Agreement in Germanic

Summary

There are four major types of agreement in Germanic: finite verb agreement, primary predicate agreement, secondary predicate agreement, and DP-internal concord, and there is extensive variation among the Germanic languages across all these agreement phenomena. Icelandic commonly has five distinct person/number forms of verbs, while Afrikaans and the mainland Scandinavian languages (Danish, Norwegian, Swedish) have no person/number distinctions of verbs, with the other languages positioning themselves between these extremes. Standard varieties of West-Germanic languages (Afrikaans, Dutch, English, German, Yiddish, West-Frisian,) have no predicate agreement, whereas standard varieties of Scandinavian languages (Icelandic, Faroese, Norwegian, Danish, Swedish) all have both primary and secondary predicate agreement. There is, however, quite some variation in predicate agreement within the Scandinavian languages. The Mainland Scandinavian languages have gender/number agreement of both primary and secondary predicates, albeit with some variation as to whether only predicative adjectives or both predicative adjectives and past participles show agreement (and also as to when past participles show agreement). The Insular Scandinavian languages (Faroese and Icelandic), on the other hand, have case agreement, in addition to gender/number agreement, of both primary and secondary predicates, either adjectives or past participles (e.g., Icelandic primary predicate agreement: "**He**.NOM.M.SG was **drunk**.NOM.M.SG"; secondary predicate agreement: "She.NOM.F.SG met **him**.ACC.M.SG **drunk**.ACC.M.SG" [he was drunk] vs. "**She**.NOM.F.SG met him.ACC.M.SG **drunk**.NOM.F.SG" [she was drunk]). Case agreement in these two languages commonly disambiguates secondary predicate structures. Afrikaans has no concord of DP-internal

modifiers (articles, adjectives, etc.), whereas the other West-Germanic languages have some DP-concord, poorest in English, richest in German (which has gender/number/case concord of a number of categories, most clearly the articles). The Mainland Scandinavian languages also have some DP-concord (gender/number), while DP-concord is extensive in Faroese and Icelandic (gender/number/case of articles, demonstrative determiners, adjectives, some numerals, indefinite pronouns, floating quantifiers, and some possessive pronouns).
The Germanic languages are a relatively small and closely knit language family, so the extensive agreement variation within this small family is a major challenge to any general theory of agreement.

Keywords

finite verb agreement, primary predicate agreement, secondary predicate agreement, DP-concord, gender/number agreement, case agreement

1. Overview

Agreement is amazingly varied across the world's languages, raising the question of why it exists and what its function is. It is clear that it involves repetition of information, commonly facilitating reference tracking and thereby processing (Corbett, 2006, pp. 274–275). However, as many languages largely or completely lack agreement, it is also clear that it is not necessary. One can compare this with rhyming and alliteration in poetry. It also involves repetition of (phonetic) information, and that is something humans appreciate, but neither is a necessary part of poetry. The question of why some languages should have one type of agreement, while other languages have another type of agreement, and yet other languages lack both, cannot be answered or even addressed at the present state of knowledge.

Chomsky assumed that agreement reflects the underlying relation of Agree, and formulated his understanding of that relation as follows (Chomsky, 2001, p. 3):

> We therefore have a relation Agree holding between α and β, where α has interpretable inflectional features and β has uninterpretable ones, which delete under Agree.

In a clause like (1), the finite verb and the logical subject agree in number.

(1) There are three cats in the garden.

The logical subject, *three cats*, has interpretable number, whereas the number feature of the finite verb is uninterpretable, as it does not add anything to the interpretation of the clause. Hence, the number feature of the verb must be deleted prior to interpretation (although it must not be eliminated at the articulatory interface). This deletion is achieved by agreement with the logical subject. The finite verb is a probe, searching for a goal, and when it finds a goal with matching features, namely the nominative logical subject, Agree is established and the uninterpretable features of the verb (the probe) are deleted for the purpose of successful interpretation.[1]

Germanic is a relatively small language family, with closely related members, but even within this small family overt agreement is highly varied, ranging from virtually no agreement (English, Afrikaans), to limited agreement (e.g., Dutch, Swedish), to relatively rich agreement (e.g., German), to extensive agreement (Icelandic, Faroese). The differences in (2) illustrate this in part.

(2) a. We **are** rich. English

b.	Ons	is	ryk.	Afrikaans
	we	is/are	rich	
c.	Wij	**zijn**	rijk.	Dutch
	we	are.PL	rich	
d.	Wy	**binne**	ryk.	West-Frisian[2]
	we	are.PL	rich	
e.	Wir	**sind**	reich.	German
	we	are.1PL	rich	
f.	Mir	**zenen**	reykh.	Yiddish
	we	are.1PL	rich	
g.	Vi	är	**rika**.	Swedish
	we	is/are	rich.C.PL[3]	
h.	Við	**erum**	**ríkir**.	Icelandic, Masculine
	we	are.1PL	rich.NOM.**M**.PL	
i.	Við	**erum**	**ríkar**.	Icelandic, Feminine
	we	are.1PL	rich. NOM.**F**.PL	
j.	Við	**erum**	**ríkt**.	Icelandic, Neuter[4]
	we	are.1PL	rich. NOM.**N**.PL	
	All: 'We are rich.'			

Afrikaans has no agreement. Dutch, German, Yiddish, West-Frisian, and English have finite verb agreement (very meager in English), but no predicate agreement; Swedish (as also Danish and Norwegian) has predicate agreement for gender and number but no finite verb agreement; Icelandic (as also Faroese) has both finite verb agreement and full predicate agreement for case, gender, and number.

Several other types of agreement are found in the Germanic languages, including, for example, complementizer agreement in West Germanic varieties and secondary predicate agreement, as in the Icelandic examples in (3).

