Agreement in specificational sentences in Faroese

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Abstract

This paper examines the patterns of agreement found in Faroese in sentences where there are two noun phrases with which the verb could potentially agree, a situation that arises in "specificational" or "inverse" copular sentences of the type *The problem is/are your parents*. It is well known that in some languages (for example English) agreement is obligatorily with the first noun phrase, while in others (for example Italian) it is obligatorily with the second. Here I demonstrate that Faroese robustly exhibits both patterns, and that their distribution is strongly affected by other aspects of the syntax of the sentences in which they occur.

1. Introduction

The question of what determines agreement on the finite verb has recently attracted renewed attention (see e.g. Bobaljik 2008). Within the Germanic languages, interest is typically focussed on agreement in sentences in which one or more arguments are lexically specified for "quirky" case. There is however at least one other problematic construction as far as agreement is concerned: copular sentences with two noun phrases, in particular the class known as "specificational" or "inverse" copular clauses (see Higgins 1979, Williams 1983, Heggie 1988, Moro 1991, 1997, 2000, Büring 1998, Heycock and Kroch 1999a,b, 2002, Mikkelsen 2005, among others). Exactly how to characterise this class is a matter of some debate; at least as an initial approximation specificational copular sentences consist of the copula and two noun phrases (typically but not necessarily definite), of which the first is used "attributively" rather than referentially. Notably, this second noun phrase is obligatorily in focus; these sentences provide information as to what individual or individuals (maximally) satisfy the description in the initial noun phrase. (1) gives two typical examples from English:

(1) a. The cause of the riot was the shooting of a teenager by the police.
b. The culprit was Paul.

Although it is often assumed that in copular sentences the case of the predicate nominal is somehow inherited from the subject, in such sentences in English it seems that the second noun phrase must be accusative; unsurprisingly then, agreement is with the first.

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Nordlyd 36.2. *NORMS Papers on Faroese*, 56–77. Edited by Peter Svenonius, Kristine Bentzen, Caroline Heycock, Jógvan í Lon Jacobsen, Janne Bondi Johannessen, Jeffrey K. Parrott, Tania E. Strahan, and Øystein Alexander Vangsnes
CASTL, Tromsø. http://www.ub.uit.no/munin/nordlyd/

(2) a. The real problem here is {me/*I}.
b. *The real problem here {is/am} I.

As is well known, in particular from the work of Andrea Moro (Moro 1991, 1997, 2000), the pattern of case and agreement in Italian is quite different. Here the second noun phrase is nominative and controls agreement:

(3) a. Il colpevole sono io.
the culprit am I
'The culprit is me.'
b. *Il colpevole è {io/me}.
the culprit is {I/me}

In this paper I present some preliminary data concerning the agreement patterns in this type of sentence in Faroese when the two noun phrases differ in number, as for example in (4):

(4) Orsøkin til eldin var/vóru tey brennandi kertiljósini í stovuni.
*cause.*DEF *to fire.*DEF *was/were the burning candles.*DEF *in room.*DEF
'The cause of the fire was the burning candles in the living room.'

I will show that both the "English-type" and the "Italian-type" of agreement—which from now on I will refer to as DP1 and DP2 agreement, respectively—appear to be found within this single language.[1] I will suggest that some part of this pattern may follow from the locality of the agreement process, as argued for Portuguese in Costa (2004), but that Faroese exhibits some unusual properties that open up new avenues for the exploration of how verbal agreement works in this and other languages.

2. Methodology, materials, procedures

As far as I am aware, there is no current description of agreement in copular clauses in Faroese. In this investigation I gathered data through a "fill-in-the-blanks" exercise similar to that used in Berg's and Fischer's studies of English,

[1] It might be objected that what I am calling "DP1 agreement" is in fact not agreement with the first noun phrase, but rather some kind of default singular agreement. The initial DP in a specificational sentence is always third person, and typically only singular DPs are fully felicitous in this position in this type of sentence. In English, to the extent that a plural subject is possible in a specificational sentence, singular "default" agreement is clearly ungrammatical:

(i) a. Her favourite authors {*is/are} Heller and Fielding.
b. Her only problem {is/*are} her parents.

Given the contrast between (ia) and (ib) it seems clear that the singular agreement in (ib) is indeed agreement with the initial DP and not just a default. This point will be returned to later in the discussion of Faroese.

Note further that although in English DP1 agreement cooccurs with accusative case on DP2, I do not assume that this is a necessary fact about DP1 agreement. In Faroese the case on DP2 in specificatonal sentences is, as far as I have been able to ascertain, nominative throughout.

German, and Dutch (Berg 1998, Fischer 2003). However, because a fill-in-the-blanks task is a type of production task, and does not give a direct answer to whether a non-produced form is ungrammatical or simply dispreferred, I also conducted a judgment exercise with six speakers on Sandoy, using the experimental paradigm of magnitude estimation. With these numbers, the results did not reach statistical significance, but they nevertheless provide useful information that can form the basis for further research.

2.1. Questionnaires

The questionnaires were designed to elicit singular or plural agreement in specificational 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 we were just interested in what words they felt fit best.

