Long-Distance Agreement in Icelandic: Locality restored*

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Abstract

The subject-predicate agreement system in Icelandic has attracted a significant amount of attention in the generative literature for two reasons: first, the agreement system appears to show sensitivity to the morphological marking of case, instead of the syntactic position of the argument to be agreed with (Zaenen et al. 1985; Sigurðsson 1993, 1996, among others). Second, agreement in a mono-clausal environment differs from its bi-clausal counterpart in that in a mono-clausal environment, the finite verbal element always agrees with a Nominative argument, irrespective of the argument's syntactic status, while in a bi-clausal environment agreement with Nominative appears to be optional and may be disrupted by an intervening Dative argument (Watanabe 1993; Schütze 1997; Chomsky 2000; Holmberg and Hróarsdóttir 2003; Boeckx and Hornstein 2003; Nomura 2005; Bobaljik 2008, among others).

This paper contributes to the existing discussion by proposing a new empirical generalization about the nature of Long-Distance Agreement (LDA), i.e., agreement which occurs in a bi-clausal environment, and its interaction with Dative interventions. Based on the new data, I argue that LDA takes place only if the intervening Dative argument undergoes independently motivated A-movement to the edge of vP, be it Object Shift (Holmberg 1986; Thráinsson 2001) or Quantifier Movement (Jónsson 1996; Svenonius 2000). The core idea is that LDA arises only if v can probe the Nominative argument in the absence of the Dative argument. If the valued ϕ-features appear on T,

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it is only via Agree between v and T. The timing of syntactic operations is crucial: I argue that it is the movement of the Dative argument which turns v into a phase head, and consequently, triggers Feature Inheritance, followed by feature matching and valuation. Thus agreement with the Nominative is obligatory whenever v is a strong phase and no Dative argument intervenes between v and Nominative when Agree takes place. Such an account in turn allows for reducing the difference between mono-clausal and bi-clausal environments to an independent difference in the base-generated position of the Dative argument with respect to the probe. The analysis is further supported by novel wh-movement-data that show that it is the timing, not the surface linear order of arguments, that determines agreement.

The timing pattern strongly suggests that this type of agreement is not post-syntactic (contra Bobaljik 2008). Instead, I argue that the obligatory agreement with the Nominative stems from the fact that only Nominative DPs contain a D that may be minimally searched for by the probe (Chomsky 2013) and in turn can give rise to ϕ-feature valuation. Quirky-case subject's D is not accessible in the same way because of an additional structural level which separates D from the probe (Rezac 2008; Pesetsky 2013, among others).

The proposed analysis thus accounts for the Icelandic patterns in a strictly derivational and locality-based manner, without any recourse to post-syntactic operations, optionality in agreement or significant modifications in the theory of ϕ-feature Agree, thus restoring the Icelandic agreement system to normalcy.

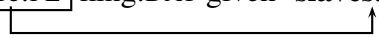
1 Agreement in mono-clausal vs. bi-clausal environment

The example in (1) demonstrates a basic agreement fact about Icelandic: overt morphological agreement of the finite predicate is not uniformly governed by an argument in a specific syntactic position; instead the finite verb agrees with an argument in Nominative, irrespective of the argument's syntactic position (Sigurðsson 1993, 1996, among others).[1] Thus in (1), the agreement is with the morphologically Nominative argument *ambáttir* 'slaves,' even though syntactically it

[1]See Zaenen et al. (1985) for arguments that quirky subjects in Icelandic are syntactically subjects, and consequently, Nominative-marked arguments can be objects etc.

is an object of the passive predicate.[2]

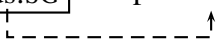
(1) það voru konugi gefnar ambáttir í vettur.
EXPL were.PL king.DAT given **slaves.NOM** in winter



'A king was given female slaves in winter.'

The puzzling fact about Icelandic is that while agreement with a Nominative argument is obligatory in a mono-clausal environment, as in (1), in a bi-clausal environment agreement appears to be optional. Thus in (2), the verb may agree with the Nominative subject of the small clause, *tölvurnar ljótar* 'computers ugly', or it may surface with default agreement (3.SG). I will refer to this type of agreement in a bi-clausal environment as Long-Distance Agreement (henceforth, LDA).