(3) a. Stelpurnar hittu **strákana** **drukkna**.
girls-the.NOM.F.PL met boys-the.ACC.M.PL drunk.ACC.M.PL
'The girls met the boys drunk.' [the boys were drunk]

b. **Stelpurnar** hittu strákana **drukknar**.
girls-the.NOM.F.PL met boys-the.ACC.M.PL drunk.NOM.F.PL
'The girls met the boys drunk.' [the girls were drunk]

In addition, there is DP-internal concord in most Germanic varieties, variable rich (richest in Icelandic). Finite verb agreement, predicate agreement, primary and secondary, and DP concord will be described here. Complementizer agreement will be set aside (but see, for example, Weiß, 2005; Zwart 1993a, 1993b).

2. Finite Verb Agreement: General

Finite verb agreement in Germanic involves person and number, as illustrated in (4) for the present indicative forms of the Icelandic verbs *sjá* 'see', *heyra* 'hear', and *byrja* 'begin'.

(4)

	sjá	heyra	byrja
	'see'	'hear'	'begin'
1SG	sé	heyri	byrja
2SG	sérð	heyrir	byrjar

3SG	sér	heyrir	byrjar
1PL	sjáum	heyrum	byrjum
2PL	sjáið	heyrið	byrjið
3PL	sjá	heyra	byrja
	6 forms	5 forms	4 forms

Largely parallel facts obtain in the past indicative and the present and past subjunctive.

Icelandic is the Germanic language that has the richest finite verb agreement. There is some variation in the number of distinct forms, depending on mood and conjugation classes, but the most common pattern is five distinct forms, as for *heyra* in (4). German, West-Frisian, and Yiddish have four distinct forms, and Dutch and Faroese three, as illustrated in (5) for the verbs meaning ‘hear’.

(5)	German	West-Frisian	Yiddish	Dutch	Faroese
1SG	höre	hear	her	hoor	hoyri
2SG	hörst	hearst	herst	hoort	hoyrir
3SG	hört	heart	hert	hoort	hoyrir
1PL	hören	hearre	hern	horen	hoyra
2PL	hört	hearre	hert	horen	hoyra
3PL	hören	hearre	hern	horen	hoyra
	4 forms	4 forms	4 forms	3 forms	3 forms

Like German, West-Frisian, and Yiddish, the Swedish dialect or language Övdalian (Älvdalsmålet) has four distinct forms, but with a very different pattern: a common singular form and three distinct plural forms.[5] English has two distinct forms, and Afrikaans and the

standard Mainland Scandinavian languages (Danish, Norwegian, Swedish) have only a single form, that is, no person/number inflection of finite verbs. See Sigurðsson (2004, p. 69) and the references therein.

The finite verb raises to the T(ense) head of the clause (previously called Infl(ection)) in Icelandic. This is shown for a subordinate clause in (6).

(6) ... [$_{CP}$ að [$_{TP}$ Hans [**vildi**$_{TAGR}$ ekki [$_{vP}$ __ lesa bókina]]]].
that Hans wanted.3SG not read book-the
'... that Hans did not want to read the book.'

T contains both a tense morpheme, T, and an AGR element, the latter with variables for person and number. In Icelandic, the verb must commonly raise, by V-to-T, across the negation and other sentence adverbials to combine with T and AGR. In the Mainland Scandinavian languages, on the other hand, T does not contain AGR and V-to-T does not take place, as illustrated for Swedish in (7).

(7) ... [$_{CP}$ att [$_{TP}$ Hans [__$_{T}$ inte [$_{vP}$ **ville** läsa boken]]]].
that Hans not wanted read book-the
'... that Hans did not want to read the book.'

This difference is commonly taken to be accounted for by the Rich Agreement Hypothesis, RAH (Kosmeijer, 1986, Vikner, 2001b and many others; see the overview in Koeneman & Zeijlstra, 2014). According to RAH, only languages with rich finite verb agreement have V-to-T. "Richness" has been defined differently by different authors (see, e.g., Bobaljik & Thráinsson, 1998; Koeneman & Zeijlstra, 2014), but finite verb agreement is "rich" in

Icelandic on all accounts, whereas there is no finite verb agreement in the Mainland Scandinavian languages.

Some of the Germanic VO varieties with poor or no inflection of finite verbs seemingly can apply V-to-T (e.g., Bentzen et al., 2007), and, conversely, there are seemingly cases of absent V-to-T in Icelandic (see Jónsson, 2019 and the references therein). However, all apparent counterexamples to RAH are rebutted by Koeneman and Zeijlstra (2014).

The element that triggers V-to-T is usually taken to be AGR alone, and not the tense part or T part of the T complex. Accordingly, as T does not contain AGR in Swedish, the past T morpheme in the Swedish *ville* in (7), *-e*, combines with the verb inside vP. It is a puzzle, though, that the infinitive verb raises across the negation in Icelandic control infinitives (see Bobaljik & Thráinsson, 1998, p. 63 and the references therein). Compare the Icelandic example in (8) and the Swedish one in (9).

(8) María lofaði [$_{CP}$ að [$_{TP}$ **lesa**$_{T}$ ekki [$_{vP}$ __ bókina]]].
Mary promised to read not book-the
'Mary promised not to read the book.'

(9) Maria lovade [$_{CP}$ att [$_{TP}$ __$_{T}$ inte [$_{vP}$ **läsa** boken]]].
Mary promised to not read book-the
'Mary promised not to read the book.'

Here, it seems that T alone attracts the verb in the Icelandic (8), in contrast to the Swedish (9).

Pro drop (null subjects) is another phenomenon that is commonly related to rich verb agreement (see, e.g., Biberauer et al., 2010; Rizzi, 1982). So-called discourse pro drop languages, such as Japanese and Chinese, are set aside here, as they do not have verb

agreement. For languages that do have verb agreement one can discern five types of subject pro drop, that can be arranged as in (10), along a scale of liberty (for a slightly different presentation, see Roberts & Holmberg, 2010, p. 12).