There were six different structures tested:

1. Main clause: DP1 ___ DP2
2. Main clause, intervening adverb: DP1 ___ Adv DP2
3. Main clause, Topic (Adjunct) Initial: Adjunct ___ DP1 DP2
4. Main clause, modal: DP1 ___ be.INF DP2
5. Embedded question: . . . whether DP1 ___ DP2
6. Embedded question, modal: . . . whether DP1 ___ be.INF DP2

Examples of these structures are as follows:

(5) a. Orsøkin til eldin ___ tey brennandi kertiljósini í stovuni.
*cause.*DEF *of fire.*DEF *the burning candles.*DEF *in room.*DEF
'The cause of the fire ___ the burning candles in the living room.'

b. Orsøkin til eldin ___ kanska tey brennandi kertiljósini í stovuni.
*cause.*DEF *of fire.*DEF *perhaps the burning candles.*DEF *in room.*DEF
'The cause of the fire ___ perhaps the burning candles in the living room.'

c. Eftir mínari meining ___ orsøkin til eldin tey brennandi kertiljósini í stovuni.
*after my opinion cause.*DEF *of fire.*DEF *the burning candles.*DEF *in room.*DEF
'In my opinion, the cause of the fire ___ the burning candles in the living room.'

d. Orsøkin til eldin ___ hava verið tey brennandi
*cause.*DEF *of fire.*DEF *have.*INF *been the burning*
kertiljósini í stovuni.
*candles.*DEF *in room.*DEF
'The cause of the fire ___ have been the burning candles in the living room.'

e. Fyrst spurdi hann, um orsøkin til eldin ___ tey brennandi
*first asked he if cause.*DEF *of fire.*DEF *the burning*
kertiljósini í stovuni.
*candles.*DEF *in room.*DEF
'First he asked if the cause of the fire ___ the burning candles in the living room.'

f. Fyrst spurdi hann, um orsøkin til eldin ___ hava verið tey
*first asked he if cause.*DEF *of fire.*DEF *have.*INF *been the*
brennandi kertiljósini í stovuni.
*burning candles.*DEF *in room.*DEF
'First he asked if the cause of the fire ___ have been the burning candles in the living room.'

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 above, but with a different lexicalisation for each example. The pairs of DPs were as follows:

(6) a. orsøkin til eldin / tey brennandi kertiljósini í stovuni
*cause.*DEF *of fire.*DEF */ the burning candles.*DEF *in room.*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.

The questionnaires were filled in by 51 speakers, from four of the localities visited: 17 speakers from Tórshavn, 6 speakers from Fuglafjørður, 2 speakers from Klaksvík, 26 speakers from Tvøroyri. In some, but not all, cases I was present when the speakers went through the questionnaire. In thirteen cases the speakers did not give their "identifying code," so the only information that I have about them is the locality. Of the 38 who identified themselves, there were 13 men and 25 women; their ages ranged from 20 to 73, with a median age of 49.

2.2. Magnitude estimation

For the magnitude estimation experiment, five of the six structures were tested (the embedded question + modal condition was dropped). Because in this case judgments were being asked for, the copula (or modal verb) was given, with either singular or plural agreement. There were therefore two variables, in a 2x5 design: Agreement (with DP1 or DP2), and Structure (the five structures presented and exemplified above). For each condition there were two lexicalisations.

For reasons of time, this experiment was only run with six subjects, all from Sandur on the island of Sandoy. Two variants of the test materials were constructed, with opposite values for agreement on the test items. Thus for example the first version of the materials included the four sentences in (7), while the second version included their counterparts in (8) with the opposite agreement patterns:

(7) a. Orsøkin til at hon flutti var teir larmandi grannarnir.
*cause.*DEF *to that she moved was.*SG *the noisy neighbours.*DEF
'The reason that she moved was the noisy neighbours.'

b. Besti partur av framførsluni var dansararnir.
*best part of performance.*DEF *was.*SG *dancers.*DEF
'The best part of the performance was the dancers.'

c. Orsøkin til eldin vóru tey brennandi kertiljósini í stovuni
*cause.*DEF *of fire.*DEF *were.*PL *the burning candles.*DEF *in living.room.*DEF
'The cause of the fire was the burning candles in the living room.'

d. Fyrsti vinningur vóru tveir ferðaseðlar til Keypmannahavnar.
*first prize were.*PL *two tickets to Copenhagen*
'The first prize was two tickets to Copenhagen.'

(8) a. Orsøkin til eldin var tey brennandi kertiljósini í stovuni
*cause.*DEF *of fire.*DEF *was.*SG *the burning candles.*DEF *in living.room.*DEF
'The cause of the fire was the burning candles in the living room.'

b. Fyrsti vinningur var tveir ferðaseðlar til Keypmannahavnar.
*first prize was.*SG *two tickets to Copenhagen*
'The first prize was two tickets to Copenhagen.'

c. Orsøkin til at hon flutti vóru teir larmandi grannarnir.
*cause.*DEF *of that she moved were.*PL *the noisy neighbours.*DEF
'The reason that she moved was the noisy neighbours.'

d. Besti partur av framførsluni vóru dansararnir.
*best part of performance.*DEF *were.*PL *dancers.*DEF
'The best part of the performance was the dancers.'

The reason for this (limited) counterbalancing was to reduce any effect of particular items favouring singular or plural agreement.