(2) a. Einhverjum stúdent finnst tölvurnar ljótar.
some student.DAT finds.SG computers.DEF.NOM ugly.NOM



b. Einhverjum stúdent finnast tölvurnar ljótar.
some student.DAT find.PL computers.DEF.NOM ugly.NOM

'Some student finds the computers ugly.' (Holmberg and Hróarsdóttir 2003, p. 999, (9))

Interestingly, LDA in a bi-clausal environment is sensitive to a presence of a potential Dative intervener. As noticed by Watanabe (1993) and Schütze (1997), if a Dative argument ('experiencer') linearly intervenes between the finite verb and the Nominative argument, the otherwise optional agreement with the Nominative argument is excluded, (3).

[2]There is a lot of variation among Icelandic speakers with respect to agreement (rural versus urban areas, inner vs. outer Reykjavík, generational differences). Unless indicated otherwise, the judgments reported in this paper are from 9 native speakers of Icelandic. They all are originally from Reykjavík, have a college education or higher, and were born between 1976 and 1982. Data were collected either as a forced choice, using truth-value judgment tasks (Skopeteas et al. 2006; Matthewson 2004), or via elicitation. All the speakers shared the core judgments reported in the paper.

(3) a. Það virðist einhverjum manni hestarnir vera
EXPL [seems.SG] **some** **man.DAT** horses.DEF.NOM be
seinir.
slow.NOM

b. *Það virðast einhverjum manni hestarnir vera
EXPL [seem.PL] **some** **man.DAT** horses.DEF.NOM be
seinir.
slow.NOM

'A man finds the horses slow.' (Holmberg and Hróarsdóttir 2003, p. 1010–1011, (39))

The contrast between mono-clausal and bi-clausal environments led to analyses in terms of defective intervention (Chomsky 2000; Boeckx 2003), and analyses that argue that the contrast results from restructuring of the infinitival complement in the sense of Wurmbrand (2001) (Nomura 2005; Bobaljik 2008).

However, as observed by Holmberg and Hróarsdóttir (2003), not all Dative arguments behave as interveners in an LDA configuration, providing an intriguing counterexample to the existing proposals. As the examples in (4) show, some Dative arguments are transparent to LDA. If LDA was blocked because of defective intervention, all Datives should block LDA. If the presence of a Dative experiencer correlated with a non-restructuring infinitival complement, no Dative should be transparent to LDA either.

(4) a. Það finnst mörgum stúdentum tölvurnar
EXPL [finds.SG] **many** **students.DAT** computers.DEF.NOM
ljótar.
ugly.NOM

b. Það finnast mörgum stúdentum tölvurnar
EXPL [find.PL] **many** **students.DAT** computers.DEF.NOM
ljótar.
ugly.NOM

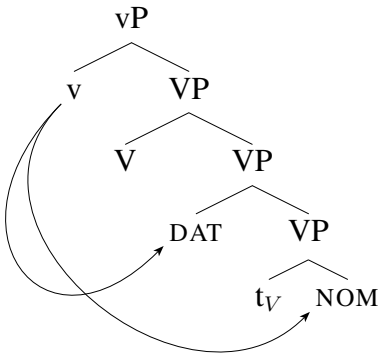
'Many students find the computers ugly.' (Holmberg and Hróarsdóttir 2003, p. 1000, (13))

The pattern raises the question of what the difference between (3) and (4) is, and why this difference arises only in a bi-clausal, and not in a mono-clausal environment. According to Holmberg and Hróarsdóttir (2003), LDA is conditioned

by the ϕ-feature values of the intervening Dative argument. According to their proposal, the Dative argument is transparent to LDA only if the Dative argument and the Nominative goal share the same values of ϕ-features.[3]