(10) no pro drop → expletive pro drop → generic pro drop → partial referential pro drop → full referential pro drop

English and the Mainland Scandinavian languages have no pro drop (and Afrikaans has next to no pro drop, see Biberauer, 2010, p. 169). Dutch and German allow *there*-type expletive pro drop, Faroese and Icelandic both *there*- and *it*-type pro drop, and Icelandic limited generic *one*-type pro drop (as in "here may (one) not smoke"; see Sigurðsson & Egerland, 2009). In contrast to most Romance languages, though, no modern Germanic variety has full referential pro drop. However, partial referential pro drop is found in a number of Germanic varieties. Verbs in the 2SG have a unique affix in most West Germanic varieties, and some of them allow 2SG pro drop, including West-Frisian, Bavarian German, Zürich German, and varieties of Dutch (see Koeneman & Zeijlstra, 2019; Rosenkvist, 2009; Weiß, 2005 and the references therein).[6] Övdalian has pro drop in the 1PL and 2PL, which clearly relates to verb agreement, as Övdalian verbs have unique agreement affixes in only 1PL and 2PL (1PL *-um*, 2PL *-ið*; Rosenkvist, 2006). Icelandic, however, has largely lost referential pro drop, despite having preserved its robust verb agreement (Sigurðsson, 2011, p. 276), including 1PL *-um* and 2PL *-ið*/*-uð* (*-ið* in the present tense, *-uð* in the past tense). Sporadic referential pro drop can be found in recently available written language corpora: Tímarit.is and The Icelandic Gigaword Corpus (as discussed in Sigurðsson, 2022). This applies especially to the 1PL, but such examples are nevertheless exceedingly rare in comparison to corresponding examples with a spelled-out subject (much less than 1%). It is probably not a coincidence that the few examples of referential pro drop in the corpora are mostly in the 1PL, with its clearly unique -

um suffix (the *ð* in the 2PL *-ið*/*-uð* is often weak or silent in pronunciation, making the suffixes homophonous in the spoken language with the common present tense 1/3SG suffix *-i* and the past tense 3PL suffix *-u*).

There seems thus to be some correlation between Germanic pro drop and verb richness, but it is vague. It is unclear why rich person agreement should enhance impersonal pro drop (expletive or generic), and it is also unclear why Övdalian has more robust 1PL and 2PL pro drop than Icelandic. It is furthermore noticeable that "richness" must be defined differently with respect to V-to-T and pro drop. While the verb is "rich enough" to trigger V-to-T in Icelandic it is not "rich enough" to license full referential pro drop.

3. Different Types of Verb Agreement

Argument-verb agreement is confined to nominative arguments in all Germanic languages that do have verb agreement. Canonically, verbs show full person/number agreement with their nominative subject, whether the two are adjacent or not. This is illustrated for German in (11)–(12).

(11) a. **Ich bin** froh gewesen.
I am.1SG happy been
'I was happy.'

b. **Wir sind** froh gewesen.
we are.1PL happy been
'We were happy.'

(12) a. ... dass **ich** froh gewesen **bin**.
that I happy been am.1SG

'... that I was happy.'

b. ... dass **wir** froh gewesen **sind**.
that we happy been are.1PL
'... that we were happy.'

While German has only full person/number agreement, as in these examples, Icelandic has instances of number agreement without concomitant overt person agreement, a fact that shows that number and person agreement are subject to distinct conditions in this language. This is most clearly seen in the famous Icelandic quirky dat-nom construction (see, for example, Coon & Keine, 2021; Sigurðsson & Holmberg, 2008). This construction is subject to a person restriction, such that the verb can agree only in the third person, first and second person agreement being ungrammatical. This is illustrated in (13).[7] Notice that the dative argument enters verb-second inversion with the finite verb, thus being the subject (Sigurðsson, 1989; Zaenen et al., 1985, among many), while the nominative is the direct object (Jónsson, 1996, pp. 143–150).

(13) a. *Honum mund**um** hafa líkað **við**. *1P AGR
him.DAT would.1PL have liked we.NOM

b. *Honum mund**uð** hafa líkað **þið**. *2P AGR
him.DAT would.1PL have liked you.NOM.PL

c. Honum mund**u** hafa líkað **þær**. ok3P AGR
him.DAT would.1PL have liked they.NOM
'He would have liked them.'

The facts in (13) are accounted for if the number feature of the verb probes only NOM, while its person feature probes both DAT and NOM, as long as this does not lead to a morphological clash (Coon & Keine, 2021, pp. 694–699; Schütze, 2003; Sigurðsson & Holmberg, 2008; and the references there). Person probing of DAT always yields third person (Boeckx, 2000; Sigurðsson, 1996), and NOM is ruled in as long as person probing of NOM leads neither to a first or second person form (which would be incompatible with person probing of DAT) nor to a form that contradicts the person of NOM. The plural feature of *mundu* in (13c) is compatible with only the plural NOM object, while its person feature is compatible with both DAT and NOM; hence, the sentence is grammatical. In (13a) and (13b), however, the first and second person forms of the verbs are incompatible with the DAT subject. As person probing of DAT always yields third person, regardless of the semantic person of DAT, this analysis extends to examples such as (14).

(14)	a.	*Okkur	mund**um**	hafa	líkað	**við** sjálf.		*1P AGR
		us.DAT	would.1PL	have	liked	we.NOM self		
	b.	*Okkur	mund**uð**	hafa	líkað	**þið**.		*2P AGR
		us.DAT	would.2PL	have	liked	you.NOM.PL		
	c.	Okkur	mund**u**	hafa	líkað	**þær**.		ok3P AGR
		us.DAT	would.3PL	have	liked	they.NOM		
		‘We would have liked them.’						

Seemingly similar dat-nom constructions are cross-linguistically common, found in, for example, South-Asian languages, Romance varieties, Russian—and German (see, e.g., Eythórsson & Barðdal, 2005). In most such constructions NOM is the sole, unrestricted agreement controller. This is illustrated for German in (15).