The six subjects therefore each saw and judged 20 test items, and in addition 33 fillers, of varying grammaticality; the order of the sentences was randomized for each subject. The experiment was conducted on a laptop running the WebExp software developed by Frank Keller and his colleagues (Keller et al. 2009). In magnitude estimation, subjects are asked to give relative judgments of grammaticality for a series of sentences. They assign to an initial sentence a number of their own choosing that represents their judgment on that sentence; they then give subsequent sentences scores that reflect their judgments relative to the first—that is, if the next sentence is judged twice as good, it is given a score twice as high, if half as good, half as high, etc. There is thus no maximum or minimum on the scale, and subjects can make as many or as few distinctions as they like. Instructions for this task were presented to the subjects on screen, in Faroese (they were also able to ask questions of the investigator), and the experiment proper was preceded by two trials, one involving judging line length, and one judging the acceptability of sentences unrelated to the test materials.

The scores given by the subjects were transformed into logs in order to yield a more normal distribution, and they were converted to z-scores (this latter conversion does not have any impact on the analysis of variance). For more detailed discussion of the use of magnitude estimation in linguistics, see Bard et al. (1996), Keller (2000), Featherston (2005), Sprouse (2007), among others.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Questionnaire

The results from the fifty-one speakers who completed the fill-in-the-blanks 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.[2]

Overall, it is clear that the frequency of the two possible agreement patterns varies according to sentence structure ($\chi^2(5, N = 267) = 63.21, p < 0.01$). The highest rate of DP2 agreement is found in main clauses where DP1 is in sentence-initial position, followed by the finite copula, followed immediately by DP2; but even in this most favouring environment DP2 agreement is only slightly above half, at 54% of responses. A somewhat lower rate of DP2 agreement is found when the DP1 *be* DP2 order occurs in an embedded *wh*-clause (38%), and when an adverb intervenes between the copula and DP2 (34%). Then there are three environments where agreement with DP2 is strongly disfavoured: in a nonsubject-initial main clause—Topic/Adjunct *be* DP1 DP2—(4%), or in a clause where the

[2]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).

The particularly alert reader may notice that there are, conversely, too many responses for the first case (Main clause: DP be DP). This was because 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*.

Table 1: Agreement with DP1 or DP2 in specificational sentences

Structure	DP1	DP2	% DP2
Main clause: DP be DP	27	32	54%
Main clause: DP be Adv DP	27	14	34%
Main clause: Adjunct be DP DP	48	2	4%
Main clause: DP Modal be DP	35	1	3%
Wh-clause: ... if DP be DP	28	17	38%
Wh-clause: ... if DP Modal be DP	35	1	3%
Total	200	67	25%

agreeing verb is a modal, whether in a main clause or an embedded *wh*-clause (3% in each case).

Most of the respondents (39/51) gave at least one plural response and at least one singular response. The twelve respondents who showed no variation all 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.[3] Of the twelve "invariant" respondents, four were from Tórshavn (4/17, 24%), seven from Tvøroyri (7/26, 27%), and one from Klaksvík (1/2). Three did not identify themselves; of the remaining nine, three were male and six female, and their ages ranged from 37 to 73. On the basis of these limited data, therefore, there does not seem any clear nonlinguistic correlate of the "invariant" pattern. Table 2 shows the figures for agreement if the respondents who have invariant DP1 agreement are set aside. Clearly this increases the relative proportion of DP2 agreement re-

Table 2: Agreement with DP1 or DP2: variable speakers only

Structure	DP1	DP2	% DP2
Main clause: DP be DP	15	32	68%
Main clause: DP be Adv DP	16	14	47%
Main clause: Adjunct be DP DP	36	2	5%
Main clause: DP Modal be DP	27	1	4%
Wh-clause: ... if DP be DP	19	17	47%
Wh-clause: ... if DP Modal be DP	27	1	4%
Total	140	67	32%

sponses in the three environments that most favour it, but has only a negligible effect on the three disfavouring contexts; the overall pattern seems unchanged.

In Fischer's study of Dutch, she found that in that language—where there was also considerable variation in agreement patterns—the particular lexical items had

[3] It is of course important to bear in mind that this is essentially a production task; thus we have no direct evidence as to whether any given response is the only possible choice for that respondent in the particular context, or just the preferred one.

a significant effect. If we look at the results by item rather than by subject, we find that this is true also of our Faroese data: the different pairs of items have different effects on the preference for DP1 or DP2 agreement ($\chi^2(5, N = 267) = 31.31, p < 0.01$). These results (for all the speakers, both variant and invariant) are set out in Table 3.

Table 3: Agreement with DP1 or DP2: by lexicalisation

Lexicalisation		DP1	DP2	% DP2
1:	orsøkin til eldin / *the cause of the fire* / tey brennandi kertiljósini í stovuni *the burning candles in the living room*	33	12	27%
2:	besti partur av framførsluni / dansararnir *the best part of the performance / the dancers*	23	22	49%
3:	hansara serligi veikleiki / skjótir bilar *his particular weakness / fast cars*	30	13	30%
4:	fyrsti vinningur / *first prize* / tveir ferðaseðlar til Keypmannahavnar *two tickets to Copenhagen*	44	1	2%
5:	trupulleikin / foreldrini *the problem / the parents*	41	6	13%
6:	orsøkin til at hon flutti / *the reason she moved* / teir larmandi grannarnir *the noisy neighbours*	29	13	31%
Total		200	67	25%

Lexicalisation 4 (*fyrsti vinningur / tveir ferðaseðlar til Keypmannahavnar*: 'first prize' / 'two tickets to Copenhagen') in particular seems to be an outlier in that DP1 agreement in this case is all but categorical. The reason for this is not immediately obvious, but it does appear that this lexicalisation is having a quite different effect than the other five.[4] If we want to get the clearest picture of the effect of the different sentence types on the agreement patterns it then seems reasonable to check what the data look like if this lexicalisation is excluded. Ta-

[4]The first place one might look for an explanation of the high level of singular agreement in the pair *fyrsti vinningur / tveir ferðaseðlar til Keypmannahavnar* (first prize / two tickets to Copenhagen) is the presence in this pair alone of a numeral. While it might seem paradoxical that the inclusion of an overt plural numeral should increase the likelihood of singular agreement, the following contrast in English also shows that there is a complex relation between numerals within noun phrases and plurality:

(i) a. We spent (*a) happy weeks in Italy.
b. we spent *(a) happy two weeks in Italy.

ble 4 gives the results if we exclude both the speakers who show invariant DP1 agreement, and the data from Lexicalisation 4.

