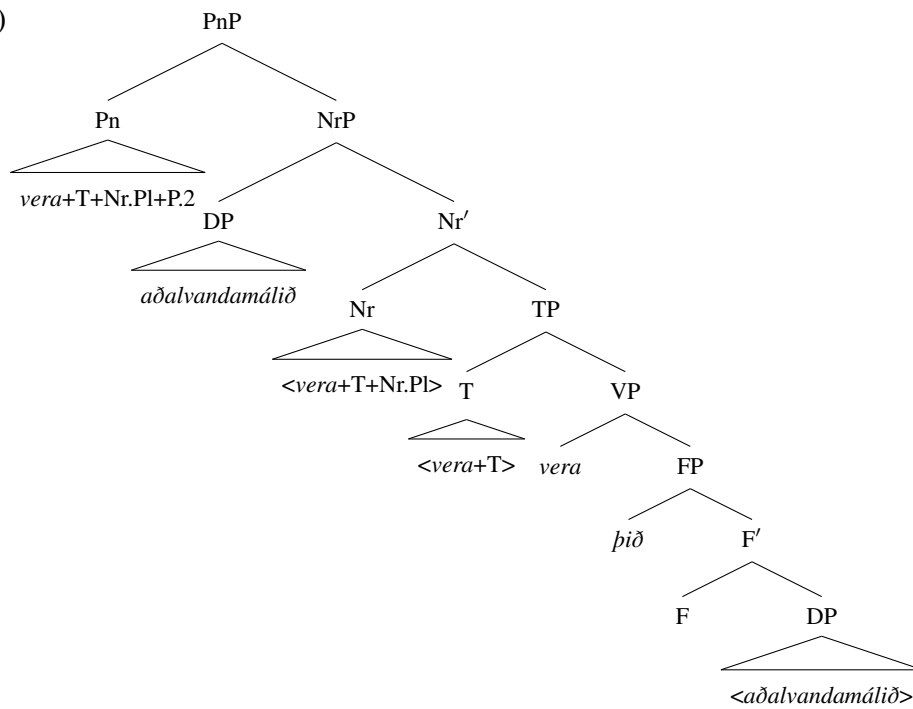
articulated clausal structure, of (30) above.

- (40) *Hann var að velta fyrir sér hvort aðalvandamálið væruð þið.*  
 he was wondering if main problem.DEF **be.2PL** you.PL  
 ‘He was wondering whether the main problem is you.pl.’



The final possibility is that the initially lower DP moves to Spec,NrP: that is, a position where it is above Nr (and hence not visible for Number agreement, which is looking *down* the tree) but immediately below Pn. As in (38), (42) shows the derivation at the point where the verbal complex has reached Pn but DP1 has not yet moved to a left peripheral position. As can be seen, the closest DP below Nr is *þið* ‘you.pl’, hence number agreement is Plural. But as a result of the movement of *aðalvandamálið* ‘the main problem’ to Spec,NrP, this is now the closest DP below Pn, hence person agreement is 3rd person. This, then, derives the partial agreement pattern, illustrated in (43), that we saw was produced by a significant number of Icelandic speakers and that we concluded—somewhat tentatively, pending further research—is not simply the result of morphological syncretism.

(42)



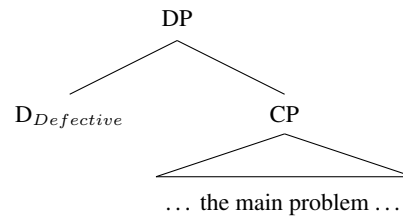
- (43) *Hann var að velta fyrir sér hvort aðalvandamálið væru þið.*  
he was wondering if main problem.DEF **be.3PL** you.PL  
'He was wondering whether the main problem is you.PL.'

#### 6.4. Alternative accounts

In recent work, Bejar and Kahnemuyipour (2014) propose that DP2 agreement in specificational sentences should be accounted for in terms of differential “phi-sensitivity.” They assume that DP1 is always closer to the agreeing head than DP2 at the point at which agreement is established. What differs from language to language is what features the agreeing head (the *probe* in Minimalist terminology) is searching for. A further crucial aspect of the proposal in Bejar and Kahnemuyipour (2014) is that in specificational sentences DP1 does not have any  $\phi$ -features accessible for agreement. The overt DP occurs buried somewhere within a much more complex structure, possibly along the lines of the free-relative-like structures proposed in den Dikken (2006a), as schematized very crudely in (44); it is assumed that CP cannot carry  $\phi$ -features, and the DP *the main problem* is buried too deep inside the structure

to be visible from outside it. Further, the posited null Determiner is defective in not receiving  $\phi$ -features via deixis (given that the initial DP in a specificational sentence does not refer to an individual).