(15) a. Ihm würd**en** **wir** gefallen haben. [ok]1P AGR
him.DAT would.1/3PL we.NOM liked have
'He would have liked us.'

b. Ihm würd**et** **ihr** gefallen haben. [ok]2P AGR
him.DAT would.2PL you.NOM.PL liked have
'He would have liked you.PL.'

c. Ihm würd**en** **sie** gefallen haben. [ok]3P AGR
him.DAT would.1/3PL they.NOM liked have
'He would have liked them.'

The difference between the dat-nom constructions in the Icelandic (13) and (14) versus the German (15) is, first, that DAT is the subject in Icelandic and NOM the object, while NOM is the subject in German, DAT the object, and second, that DAT interferes with agreement in Icelandic, requiring third person of the verb, while it does not in German.

In Icelandic dat-nom constructions such as in (13) and (14), the dative subject is always adjacent to the finite verb. This is also true of regular nominative first and second person subjects, but not of indefinite third person subjects. Compare (16), with a first-person nominative subject, and (17), with an indefinite third person nominative subject.

(16) a. Við fórum þangað í gær.
we.NOM went.1PL there in yesterday
'We went there yesterday.'

b. *Í gær **fórum** þangað **við**.
in yesterday went.1PL there we.NOM

(17) a. Nokkrir frægir tónlistarmenn fóru þangað í gær.
several famous musicians.NOM went.3PL there in yesterday
'Several famous musicians went there yesterday.'

b. Í gær **fóru** þangað **nokkrir frægir tónlistarmenn**.
in yesterday went.3PL there several famous musicians.NOM
'Yesterday, several famous musicians went there.'

The subject and the verb are adjacent in the a-examples, but not in the b-examples. Example (16b), with a late first person subject, is sharply ungrammatical, and the same applies to parallel examples with a late second person subject, whereas the third person example in (17b) is well formed. If third person is "no person," as commonly assumed (Benveniste, 1966 and many others since; but see, e.g., Nevins, 2007 for a different view), the third-person form of the verb in (17b) is third person by default, there thus being no active person agreement between the verb and the late subject, only number agreement. In (16), however, there is clear person agreement, and, as this is ungrammatical in (16b), as opposed to (16a), one might be tempted to conjecture that strict adjacency is a condition on person agreement in Icelandic (see Baker, 2008; Koopman, 2006), as opposed to number agreement in that language as well as both person and number agreement in German. However, in clauses with demonstrative *þetta* 'this' and *það* 'it, that' as a subject, clauses with non-adjacent person agreement are fully grammatical. This is illustrated in (18); notice the verb-second inversion in (18b), showing that *það*/*þetta* is the subject.

(18) a. Það/Þetta er**um** (bara) **við**.
it/this are.1PL (only) we.NOM
'It/This is (only) us.'

b. Líklega höf**um** það/þetta þá (bara) verið **við**.
probably have.1PL it/this then (only) been we.NOM
'Probably, it/this has then (only) been us.'

Það and *þetta* are interpreted as 3SG.N in morphology, but they do not seem to have any active person feature, their third person arguably being assigned by default (Sigurðsson & Holmberg, 2008). In contrast to quirky datives, these elements thus do not interfere with verb agreement, the finite verb therefore being free to agree in person with the low predicative NOM *við* 'we'.

Adjacency is thus not a precondition on person agreement, neither in German nor Icelandic. The question, then, is why (16b) is ungrammatical ("*yesterday went there we"). The "obvious" answer might seem to be that the NOM *við* 'we' is too low, in a position where NOM cannot be assigned. However, that idea is immediately refuted by the grammaticality of the low third person NOM in (17b), as well as by the NOM object in (13c) and (14c).

4. Primary Predicate Agreement

4.1 The Icelandic Facts

In Icelandic, both predicative adjectives and passive past participles agree with their nominative subject (PRED-AGR), as illustrated in (19).[8]

(19) a. Hann var líklega **ríkur/kosinn**
he.NOM.M.SG was probably rich/elected.NOM.M.SG
'He was probably rich/elected.'
e. Þær voru líklega **ríkar/kosnar**.

they.NOM.F.PL were probably rich/elected.NOM.F.PL

'They were probably rich/elected.'

As seen, the agreeing features are case, gender, and number. The same pattern is seen in most infinitives and small clauses (see, e.g., Sigurðsson, 2008; Thráinsson, 1979). See (20).

(20) Þeir vonuðust til að verða **ríkir/kosnir**.
they.NOM.M.PL hoped for to be(come) rich/elected.NOM.M.PL
'They hoped to get rich/elected.'

In addition, the same patterns are seen in Exceptional Case Marking constructions (ECM; also referred to as Accusativus cum Infinitivo, the only difference being that the agreeing case is accusative instead of nominative on both the ECM subject and the predicate. That is, primary predicate agreement is confined to the structural cases. See (21).

(21) Ég mundi því telja þá hafa verið **ríka/kosna**.
I would thus believe them.ACC.M.PL have been rich/elected.ACC.M.PL
'I would thus believe them to have been rich/elected.'

Moreover, multiple predicate agreement is found in both nominative and accusative infinitival (and small clause) structures:

(22) a. Þeir mundu vera **taldir** vera **sagðir**
they.NOM.M.PL would be believed.NOM.M.PL be said.NOM.M.PL
hafa verið **kosnir**.
have been elected.NOM.M.PL

‘They would be believed to be said to have been elected.’

b. Ég mundi telja þá vera **sagða** hafa
I would believe them.ACC.M.PL be said.ACC.M.PL have
verið **kosna**.
been elected.ACC.M.PL
‘I would believe them to be said to have been elected.’