Table 4: Agreement with DP1 or DP2: variable speakers, Lex. 4 excluded

Structure	DP1	DP2	% DP2
Main clause: DP be DP	12	32	73%
Main clause: DP be Adv DP	8	14	64%
Main clause: Adjunct be DP DP	33	1	3%
Main clause: DP Modal be DP	20	1	5%
Wh-clause: ... if DP be DP	11	17	61%
Wh-clause: ... if DP Modal be DP	22	1	4%
Total	106	66	38%

What seemed in Table 1 to be a three-way distinction in the effect of the different structures now looks rather more binary. Three contexts strongly—but not categorically—favour DP2 (plural) agreement: DP1 *be* DP2, in both main clause and embedded *wh*-clause, and DP1 *be* Adverb DP2 (tested only in main clause). The remaining three contexts almost categorically require DP1 (singular) agreement: DP1 Modal *be* DP2, in both main clause and embedded *wh*-clause, and Adjunct *be* DP1 DP2. While the first context still appears to favor DP2 agreement most strongly, there is no significant difference between the three favouring contexts ($\chi^2(2, N = 94) = 1.27, ns$). Thus it seems that there are three contexts which essentially show only DP1 agreement, and three which favour (but do not require) DP2 agreement.

3.2. Magnitude estimation

The results of the magnitude estimation task are given in graphical form in Figure 1. The two lines plot the transformed scores for singular agreement with DP1 and plural agreement with DP2. The structures are, in order, as follows:

1. Main clause: DP1 ___ DP2
2. Embedded question: ... whether DP1 ___ DP2
3. Main clause, intervening adverb: DP1 ___ Adv DP2
4. Main clause, Topic (Adjunct) Initial: Adjunct ___ DP1 DP2
5. Main clause, modal: DP1 ___ be.INF DP2

As stated above, the magnitude estimation task was carried out only by six speakers, and the results therefore do not reach statistical significance. It is also worth bearing in mind that the design was not fully counterbalanced, so there may be skewing due to the effect of the different lexicalisations. Nevertheless, there are

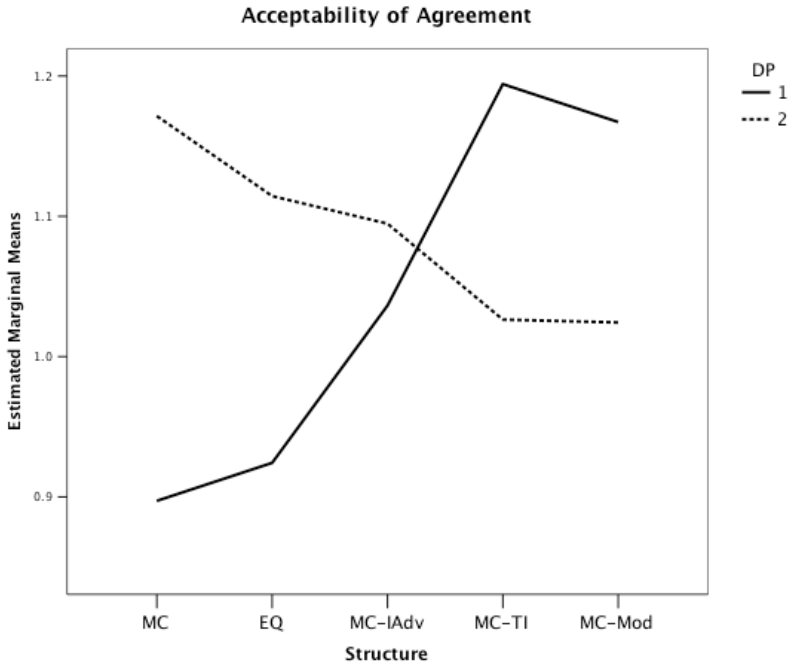

Figure 1: Acceptability of DP1 and DP2 agreement

interesting points of similarity and difference with the production results. Clearly there is broad agreement between the two sets of results. If we consider that whenever one type of agreement is judged "more acceptable" than the other, the favoured variant will be the most likely to be produced, these results are very much in line with the production data that we have: DP2 agreement is judged more acceptable than DP1 agreement in the three environments where the production data show it to be most frequent, and DP1 agreement is judged more acceptable than DP2 agreement in the two environments where DP2 agreement was rarely produced.[5] There are however some further points to note. One is that DP1 agreement in the context in which an adverb intervenes between the copula and DP2 appears to be more acceptable than DP1 agreement where there is no intervening adverb (the first and third structures in the graph). This is not straightforwardly matched in the production data. Second, while the acceptability of DP1 and DP2 agreement generally show a negative correlation (one rises as the other falls), the pattern is not fully symmetrical. In particular, rather surprisingly given that we found in the production data that there were speakers who produced only DP1 agreement but none who produced only DP2 agreement, the acceptability of DP2 agreement drops in the last two contexts (adjunct-initial main clause and clause containing a modal), but the slope is relatively shallow: the worst case of DP2 agreement appears to be more acceptable than the worst case of DP1 agreement.