I will argue that the generalization put forward in Holmberg and Hróarsdóttir (2003) is not empirically correct, a fact which in turn invalidates the proposed analysis. The argument will come from a new empirical observation, namely, that there are some Dative arguments that share their ϕ-features with the Nominative probe, yet they still behave as interveners for the Agree relation between the finite verb and the Nominative argument. In order to account for the data, I will propose a new generalization which will tie the difference between transparent and opaque Dative arguments to an independent syntactic property: I will show that only Dative arguments that may independently undergo Object Shift[4] (Holmberg 1986; Thráinsson 2001) may be transparent to LDA.[5] Thus, the proper characterization of the intervention properties cannot be stated in terms of ϕ-feature-value congruence. Instead, it needs to be stated in structural terms, more precisely, in terms of locality. More precisely, I will argue that LDA arises only if there is no intervening argument between the probe (v) and the Nominative argument at the time when Agree takes place, as schematized in (5).

(5) a. *LDA:

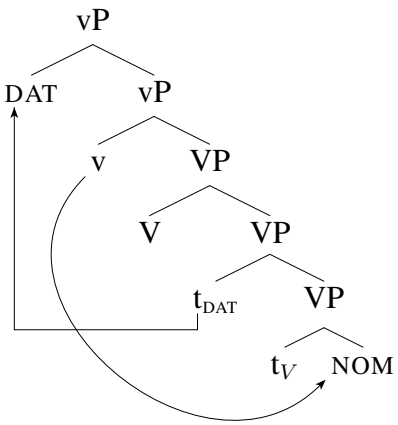


[3]Thus they adopt the defective intervention analysis but modify it in the spirit of multiple-Agree proposals, such as that of Hiraiwa (2005).

[4]As I discuss in Section 3, I assume the Dative argument is merged as an internal argument.

[5]It is a common property of all the cases to be discussed in this paper that the relevant movement is semantically motivated. I do not have a principle explanation for why it should be so. The pattern seems to suggest that only a semantic movement is capable of merging a specifier of vP in the absence of an external argument. One possibility is that there is a connection between an existential closure and having a specifier, as in Diesing (1992). The other option is that the ability to merge a specifier of this sort results from an independent economy condition on the syntax-semantics interface. Unfortunately, I am not aware of any data or theoretically motivated argument which would clearly distinguish between these two options.

b. ✓LDA:



Section 2 provides empirical support for this new generalization, and Section 3 proposes an analysis in terms of v acting as a single probe and the Nominative argument being the closest goal in the search domain at the relevant time of the derivation. Since LDA arises only if the Dative argument may be removed from the probing domain, we expect to find LDA whenever the Dative argument may be moved out from the probing domain. Section 3.1 explores this prediction by investigating Dative arguments that undergo so-called Quantifier Movement (Jónsson 1996; Svenonius 2000). As we will see, the prediction is indeed borne out.

Since LDA is predicted to take place only if the potential intervener is removed from the probing domain before Agree takes place, the timing of syntactic operations is crucial. Section 4 refines the proposed system by looking closely at the question of when exactly Agree takes place, and argues that the timing is closely tied to phase-hood which in and of itself is dependent on whether or not the given domain can be linearized (Richards 2003; Kučerová 2012, see also Fox and Pesetsky 2005 for a related proposal). Since the relevant configurations concern v while the morphological reflex of the finite agreement appears on the finite verb in T, it is unlikely that LDA is an instance of a post-syntactic agreement (contra Bobaljik 2008). Section 4.2 addresses the seeming paradox, namely, the fact that even though the relevant Agree takes place in syntax, it still seems to respect a morphologically based accessibility hierarchy (Marantz 1991). I will argue that a morphological Nominative results from mapping onto a DP without any additional case layer (Rezac 2008; Pesetsky 2013). Thus it is the only type of noun phrase which may be minimally searched for D and in turn become a source

of ϕ-feature valuation. Section 4.1 explores the predictions made by the refined system in the domain of *wh*-movement. Section 5 concludes the paper.