(44)



Bejar and Kahnemuyipour (2014) propose that the defective D has “just the minimal feature structure required to be recognized in the syntax as a nominal category, hereafter referred to as [n]”. Thus only if the agreeing head is extremely unselective—searching only for [n], rather than any specific  $\phi$ -feature, will DP1 meet its specification. This, it is proposed, is exactly the situation in English (a language without DP2 agreement in specificational sentences). Since, under this hypothesis, DP1 does not have any accessible  $\phi$ -features, presumably the singular agreement observable in examples like (45) is taken to be a default.

(45) The problem is {your parents/you}.

In contrast, if T is more specific in any way in what it is searching for, DP1 in a specificational sentence will simply be skipped, and agreement will be with DP2.<sup>23</sup> This, then, would be the account for varieties of Faroese and Icelandic that exhibit consistent DP2 agreement.<sup>24</sup> Variation between DP1 and DP2 agreement would presumably be the result of variation in the specificity of the features that T searches for, within a single speaker’s competence.

<sup>23</sup>In fact the mechanism involved is somewhat more complex than implied by the terminology of “skipping,” but this simplification is adequate for current purposes.

<sup>24</sup>In essence, this account is very similar to the one proposed for the copular sentences with singular demonstrative subjects in Sigurðsson (1996, 2004), Sigurðsson and Holmberg (2008), as described in Section 1 above.



We see two problems with such an approach. First, our data suggest strongly that DP1 has at least a number feature that is “visible” to agreeing heads. As noted in Heycock (2012), when DP1 is plural in English, agreement on the verb is not default singular (as predicted by this account), but plural. Similarly, while Dutch speakers generally show a high degree of variation between DP1 agreement and DP2 agreement when DP1 is singular and DP2 plural (Fischer 2003, Hartmann and Heycock 2014), if DP1 is plural then agreement on the verb is obligatorily plural:

- (46) a. My favourite authors {\*is/are} Austen and Heller.  
 b. ... *dat de winnaars Blanchett en Nyong’o \*was/waren*  
 that the winners Blanchett and Nyong’o \*was/were  
 ‘... that the winners were Blanchett and Nyong’o’

And we can now see the same phenomenon in our Icelandic data. As discussed above, agreement in specificational sentences in Icelandic is not always with DP2. If DP1 has no accessible  $\phi$ -features, the only alternative should be 3rd person singular (default) agreement. But this is not what we find. If DP1 is plural—as it was in Condition E in the second Icelandic experiment, see Tables 6 and 7—we find not one single case of 3rd person singular agreement. Further, as discussed in Section 6.2, in the configuration where the finite verb precedes both DP1 and DP2, even speakers who otherwise consistently produce DP2 agreement produce at least some tokens of DP1 agreement; many speakers switch to consistent DP1 agreement. This is unexpected if DP1 actually has no  $\phi$ -features of its own.<sup>25</sup>

This problem could perhaps be circumvented by dropping the claim that DP1 has no accessible  $\phi$ -features and adopting a slightly different hypothesis

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<sup>25</sup>In the experiments themselves we only tested this configuration for the case where DP1 is 3rd singular. So it could perhaps be argued that what we are finding here is not DP1 agreement, but again default agreement. However, at least the German, Dutch and Faroese speakers (we have not yet had the chance to test this for Icelandic) that we have consulted have judged that when DP2 is plural in this configuration, again only plural agreement—not default singular—is possible. We illustrate here with Faroese:

about the possible ways in which the finite verb searches for features with which to agree. That is, adopting ideas in Preminger (2011)—who also draws heavily in proposals in Béjar (2003), Béjar and Rezac (2009)—for a slightly different case, we might suppose that in a variety with DP2 agreement there are two separate probes for agreement. One is looking, not just for Number, but specifically for the plural value of Number. If it fails to find a match, the result will be singular agreement. The other is looking, not just for Person, but specifically for “participant”—which covers both 1st and 2nd person. If it fails to find a match, the result will be 3rd person agreement. In the case that Preminger discusses, there are complex issues that arise when, for example, one DP is 3rd person plural and the other 1st/2nd person singular. But recall that in specificational sentences there are actually a rather limited set of combinations that occur. Given these combinations, such a system will always yield DP2 agreement, as set out in Table 12.<sup>26</sup>

[@@Insert Table 12 here.]

- (i) *Mær vitandi* {\*er/eru} *hennara yndishöfundar*  
to my knowledge {\*be.PRES.3SG/be.PRES.PL} her favourite authors  
*Heinesen og Kamban.*  
Heinesen and Kamban  
‘As far as I know, her favourite authors are Heinesen and Kamban.’