The slightly different picture that we get from the judgment data is interesting and suggestive, but given the small numbers on which it is based, and the strong effect of lexicalisation that we saw in the production data, it would be unwise to overinterpret these differences at this stage; this is however clearly an opportunity for further research.

3.3. Discussion

Although a good deal of empirical and theoretical work remains to be done in order to fully integrate these results into a theories of copular clauses and of agreement, a number of points can already be made.

3.3.1. DP2 agreement and V2

First, the fact that DP2 agreement shows up robustly in embedded questions (61% DP2 responses in this environment in Table 4) shows that **DP2 agreement in Faroese is not a result of verb second (V2)**. That is to say, while in the root clause in (9a) it is possible to hypothesize that DP1 has been topicalised from some non-subject position, and that DP2 is in the canonical subject position (e.g. Spec,TP), this analysis is not available for the embedded clause in (9b), since embedded questions in Faroese do not allow V2 (Thráinsson et al. 2004, Heycock et al. To appear).

[5] Recall that the judgment task did not include the context "… *if* DP1 Modal *be* DP2."

(9) a. Besti partur av framførsluni vóru dansararnir.
*best part of performance.*DEF *were.*PL *dancers.*DEF
'The best part of the performance was the dancers.'
b. Hann spurdi, um besti partur av framførsluni vóru dansararnir.
*he asked if best part of performance.*DEF *were.*PL *dancers.*DEF
'He asked if the best part of the performance was the dancers.'

In an embedded question like (9b) it is hard to escape the conclusion that DP1—*besti partur av framførsluni* (the best part of the performance)—is in Spec,TP, or whatever is taken to be the canonical position for a VP-external subject that has not moved to the initial position in a V2 clause.

3.3.2. Agreement with a low DP

If we conclude, then, that DP1 is in Spec,TP in (9b) and similar sentences, it follows that when the finite verb shows DP2 agreement **it is agreeing with a DP in a relatively low position in the clause**. The failure of modals to agree might then be seen as a locality effect: the modal cannot probe "deep enough" to access DP2. Exactly such an explanation was given in Costa (2004) for the pattern of agreement and nonagreement in Brazilian and European Portuguese. Costa states that in both Brazilian and European Portuguese the most simple cases of specificational sentences show DP2 agreement:

(10) O assassino sou eu.
the murderer am I
'The murderer is me.'

Brazilian Portuguese and European Portuguese behave differently, however, when there is a modal verb. In European Portuguese the modal agrees with DP2:

(11) a. O assassino devo/*deve ser eu.
*the murderer must.*1SG/**must.*3SG *be I*
'The murderer must be me.'
b. O assassino posso/*pode ser eu.
*the murderer can.*1SG/**can.*3SG *be I*
'The murderer may be me.'

But in Brazilian Portuguese the modal instead agrees with DP1:

(12) a. O assassino *devo/deve ser eu.
*the murderer *must.*1SG/*must.*3SG *be I*
'The murderer must be me.'
b. O assassino *posso/pode ser eu.
*the murderer *can.*1SG/*can.*3SG *be I*
'The murderer may be me.'

Costa argues that this contrast mirrors the contrast between the two languages in the possibility of "restructuring" the verbal complex, as evidenced by the grammaticality of clitic climbing. European Portuguese allows such restructuring with modal verbs, while Brazilian Portuguese does not; thus (13) is grammatical in European Portuguese and ungrammatical in Brazilian:

(13) Eu não o devo ver.
I not him must see
'I must not see him.'

Further, even within European Portuguese there are verbs which do not allow restructuring/clitic climbing; one such verb is *necessitar* (to need), as shown in (14). This verb also does not show DP2 agreement even in European Portuguese, as illustrated in (15):

(14) a. Eu só necessito de lhe dar-lhe um libro.
I just need to him give-him a book.
b. *Eu só lhe necessito de dar um libro.
I just to-him need to give a book.
'I just need to give him a book.'

(15) a. *O problema necessito de ser eu.
*the problem need[*1SG*] to be I*
b. O problema necessita[3SG] de ser eu.
the problem needs to be I
'The problem needs to be me.'

Costa's proposal is that restructuring verbs take "defective" complements that do not project to the CP level, in contrast to nonrestructuring verbs. Given the assumption that the syntactic mechanism Agree cannot take place across the CP boundary (because CP is a strong Phase), it is therefore blocked from applying between Brazilian Portuguese modals and the lower DP in examples like (12), and similarly in European Portuguese just in case there is a nonrestructuring verb like *necessitar* instead of a modal.

In order for this analysis to be extended to Faroese, clearly it is crucial that modal verbs in Faroese must not be "restructuring" predicates.[6] It is however far from obvious that this is the case. There is no obvious analogue to the clitic climbing found in Romance that could be used as a test, and the diagnostics used for German and Dutch in Wurmbrand (2001) do not seem straightforwardly applicable to Faroese. It is very widely assumed that modals in the Germanic languages are restructuring predicates; Wurmbrand (2001) states that modals fall into the core class of restructuring predicates (Wurmbrand 2001:7), where this core "is not disputed and moreover found in all languages displaying restructuring effects"

[6]In the judgment tast, the modal used was *kunna* (can). In the fill-in-the-blanks task, respondents were free to make their own choices: those counted as modals were *skula* 'should,shall,' *munna* 'must,' *kunna* 'can,' *mega* 'must, may.' I also included with these the middle *sigast* 'be said to,' as it is followed by a bare infinitive; this was only used in a small minority of cases.