As mentioned in section 3, only nominatives may ever control finite verb agreement. The same applies to primary predicate agreement in finite clauses. Parallel restriction holds in ECM; that is, only accusatives that correspond to nominatives in finite clauses trigger predicate agreement in ECM (in both cases, thus, only the structural cases can control agreement). This is clearly demonstrated by adjectival predicates such as ‘cold’ and ‘hot’, which may take either a nominative (theme) or a dative (experiencer) subject. When the subject is nominative (or accusative in ECM), agreement is obligatory, but it is impossible when the subject is dative. This is illustrated in (23) and (24) for ‘cold’; the form *kalt* is default, DFT (homophonous with agreeing NOM/ACC.N.SG).

(23) a. Þeir **voru** **kaldir**.
they.NOM.M.PL were.3PL cold.NOM.M.PL
‘They were cold (to touch).’

b. Þeim **var** **kalt**.
them.DAT.PL was.3SG cold.DFT
‘They were (feeling) cold.’

(24) a. Ég taldi þá vera **kalda**.
I believed them.ACC.M.PL be cold.ACC.M.PL

‘I believed them to be cold (to touch).’

b. Ég taldi þeim vera **kalt**.
I believed them.DAT.PL be cold.DFT
‘I believed them to be (feeling) cold.’

Active participles selected by *vera* ‘be’ and *verða* ‘become’ show the same agreement properties as do passive participles, whereas active participles selected by *hafa* ‘have’ never agree, instead showing up in a default form (homophonous with NOM/ACC.N.SG). This is illustrated in (25).

(25) a. Þeir voru **horfnir/byrjaðir**.
they.NOM.M.PL were.3PL disappeared/begun.NOM.M.PL
‘They had disappeared/begun.’

b. Þeir höfðu **horfið/byrjað**.
they.NOM.M.PL had.3PL disappeared/begun.DFT
‘They had disappeared/begun.’

4.2 The Germanic Variation

This section presents the most central Germanic variation with respect to primary predicate agreement (PRED-AGR), in view of the Icelandic facts just described. Recall, first, that Icelandic PRED-AGR applies to both adjectives and past participles. Second, it involves agreement in (structural) case, gender, and number. Third, only structurally case-marked DPs may ever control PRED-AGR. Fourth, Icelandic PRED-AGR applies in finite clauses as well as in both nominative infinitives (and small clauses) and accusative infinitives (and small clauses). Fifth, it can multiply, apply repeatedly, in certain infinitival and small clause structures.

The major distinction within Germanic with respect to predicate agreement is that between North- and West-Germanic. The standard West-Germanic languages have no predicate agreement at all.[9] Thus, even standard German, which has both finite verb agreement and DP-internal concord, has no predicate agreement. This is illustrated in (26) for predicative adjectives, which always show up in uninflected short forms (the same applies to past participles).

(26) a. Ein guter Junge ist immer **gut**/*guter.
a good boy is always good
'A good boy is always good.'

b. Ein gutes Mädchen ist immer **gut**/*gutes.
a good girl is always good
'A good girl is always good.'

PRED-AGR shows variation within the Scandinavian branch. Faroese normally has the Icelandic type of PRED-AGR, in case, gender, and number, of both predicative adjectives and past participles. See Thráinsson et al. (2004, pp. 224–225, 265–266). In contrast, the Mainland Scandinavian languages, Norwegian, Swedish, and Danish, have no case agreement (as they only have pronominal case and the phrasal genitive).

All the standard Mainland Scandinavian languages have gender and number agreement of predicative adjectives, in both finite clauses and infinitives. This is illustrated for Swedish in (27) and (28).[10]

(27) a. Bilarna är **gula**.
cars-the.C.PL are yellow.C.PL
'The cars are yellow.'

b. Huset är **gult**.
house-the.N.SG is yellow.N.SG
'The house is yellow.'

(28) a. Kvinnan försökte (att) vara **stark**.
woman-the.C.SG tried (to) be strong.C.SG
'The woman tried to be strong.'

b. Kvinnorna försökte (att) vara **starka**.
women-the.C.PL tried (to) be strong.C.PL
'The women tried to be strong.'

In contrast, there is some variation within Mainland Scandinavian as to whether and when past participles show PRED-AGR. Danish and most varieties of Norwegian (referred to as Norwegian 1 in Holmberg, 2002), including the *bokmål* standard, lack participle agreement altogether. The Danish examples in (29) illustrate the difference between predicative adjectives and participles.

(29) a. De blev **rige**. / Hun blev **rig**. *agreement*
they became rich.PL / she became rich.SG
'They/She became rich.'

b. De blev **valgt**. / Hun blev **valgt**. *no agreement*
they were elected / she was elected
'They/She were elected.'

Two other varieties of Norwegian (Norwegian 2 and 3 in Holmberg, 2002) have number and gender agreement of past participles and so does Swedish. The distribution of past participle

agreement with respect to expletive subjects and logical subjects in existential sentences differs somewhat across these varieties, though, as discussed by Holmberg (2002) and Åfarli (2009). In Swedish, the participle agrees either with the expletive subject or the logical subject, depending on the position of the latter; when it has moved to the left of the participle, it triggers agreement; otherwise, the expletive does. This is shown in (30), from Holmberg (2002, p. 86).

(30) a. Det har blivit **skrivet**/*skrivna tre böcker om detta.
it.N.SG has been written.N.SG three books about this
b. Det har blivit tre böcker **skrivna**/*skrivet om detta.
it has been three books.C.PL written.C.PL about this
Both: 'There have been three books written about this.'

Norwegian 2, including the *nynorsk* standard (in Western Norway), behaves much like Swedish in this respect. Norwegian 3 is the least common of the three Norwegian varieties discussed by Holmberg (2002), found mainly along the south and the west coast. It differs from Norwegian 1 and 2, as well as Swedish, in having the locative expletive *der* (similar to English *there*), instead of the pronominal *det* (similar to *it*). The locative expletive is not specified for gender or number, so it cannot trigger participle agreement, the participle thus agreeing exclusively with the logical subject (as in Icelandic and Faroese). This is illustrated in (31), from Christensen and Taraldsen (1989, p. 58).