<sup>26</sup>Unlike the system proposed in Bejar and Kahnemuyipour (2014), this variant would not, without further assumptions, distinguish between specificational sentences and other copular sentences, predicting that if a language has DP2 agreement in specificational sentences it will also have it in other copular sentences, such as cases of (mistaken) identity ; for some languages—but not all, see Bejar and Kahnemuyipour (2014) on Eastern Armenian—we know that this prediction is incorrect, as illustrated by the German examples in (i).

- (i) a. *In der Dunkelheit dachte ich dass du sie wärst.*  
in the dark thought I that you.2SG.NOM she.3SG.NOM be.2SG  
‘In the dark, I thought that you were her.’  
b. *In der Dunkelheit dachte ich dass sie du wäre.*  
in the dark thought I that she.3SG.NOM you.2SG.NOM be.3SG  
‘In the dark, I thought that she was you.’

Thus a different structure for such sentences would have to be proposed, in which DP2 is somehow not accessible to agreement, despite being nominative.

The second problem, however, does not have any obvious solution that we can see within this type of account. This is the existence of the partial agreement pattern in some variety/varieties of Icelandic. We have shown above how this phenomenon can be derived by positing distinct heads for Person and Number and allowing DP1 to move directly to a position above Number but below Person. We do not see how to achieve this simply by manipulating the  $\phi$ -sensitivity of the agreeing head(s) in a way that does not have disastrous consequences elsewhere. That is, one could propose that in such a variety there is no distinct search for [Participant], but only for [Plural]. That would give the pattern in Table 13. But clearly the result will be quite wrong for the ordinary case—where there is only one Nominative DP with which the finite verb is agreeing. So this would have to be a system specifically for specificational sentences, thereby making the analysis simply a replication of the original problem rather than any kind of explanation.

[@@Insert Table 13 here.]

For these reasons, then, we continue to maintain that the landing site of DP1 is a crucial part of an account for the full array of agreement options available in specificational sentences.

## **7. Summary and future work**

In this paper we have explored some of the variation that arises in agreement in Faroese and Icelandic when there are two nominative DPs in a copular sentence. Our data have come from three experiments, one in Faroese and two in Icelandic. We have then given an outline of an analysis for the data presented. It is evident that there is considerable variation in Icelandic in this area; the same appears to be true of Faroese, but in order to properly characterise the possibilities in this language we clearly need at least to replicate our second

Icelandic experiment for Faroese. There are a number of further unanswered questions that remain, at least some of which we hope to address in future research. For example: Are there any correlations between agreement preferences in these patterns and the variation in agreement in Dat/Nom constructions in Icelandic described in Sigurðsson and Holmberg (2008)? Is it possible to establish a correlation between acceptance of e.g. stylistic fronting and DP2 agreement in Faroese? More generally, can we more precisely characterise the basis for the cross-linguistic differences that are beginning to come to light?

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## List of Tables

1	Faroese—Agreement with DP1 or DP2 in specificational sentences . . . . .	57
2	Faroese—Agreement with DP1 or DP2 in specificational sentences (revised) . . . . .	58
3	Icelandic—Number Agreement with DP1 or DP2 in specificational sentences . . . . .	59
4	Orthogonal contrasts with participants (F1) and items (F2) as random effects. . . . .	60
5	Number of speakers with uniform/variable agreement per condition . . . . .	61
6	Overview of Conditions in Experiment 2 . . . . .	62
7	DP1 vs. DP2 Agreement per condition (irrelevant cases excluded) . . . . .	63
8	Percentage of DP1 agreement per condition (missing values excluded) . . . . .	64
9	Statistical results for planned contrasts . . . . .	65
10	Number of speakers with uniform/variable agreement per condition . . . . .	66
11	Percentage of DP1 agreement per condition and speaker group based on condition D . . . . .	67
12	Hypothetical agreement resolution in specificational sentences	68
13	Hypothetical agreement resolution system resulting in “partial” agreement with DP2 . . . . .	69

Table 1: Faroese—Agreement with DP1 or DP2 in specificational sentences

Cond	Structure	DP1Agr	DP2Agr	% DP2Agr
A	Main clause: DP be DP	27	32	54%
B	Main clause: DP be Adv DP	27	14	34%
C	<i>Wh</i> -clause: ... if DP be DP	28	17	38%
D	Main clause: Adjunct be DP DP	48	2	4%
E	Main clause: DP Modal have been DP	35	1	3%
F	<i>Wh</i> -clause: ... if DP Modal have been DP	35	1	3%
Total		200	67	25%

Table 2: Faroese—Agreement with DP1 or DP2 in specificational sentences (revised)

Cond	Structure	DP1Agr	DP2Agr	% DP2Agr
A	Main clause: DP be DP	18	32	64%
B	Main clause: DP be Adv DP	19	14	42%
C	<i>Wh</i> -clause: ... if DP be DP	20	17	46%
D	Main clause: Adjunct be DP DP	41	1	2%
E	Main clause: DP Modal be DP	28	1	3%
F	<i>Wh</i> -clause: ... if DP Modal be DP	30	1	3%
Total		156	66	30%