(note however that if Costa is right, at least Brazilian Portuguese modals do not fall into this core class). Further research therefore needs to be done on the structure of clauses including modals in Faroese to determine whether there is any evidence that they contrast with modals in German and Dutch, or, alternatively, whether a different type of "restructuring" is at issue in the Germanic and the Romance case.

3.3.3. What happens when agreement with DP2 is blocked?

The second issue in applying this analysis to Faroese arises already in Portuguese, as noted by Costa himself. That is, in structures where DP2 is not sufficiently local to the finite verb to allow agreement, how is it licensed? In his discussion of agreement in Portuguese, Costa shows that agreement with a "low" DP is possible not only in specificational sentences, but also in cases of "inversion" like (16a,b):

(16) a. Telefonou a Maria.
*telephoned.*3SG *Maria*
'Maria telephoned.'
b. Querem ler todos os alunos esse livro.
*want.*3PL *read.*INF *all the students that book*
'All the students want to read that book.'

If instead of a restructuring verb as in (16b), the matrix contains a nonrestructuring verb, as in (17), the sentence becomes ungrammatical:

(17) *Recusaram ler todos os alunos esse livro
*refused.*3PL *read.*INF *all the students that book*
'All the students refused to read that book.'

But in this case, changing the agreement in (17) does not improve the sentence; this order is simply ungrammatical. Costa argues that this is just as expected; the postverbal DP is not licensed as it cannot be reached by agreement from the tensed matrix verb. However, this is not what happens with the copular sentences where agreement with DP2 is blocked, either in Portuguese or in Faroese: here the order with DP2 in the low position remains grammatical, just the agreement changes.

Costa's discussion focussed on the licensing of DP2 in the absence of agreement; his tentative suggestion was that there was some kind of last-resort case-assignment (which would have to be prevented from occurring in examples like (17)). In fact the licensing of DP2 is only half the question; the other half is what the finite verb agrees with, if it cannot agree with DP2. While I do not currently have relevant data from Portuguese, in Faroese when the verb does not agree with DP2 what we get is not some kind of default third singular agreement, but agreement with the first DP. In sentences like (18), where our results with DPs of different number have shown us that DP2 agreement is blocked, the modal has to take plural agreement. Since we have independent evidence that this cannot be the result of agreement with DP2, we have to conclude that it is agreement with

DP1, as was argued for English in footnote 1:[7]

(18) a. Hennara yndishøvundar {*man/munnu} vera Heinesen og
*her favourite authors {*may.*SG*/may.*PL*} be Heinesen and*
Kamban.
Kamban
'Her favourite authors may be Heinesen and Kamban.'
b. Hann spurdi meg, um hennara yndishøvundar
he asked me if her favourite authors
{*mundi/mundu} vera Heinesen og Kamban.
*{*might.*SG*/might.*PL*} be Heinesen and Kamban*
'He asked me if her favourite authors might be Heinesen and Kamban.'

The same is true in the sentence type *Topic/Adjunct be DP1 DP2*, which as we have seen also does not seem to allow DP2 agreement in Faroese:

(19) Mær vitandi {*er/eru} hennara yndishøvundar Heinesen og
*to my knowledge {*is/are} her favourite authors Heinesen and*
Kamban.
Kamban
'As far as I know, her favourite authors are Heinesen and Kamban.'

Thus when DP2 agreement does not occur in Faroese, what we get instead is agreement with the first noun phrase, just as we find throughout in English.

3.3.4. Agreement and Intervention

The obligatory DP1 agreement in Adjunct-initial V2 clauses like (5c) and (19) is in some ways the most surprising aspect of these data. On the face of it, this looks like a straightforward intervention effect: the copula cannot agree with DP2 because DP1 is closer. But the typical analysis of a non-subject-initial clause like (19) is that it involves movement of the finite verb from T to C; agreement should have been established already before that movement (cf. Holmberg and Hróarsdóttir 2003), and hence should be with DP2. This however seems to be excluded, given what appears to be a near-categorical absence of the pattern exhibited in (20), which I therefore represent as ungrammatical.

(20) a. *Eftir mínari meining vóru orsøkin til eldin tey brennandi
*In my opinion were cause.*DEF *of fire.*DEF *the burning*
kertiljósini í stovuni.
*candles.*DEF *in living.room.*DEF
'In my opinion, the cause of the fire were the burning candles in the living room.'

[7] Thanks to Victoria Absalonsen, Zakaris Svabo Hansen, and Hjalmar Petersen for constructing and evaluating these sentences.

b. *[$_{CP}$ Adjunct [$_{C'}$ be.PL$_j$ [$_{TP}$ DP.SG$_i$ [$_{T'}$ t$_j$ [$_{SC}$ DP2.PL t$_i$]]]

One possible conclusion is that the finite verb has to establish agreement from its final position; this is however not at all a standard assumption, and this aspect of the agreement pattern in Faroese merits further study.