(31) a. Gjestene er nett **komne**/*kome.
guests.the are just arrived.PL/SG
'The guests have just arrived.'

b. Der er nett **komne**/*kome nokre gjester.

there are just come.PL/SG some guests

'Some guests have just arrived.'

In addition, there are Norwegian dialects that can use either *det* or *der* as expletives, some of them showing agreement with the logical subject in *der*-clauses, some not (Åfarli, 2009).

If microvariation is set aside, the Germanic primary predicate agreement facts can be sketched in a simplified manner as in (32).

(32)	a.	West-Germanic (standard):	No agreement
	b.	Norw. 1, Danish:	Gender/number Adj agreement, no Pcpl agreement
	c.	Norw. 2/3, Swedish:	Gender/number Adj and Pcpl agreement
	d.	Far., Ice.:	Case/gender/number Adj and Pcpl agreement

5. Secondary Predicate Agreement

Secondary adjectival predicates are either depictives or resultatives. These are boldfaced in (33).

(33)	a.	She flattened the metal **wet**.	*depictive*
	b.	She pounded the metal **flat**.	*resultative*

These examples are from Bruening (2018), where they are numbered as (2a) and (2b). Bruening stated (2018, p. 539):

> Depictives characterize an NP referent throughout the duration of the verbal event (the main predicate); resultatives characterize a result state of an NP brought about by the verbal event. Thus, in (2b) [= (33b) here] the metal becomes flat as a result of the pounding. In contrast, in (2a) [= (33a)] the metal is wet throughout the event of flattening, and not as a result of the flattening.[11]

There is no predicative agreement in standard West Germanic, whether in primary or secondary predicates. All the standard Scandinavian languages, on the other hand, have gender and number agreement in secondary predicates, and Icelandic and Faroese have case agreement there as well. The examples in (34) illustrate this for Danish, the ones in (35) for Swedish, and the ones in (36) for Icelandic.

(34) a. Hun filmede ham **nøgen**.
she filmed him naked.SG
'She filmed him naked.' [either she or he was naked]

b. Hun filmede dem **nøgne**.
she filmed them naked.PL
'She filmed them naked.' [they were naked]

(35) a. Hon filmade honom **naken**.
she filmed him naked.SG
'She filmed him naked.' [either she or he was naked]

b. Hon filmade dem **nakna**.
she filmed them naked.PL
'She filmed them naked.' [they were naked]

(36) a. Hún kvikmyndaði hann **nakin**/**nakinn**.

she filmed him naked.F.SG/M.SG

'She filmed him naked.' [F.SG: she was naked/M.SG: he was naked]

b. Hún kvikmyndaði þá **nakta**.

she filmed them.M.PL naked.M.PL

'She filmed them naked.' [they were naked]

The Icelandic examples in (37) and (38) illustrate that case agreement disambiguates secondary predicates in this language.

(37) a. Strákurinn flutti til **pabbans** **ungs**.

boy-the.NOM moved to father-the.GEN young.GEN

'The boy moved to the father (when the father was) young.'

b. **Strákurinn** flutti til pabbans **ungur**.

boy-the.NOM moved to father-the.GEN young.NOM

'The boy moved to the father (when the boy was) young.'

(38) a. Bóndinn gaf stráknum **hestinn** **ungan**.

farmer-the.NOM gave boy-the.DAT horse-the.ACC young.ACC

'The farmer gave the boy the horse (when the horse was) young.'

b. Bóndinn gaf **stráknum** hestinn **ungum**.

farmer-the.NOM gave boy-the.DAT horse-the.ACC young.DAT

'The farmer gave the boy the horse (when the boy was) young.'

c. **Bóndinn** gaf stráknum hestinn **ungur**.

farmer-the.NOM gave boy-the.DAT horse-the.ACC young.NOM

‘The farmer gave the boy the horse (when the farmer was) young.’

Recall that primary predicate agreement is restricted to the structural cases. Secondary predicate agreement, in contrast, does not obey any such case restriction; the secondary predicate agrees with its antecedent regardless of whether it is assigned structural or inherent case. It seems that finiteness somehow blocks non-structural case agreement of primary predicates, but it is unclear what the mechanism behind this blocking is. Notice that the mechanism, whatever it is, stretches into Exceptional Case Marking (ECM) infinitives (where there is obviously no local finiteness). As illustrated in (39), a primary predicate in ECM may not show non-structural case agreement, whereas a secondary predicate must; *hjálpað* ‘helped’ is a non-agreeing default form, DFT.

(39) Ég tel **henni** hafa verið **hjálpað**/*hjálpaðri **ungri**/*ung/*unga.
I believe her.DAT have been helped.DFT/DAT young.DAT/NOM/ACC
‘I believe her to have been helped (when she was) young.’

As shown in (37) and (38), the antecedent of the secondary predicate may be an indirect object or an object of a preposition. In this respect Icelandic behaves similarly to Russian, which also has case-marked secondary predicates.[12] English disallows secondary predicates anteceded by indirect objects and prepositional objects (Bruening, 2018), and so do the Mainland Scandinavian languages. German, on the other hand, does allow indirect objects to antecede secondary predicates (Müller, 2008), but this is clearly much more restricted than in Icelandic and seemingly also more restricted than in Russian. Plausibly, case marking of secondary predicates disambiguates their interpretation, thereby enabling them to relate to a wider variety of antecedents than possible in languages that do not have case-marked predicates.