Table 3: Icelandic—Number Agreement with DP1 or DP2 in specificational sentences

Cond	Structure	DP1Agr	DP2Agr	% DP2Agr
A	Main clause: DP be DP	50	139	74%
B	Main clause: DP be Adv DP	104	84	45%
C	<i>Wh</i> -clause: . . . if DP be DP	63	123	66%
D	Main clause: Adjunct be DP DP	187	3	2%
Total		404	289	41%

Table 4: Orthogonal contrasts with participants (F1) and items (F2) as random effects.

Contrast	F1(1,68)	MSe	F2(1,15)	MSe
A versus B (interv. ADV)	38.2***	.34	37.4***	.04
A versus C (embed.)	3.4+	.25	4.0+	.03
B versus D (ADV position)	74.3***	.43	260.2***	.03

Table 5: Number of speakers with uniform/variable agreement per condition

Cond	Structure	DP1Agr only	DP2Agr only	variable agreement
A	DP1 - V - DP2	8	42	22
B	DP1 - V - ADV - DP2	26	21	24
C	C -DP1- V - DP2	13	33	23
D	ADV - V - DP1 - DP2	69	0	3

Table 6: Overview of Conditions in Experiment 2

Cond	Description	Number/Person	type of DP1
A	3s-3p-coll	number mismatch	- collective DP1
B	3s-2s-coll	person mismatch (with sg)	- collective DP1
C	3s-2s-dist	person mismatch (with sg)	- distributive DP1
D	3s-2p-coll	number and person mismatch	- collective DP1
E	3p-2p-dist	person mismatch (with pl)	- distributive DP1

Table 7: DP1 vs. DP2 Agreement per condition (irrelevant cases excluded)

Cond	Structure	DP1Agr	DP2Agr	DP2Agr(Nr)	Total
A	3s-3p-coll	74	143	n.a.	217
B	3s-2s-coll	109	99	n.a.	208
C	3s-2s-dist	113	105	n.a.	218
D	3s-2p-coll	68	80	63	211
E	3p-2p-dist	118	91	n.a.	209



Table 8: Percentage of DP1 agreement per condition (missing values excluded)

Cond	Structure	% DP1Agr	Total N
A	3s-3p-coll	34	217
B	3s-2s-coll	52	208
C	3s-2s-dist	51	218
D	3s-2p-coll	33	211
E	3p-2p-dist	56	209

Table 9: Statistical results for planned contrasts

	Contrast	F1(3,69)	MSe	F2(1,17)	MSe
Number vs. person mismatch	A versus B	11.5***	.60	25.5***	.02
Mismatch dist-coll	B versus C	<1 ns	.24	<1 ns	.09
Person mismatch sg. vs. pl	C versus E	<1 ns	.52	<1 ns	.08

Table 10: Number of speakers with uniform/variable agreement per condition

Cond	Description	DP1Agr only	DP2Agr only	variable agreement
A	3s-3p-coll	16	38	19
B	3s-2s-coll	32	27	14
C	3s-2s-dist	28	25	20
D	3s-2p-coll	13	full 19 partial 14	26
E	3p-2p-dist	34	23	15

Table 11: Percentage of DP1 agreement per condition and speaker group based on condition D

Cond	Description	Group I:DP2	Group II:DP1	Group III: partial	Group IV: Variable
A	3s-3p-coll	3%	77%	2%	53%
B	3s-2s-coll	28%	89%	50%	54%
C	3s-2s-dist	26%	82%	59%	54%
E	3p-2p-dist	11%	87%	100%	52%

Table 12: Hypothetical agreement resolution in specificational sentences

DP1	DP2	[Plural] matches?	[Participant] matches?	Agreement
3rd sing	3rd sing	no	no	3rd sing
3rd sing	3rd plural	yes	no	3rd plural
3rd sing	1st/2nd sing	no	yes	1st/2nd sing
3rd sing	1st/2nd plural	yes	yes	1st/2nd plural
3rd plural	3rd plural	yes	no	3rd plural
3rd plural	1st/2nd plural	yes	yes	1st/2nd plural

Table 13: Hypothetical agreement resolution system resulting in “partial” agreement with DP2

DP1	DP2	[Plural] matches?	Agreement
3rd sing	3rd sing	no	3rd sing
3rd sing	3rd plural	yes	3rd plural
3rd sing	1st/2nd sing	no	3rd sing
3rd sing	1st/2nd plural	yes	3rd plural
3rd plural	3rd plural	yes	3rd plural
3rd plural	1st/2nd plural	yes	3rd plural