3.3.5. Comparison with Icelandic

Preliminary data gathering from six native speakers of Icelandic (three linguists and three nonlinguists) was first reported on in Heycock and Kroch (1999a). It suggests that the facts for this language are very similar to those in Faroese, but a systematic investigation remains to be conducted.[8]

According to the Icelandic speakers we consulted, in simple main clauses of the form DP1 *be* DP2, the DP2 agreement pattern is possible, and probably preferred:

(21) Sökuldóguldurinn er/ert þú.
culprit.DEF *is/are you*
'The culprit is you.'

Five of the six speakers consulted found the DP2 agreement pattern grammatical (the remaining one said that the form was "incorrect" but that it occurred); of those five, one found the DP1 agreement pattern also acceptable, while the other four found the DP1 agreement pattern either questionable or ungrammatical. This pattern did not change significantly in an adverbial clause. Because in Icelandic there is considerable debate concerning the availability of V2 in varous types of subordinate clause, it was hard to rule out a possible V2 derivation even here; however the fact that we have now found no effect in embedded questions in Faroese now makes this seem much less plausible as an explanation in Icelandic.

Again, just as in Faroese, if the tensed verb is a modal or the raising verb *virða* (seem), all informants found DP1 agreement fully grammatical and (with one exception) DP2 agreement ungrammatical:

(22) a. Sökuldóguldurinn gæti/gætir verið þú.
culprit.DEF *may*.3S/*may*.3S *be[*SUP*] you*
'The culprit may be you.'
b. Hið raunverulega vandamál virðist/virðast vera foreldrar þínir.
the real problem seems/seem be.INF *parents your*
'The real problem seems to be your parents.'

And if the clause begins with an adverbial adjunct, resulting in the order Adjunct *be* DP1 DP2, as in (23), the judgments change from those given for the DP1 *be* DP2 order, just as we have found in Faroese:

[8] It should be noted that the Icelandic sentences that were tested in some cases involved mismatch in person rather than number, so we do not always have a minimal comparison with the Faroese cases investigated here.

(23) a. Augljóslega er/ert sökuldóguldurinn þú.
*obviously is/are culprit.*DEF *you*
'Obviously, the culprit is you.'
b. Eins og vanalega er/eru hið raunverulega vandamál foreldrar þínir.
As usual is/are the real problem parents your
'As usual, the real problem is your parents.'

With this order, the six speakers we consulted were unanimous in finding the third singular agreement in (23b) (DP1 agreement) grammatical and the plural agreement ungrammatical; five out of six gave the same judgments for (23a) (that is, they found the third singular agreement grammatical and the second singular agreement ungrammatical or highly marginal); one informant only found the second person agreement better than the third. Overall, here it seems that speakers quite robustly favour the DP1 agreement, as was reported above for Faroese.

So far there seems only one possible point of difference between the two languages. In Icelandic the preference for DP2 agreement with a finite form of the copula was diminished or reversed when the negative marker *ekki* or an adverb followed the finite verb and preceded DP2:

(24) Sökuldóguldurinn er/ert ekki/alltaf/líklega þú.
*culprit.*DEF *is/are not/always/probably you*
'The culprit is not/always/probably you.'

Of the six speakers that we consulted, three found that when negation is included, third person (DP1) agreement becomes fully grammatical, instead of dispreferred; they reported that DP2 agreement remained possible, however. The other adverbs more strongly favoured DP1 agreement. This effect shows up only weakly in the production data from Faroese, as we have seen. Although the rate of DP2 agreement appears lower in this context in Table 4, the difference was not statistically significant. The judgement data from Faroese displayed in Figure 1 however, where the *Adjunct be DP1 DP2* order is the third point on the X axis, do show both an increase in the acceptability of DP1 agreement and a decrease in the acceptability of DP2 agreement in this context. It is therefore unclear at this point whether or not there is a difference between the two languages as regards the effect of negation and medial adverbs on agreement.

3.3.6. What accounts for the crosslinguistic differences?

One idea that has been exploited by various authors to explain DP2 agreement in specificational sentences is that the first noun phrase is a topic, rather than a subject. This is generally associated with the proposal that the second noun phrase is the subject of a small clause, the first noun phrase having moved from predicate position within that small clause (Moro 1991, 1997, 2000):

(25) DP1[Topic]$_i$ be [$_{SC}$ DP2[Subj] t$_i$]

This association however has sometimes been argued not to be necessary. For example Alsina (2003) argues in his analysis of specificational sentences in Catalan that the second noun phrase cannot be the subject, in particular because in a situation of *pro*-drop the first noun phrase, but not the second, can be absent. Alsina observes that the languages that show DP2 agreement are all *pro*-drop languages, unlike English and French. This cannot be quite right, since as we have seen Faroese (as well as German and to a lesser extent Dutch) allows DP2 agreement, but is not a *pro*-drop language. However, like *pro*-drop languages and unlike English and French, Faroese does allow Spec,TP to remain empty (or to contain a null expletive, depending on the analysis); if there is a subject that remains *in situ* in a lower position, the verb agrees with it. The examples in (26) from Thráinsson et al. (2004) show that Spec,TP may remain empty (or be occupied by a null expletive) in Faroese, this possibility alternating with an overt expletive:[9]

(26) a. Er (tað) skilagott at koyra við summardekkum um veturin?
*is (it) sensible to drive with summer tires in winter.*DEF
'Is it sensible to use summer tires in the winter?'
b. Í gjárkvøldið bleiv (tað) dansað í havanum.
*last night became (it) danced in garden.*DEF
'Last night there was dancing in the garden.'