6. DP-Internal Concord

Afrikaans has no DP-internal concord, and English has only number concord of demonstrative determiners, *this* versus *these* and *that* versus *those*. Other Germanic languages, Dutch, German, and the Scandinavian languages, have concord of determiners (including articles) and (commonly meager) concord of adjectives. Icelandic, Faroese, and German have concord of other nominal categories, including, for example, indefinite pronouns and quantifiers (see on Icelandic). Dutch and the Mainland Scandinavian languages have concord for gender and number, while German, Icelandic, and Faroese have concord for case, in addition to gender and number. These languages thus split into two groups, the gender/number concord group, and the case/gender/number group. Within both groups, though, concord is variably strong, with respect to which lexical items show concord as well as the richness of concord (number of distinctions) of those items that do partake in concord. In both groups, also, there are fewer distinctions in the plural than in the singular. Generally, the Germanic languages can be ordered along the concord richness scale in (40), where ">" indicates "stronger than in."

(40) Icelandic/Faroese > German > Mainland Scandinavian > Dutch > English > Afrikaans

Concord is illustrated in (41) for Swedish.

(41) a. **en** gammal kvinna / **den** gamla kvinna**n**
an.C.SG old.C.SG woman.C.SG / the old woman-the.C.SG
'an old woman' / 'the old woman'

b. **ett** gammal**t** hus / **det** gamla hus**et**
an.N.SG old.N.SG house.N.SG / the.N.SG old house-the.N.SG
'an old house' / 'the old house'

c.	**denna**	gamla	kvinna	/	**dessa**	gamla	kvinnor	
	this.C.SG	old	woman.C.SG	/	these.PL	old	women.PL	
	‘this old woman’ / ‘these old women’							
d.	**detta**	gamla	hus	/	**dessa**	gamla	hus	
	this.N.SG	old	house.N.SG	/	these.PL	old	houses.PL	
	‘this old house’ / ‘these old houses’							

Parallel patterns are much more varied in German, Faroese, and Icelandic, as these languages have case concord. This is illustrated for Icelandic in (42), albeit only in the feminine singular (the plural feminine and the singular and plural masculine and neuter have similar patterns). As Icelandic does not have an indefinite article, this is shown for the numeral *ein* ‘one’ instead.

(42)	a.	ein	gömul	kona	/	gamla	konan	NOM
		one	old	woman	/	old	woman-the	
	b.	eina	gamla	konu	/	gömlu	konuna	ACC
	c.	einni	gamalli	konu	/	gömlu	konunni	DAT
	d.	einnar	gamallar	konu	/	gömlu	konunnar	GEN
		All: ‘one old woman’			/	‘the old woman’		

As seen, the suffixed definite article, the numeral and the strong (indefinite) adjective have four case distinctions, while the weak (definite) adjective has only a nominative/oblique distinction (in the singular, none in the plural).

Icelandic concord is extensive (see, e.g., Norris, 2012). Almost any nominal DP-internal modifier shows agreement for case, gender, and number. This includes the definite article, demonstrative determiners, adjectives, the numerals 1–4, indefinite pronouns, floating

quantifiers, and some possessive pronouns. Regular Icelandic adjectives have 24 feature combinations in the strong positive inflection (4 cases, 3 genders, 2 numbers), and an additional 24 combinations in the weak inflection, while the other categories have 24 combinations (including even the first four numerals). There is quite some syncretism in the inflectional paradigms, but the number of distinctions is nevertheless impressive. Thus, adjectives have 13 distinct forms in the strong positive inflection (as compared to five distinct forms in German strong adjectives).

Consider the Icelandic extended DPs in (43).

(43)	a.	allir	þessir	þrír	gömlu	vinir	mínir	NOM.M.PL
		all	these	three	old	friends	mine	
	b.	alla	þessa	þrjá	gömlu	vini	mína	ACC.M.PL
	c.	öllum	þessum	þrem	gömlu	vinum	mínum	DAT.M.PL
	d.	allra	þessara	þriggja	gömlu	vina	minna	GEN.M.PL
		All: ‘all these three old friends of mine’						

Extended DPs of this sort seem to be headed by the initial quantifier, Q, which in turn takes the rest of the DP as a complement (Shlonsky, 1991).

When floated, quantifiers show the same distinctions as when not floated. This is illustrated in (44).

(44)	a.	Þessir	þrír	vinir	eru	**allir**	hraustir.	NOM.M.PL
		these	three	friends	are	all	healthy	
	b.	Þessa	þrjá	vini	vantar	**alla**	skó.	ACC.M.PL
		these	three	friends	lack	all	shoes	
	c.	Þessum	þrem	vinum	líður	**öllum**	vel.	DAT.M.PL

	these	three	friends	feel	all	well	
d.	Þessara	þriggja	vina	er	**allra**	saknað.	GEN.M.PL
	these	three	friends	are	all	missed	

Largely the same applies when the DP is an object (indirect, direct, prepositional). Reasonably, floating quantifiers are generated low in the structure and stranded when the rest of the DP is moved higher up in the clausal structure (Sportiche, 1988; see also the extensive discussion in Cirillo, 2009).

In the Scandinavian languages, DP-concord and predicate agreement seem to be closely related. They involve the same features: gender and number in Mainland Scandinavian, gender, number, and case in Insular Scandinavian (Icelandic and Faroese). This might seem to suggest that predicate agreement actually *is* DP-concord; the agreement controller might be generated in a DP within the VP, triggering concord there, and later moved to the subject position, as simply sketched in (45) for Icelandic *Þeir voru ríkir/kosnir* 'they.NOM.M.PL were rich/elected. NOM.M.PL'.

(45) [voru rík-/kos- þeir] > [voru þeir$_i$ ríkir/kosnir __$_i$] > [þeir voru __$_i$ ríkir/kosnir __$_i$]

DP-concord

However, if this is on the right track, there must be some extra explanation of the fact that standard German and Dutch have DP-concord but no predicate agreement (see Booij, 2002; Schoorlemmer, 2014) and also of the fact that Danish and most varieties of Norwegian do not have predicate agreement of past participles, in contrast to adjectives.

7. Discussion

Central agreement phenomena in Germanic have been described here: finite verb agreement, primary predicate agreement, secondary predicate agreement, and DP-concord. Chomsky's understanding of Agree (Chomsky, 2000, 2001), mentioned in section 1, seems to account straightforwardly for finite verb agreement, provided that intervention is taken into account. Predicate agreement and DP-concord are more complicated, as they involve multiple agreement (recall that Icelandic Exceptional Case Marking [ECM] constructions can have multiple predicate agreement). However, if many probes are capable to agree with a single NP, also these phenomena can be accommodated under Chomsky's Agree.[13] Icelandic nominal modifiers, including adjectives, indefinite pronouns, demonstrative pronouns, the definite article, and past participles, have AGR variables for case, number, and gender, and if these variables can all probe one and the same NP (or its N-head) each of them establishes an Agree relation with the NP. Insertion of the agreeing suffixes obviously takes place post-syntactically (in the so-called phonetic form), but their values are arguably calculated in syntax. It is noteworthy, though, that Chomsky's Agree involves matching of uninterpretable features (on a probe) and interpretable features (on a goal), which results in elimination of the uninterpretable features, so they will not be visible in the semantics (so-called logical form), hence not get any interpretation. The structural cases are taken to be uninterpretable by Chomsky. They are clearly uninterpretable on agreeing elements, such as adjectives and past participles; in a sentence like Icelandic *Þeir voru ríkir/kosnir* 'they.NOM.M.PL were rich/elected. NOM.M.PL', neither the case nor the gender/number of the predicate adds anything to the interpretation of the clause; it means exactly the same as English *They were rich/elected*. If the nominative case of the DP *þeir* 'they' is **un**interpretable it should not enter an Agree(ment) relation with the **un**interpretable nominative case of the predicates, contrary to fact. It thus seems that the notion of (un)interpretability needs to be revised; alternatively,

feature (un)interpretability must be distinguished from feature valuing, as argued by Bošković (2011). On Bošković's approach the structural case of DPs is not both uninterpretable and unvalued, as Chomsky suggests (Chomsky, 2000, 2001), but rather uninterpretable and valued.

Regardless of the technical details of the analysis or analyses of various agreement phenomena, the major challenge for any general approach to agreement is that agreement is everything but general. It is amazingly varied, even within the small family of the closely related and in many other ways similar Germanic languages. Finite verb agreement, primary and secondary predicate agreement, and DP-concord are all variably rich across Germanic, and there are also many agreement lacunas in Germanic, such that language A has no agreement, where language B has robust agreement.

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Corpora

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Notes

[1] The minimalist terms “probe” and “goal” correspond, roughly, to “controller” and “target,” respectively, in the terminology of Corbett (2006). I opt for “probe” and “goal”, as I adopt the minimalist approach. Besides, as far as I can see, “agreement probe, “agreement goal” are more widespread on the Internet (Google, Google Scholar) than “agreement controller,” “agreement target.”

[2] West-Frisian and Dutch have person distinction in the singular, but not in the plural. See (5).

[3] Swedish, like Danish, Dutch, West-Frisian, and varieties of Norwegian, has a two-gender system, neuter and common gender, C.

[4] Neuter is used when the subject refers to both masculine and feminine referents (as in “Mary said to Peter: ‘We (Mary and Peter) are rich’”).

[5] This is the same system as in Old Swedish (see Petterson 1996,p. 101). As seen in (4), the singular person endings are more varied in Icelandic than the plural person endings. However, it is like Old Swedish and Övdalian in that it generally has more person distinctions in the plural (three) than in the singular (commonly two). In Continental West Germanic, the opposite pattern is much more common, that is, two to three person distinctions in the singular but no person distinctions in the plural (“Einheitsplural”). See the map in König et al. (2019, p. 128) on Einheitsplural-forms in German dialects, which mainly occur in Western Upper German and in Low German. In terms of the relevance hierarchy of Bybee (1985), the system of Old Swedish and Övdalian is unexpected, because person is claimed to be less relevant than number.

[6] The example in (i), here taken from Rosenkvist (2009, p. 162), illustrates this for Bavarian.

(i)	...	ob**st**	noch	Minga	kumm**st**.
		if.2SG	to	Munich	come.2SG
		‘... if you come to Munich.’			

[7] There is also a biclausal Exceptional Case Marking type dat-nom construction, which contains not only a simple main clause but also a subordinate infinitive or a small clause (type "her.DAT would then seem they.NOM (be) lazy" = 'They would then seem to be lazy to her'). It shows largely the same person restriction as the monoclausal construction. See Sigurðsson and Holmberg (2008) for discussion.

[8] Conjoined subjects raise complications with respect to both predicate agreement and finite verb agreement that are set aside here. See Friðjónsson (1991) and Þorvaldsdóttir (2017).

[9] In contrast, Highest Alemannic has predicate agreement and in larger parts of Upper German there is an inflectional marker with depictives. See, for example, Bucheli Berger (2005), Vikner (2001a).

[10] The Mainland Scandinavian languages also have so-called pancake sentences, where the overt subject is in the common gender, singular or plural, while the predicative adjective is in the neuter singular. This is illustrated for Swedish in (i).

(i) Pannkakor är nyttig**t**.
pancakes.C.PL is healthy.N.SG
'(To have/eat) pancakes is healthy.'
[from Josefsson (2014, p.62)]

As convincingly argued by Josefsson (2014), however, the subject of a pancake sentence is headed by a null neuter classifier that triggers neuter agreement of the predicate. This type will not be further discussed here.

[11] On resultatives in Icelandic, see Whelpton (2017).

[12] The facts are more complex in Russian than in Icelandic, though, as Russian variably uses instrumental case marking in secondary predicates or case agreement (Icelandic applying only the agreement strategy). See Richardson (2001, 2007).

[13] See Hiraiwa (2001) on multiple Agree. See also Norris (2012).