And the example in (27) shows agreement with a postverbal subject, Spec,TP having again the possibility of remaining empty at least of phonological material:

(27) Eru (tað) komnir nakrir gestir úr Íslandi?
are (it) come any guests from Iceland?
'Have any guests come from Iceland?'

This evidently leads to the hypothesis that in specificational sentences in Faroese the initial DP is not in fact the subject, rather it is a kind of topic occupying Spec,TP just because this position can remain empty (this is the essence of the analysis of Italian in Moro 1991, 1997, 2000).

[9] Vikner (1995), whose position on this is adopted also in Rohrbacher (1999), takes a different view of this aspect of the language, stating (p. 118) that "Faroese has no empty expletives," while conceding that it does allow the "quasi-argumental null subjects" found in weather-verb clauses. The data given in support of this position are the examples in (i) (Vikner's (15c,d) from Chapter 7 (glosses and translations not in the original)):

(i) a. Sjálvandi er tað/**pro* gott, at tú kom.
*of course is it/*pro good that you came*
'Of course it's good that you came.'
b. Í dag er tað/**pro* komin ein drongur.
*today is it/*pro come a boy.*
'Today there came a boy.'

These judgments are clearly in conflict with those reported in Thráinsson et al. (2004). Although variation in this area has been noted, less empirical work has been done on this phenomenon so far than on the position of the finite verb.

There is another construction in Faroese in which an otherwise empty Spec,TP can host a nonsubject: stylistic fronting. In addition to cases where the subject "gap" is the result of A′-movement from this position, stylistic fronting is to some extent acceptable where there is a "low" subject; apparently less so in impersonal constructions (Barnes 1987). The existence of stylistic fronting is evidence then that Spec,TP can be occupied in Faroese by an element other than the one that the verb agrees with. Stylistic fronting is however at least marked in Faroese, whereas simple specificational sentences with DP2 agreement do not seem to have this status. At this point the question of whether the inclusion of negation or a sentence-medial adverb has a different effect in blocking DP2 agreement in Icelandic than it does in Faroese becomes particularly important. As noted in Maling (1980), in Icelandic the presence of negation blocks stylistic fronting of any other element; Holmberg (2000) points out that in fact any sentence-medial adverb has this effect. In Faroese, however, it is known that negation, at least, does not block stylistic fronting (Johannes Gisli Jónsson, Ásgrímur Angantýsson, personal communication). If the initial DP in a specificational sentence in Faroese and Icelandic where the agreement is with DP2 involves a nonsubject occupying an empty Spec,TP position by virtue of the same kind of process involved in stylistic fronting, we would expect to find blocking by negation and sentence adverbials in Icelandic but not in Faroese. At present the data are equivocal; this question therefore would benefit from a more systematic comparison between the two languages. Another question that deserves to be explored is whether there is any correlation between acceptance of "null expletives" and/or stylistic fronting and acceptance of DP2 agreement (which, as we have seen, is not consistent across speakers even in the favouring contexts).

If the DP2 agreement pattern relies on the possibility of Spec,TP being filled by some element other than the subject (or an overt expletive) then this potentially explains the lack of this agreement pattern in French and English. Given that in Faroese the possibility of leaving Spec,TP empty, or filling it via stylistic fronting rather than an overt expletive is apparently marked in comparison to e.g. Icelandic, this might even explain the variability in DP2 agreement that we observed even in the most favouring environments tested. What remains unexplained at this stage however is the robust coexistence of the "English-type" DP1 agreement strategy with the "Italian-type" DP2 type, and the pattern of distribution of the two within the language.[10]

[10]It is instructive to consider a case of what appears to be a nonsubject DP in Spec,TP in Spanish and Portuguese. In the Spanish example (ia) it might appear that the apparent "subject" has raised from the complement to *poder* (can), although the embedded verb is finite (subjunctive). However, it turns out that *poder* cannot agree with the initial DP, but instead always has third person singular (default) agreement, as seen in (ib).

(i) a. El problema pude que sea dificil
*the problem may.*3SG *that is.*SUBJ *difficult*
'The problem may be difficult.'
b. Los problemas pude/*puden que sean dificils
*the problems may.*3SG*/may.*3PL *that are[*SUBJ *difficult.*PL
'The problems may be difficult.'

4. Conclusion

Agreement in specificational sentences in Faroese is variable in more than one sense. On the one hand, agreement with the second noun phrase is favoured in some contexts, in that it is produced more than 50% of the time, and judged to be more grammatical than the alternative. Nevertheless, this preference does not result in consistent production. I have suggested that the next question to ask about this type of variation is whether there is a correlation either with the availability of "null expletive" and/or stylistic fronting constructions. On the other, we have seen that there is systematic variation between favouring agreement with the second noun phrase and nearly categorically preferring agreement with the first, depending on other aspects of the syntactic environment. In some respects this pattern resembles what has been observed for Portuguese, but Faroese agreement exhibits some properties that have not been described in the literature. Here the next question is how this distribution can be explained within a general theory of agreement and of the syntax of specificational sentences.

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The initial DP is in fact optional; when it does not appear the construction is simply viewed as impersonal. But when it does appear there must be some way of assigning it Case, just as in the Faroese examples that we are considering. It must of course also be licensed interpretively somehow, presumably via predication, as proposed for e.g. the matrix subjects of "copy-raising" constructions in Heycock (1994). Notably, however, it does not license agreement, in contrast to the cases in Faroese where agreement with DP2 is unavailable.

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