2 Toward a new generalization: Object Shift feeds LDA

The problem with the generalization put forward in Holmberg and Hróarsdóttir (2003), namely, the generalization that LDA across a potential Dative intervener is possible only if the values of ϕ-features on the Nominative goal and the Dative intervener are identical, does not extend to other lexical items with the same ϕ-feature values. We can see this if we compare one of their original examples, in (4), repeated below, with its minimally different counterpart given in (6). In both (4) and (6), the Nominative argument is the subject of the small clause and it is in the plural, while the potential intervener is plural in both of these configurations. Yet, only the Dative in (4) enables LDA. The Dative in (6) blocks it. The contrast is entirely unexpected under the generalization proposed by Holmberg and Hróarsdóttir.

(4) a. Það finnst mörgum stúdentum tölvurnar
EXPL finds.SG **many** **students.DAT** computers.DEF.NOM
ljótar.
ugly.NOM

b. Það finnast mörgum stúdentum tölvurnar
EXPL find.PL **many** **students.DAT** computers.DEF.NOM
ljótar.
ugly.NOM

'Many students find the computers ugly.'

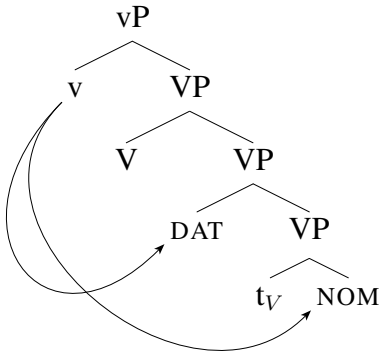
(6) a. Það finnst fáum börnum tölvurnar
EXPL finds.SG. **few** **children.DAT.PL** computer.DEF.NOM.PL
ljótar.
ugly

b. *Það finnast fáum börnum tölvurnar ljótar.
EXPL find.PL. **few** **children.DAT.PL** computer.DEF.NOM.PL ugly

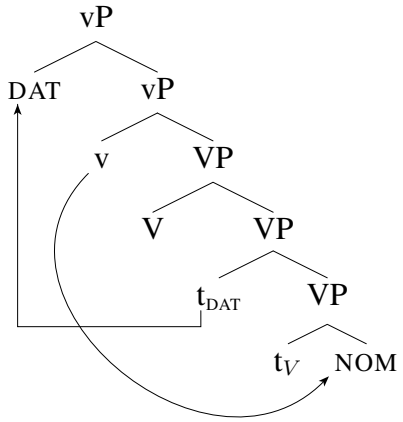
'Few children find the computers ugly./There are few children that find the computers ugly.'

I argue that the presence or absence of LDA is not dependent on the value of ϕ-features of the Dative intervener, instead LDA depends on whether or not the Dative intervener may have undergone Object Shift (Holmberg 1986; Thráinsson 2001). Thus, Datives that always block LDA – I will call them Datives of the A-class (Dative-A) – correspond to DPs that on independent syntactic grounds cannot undergo Object Shift. Hence, they stay below v at the time when Agree takes place. In contrast, Datives that are transparent to LDA – I will call them Datives of the B-class (Dative-B) – may independently undergo Object Shift, i.e., they may raise above v, which is, as I argue, the structural configuration necessary for LDA to take place. In contrast, if Dative-B does not undergo Object Shift, for the purposes of LDA it behaves like Dative-A, i.e., it blocks agreement with the Nominative argument and in turn it creates the illusion of agreement with Nominative being optional. The relevant configurations are schematized in (7) and (8).

(7) Dative-A does not undergo OS:



(8) Dative-B undergoes OS:



In order to execute the argument, let us first summarize the basic distributional facts about Long-Distance Agreement with a Nominative argument in a biclausal environment. First, as the examples in (9) demonstrate, if no argument intervenes between the finite verb and the Nominative argument, agreement is optional. Thus, whatever theory of agreement we will adopt, it needs to allow for two possible agreement patterns in the absence of a possible intervener.

(9) a. Einhverjum stúdent finnst tölvurnar ljótar.
some **student.DAT** finds.SG computers.DEF.NOM ugly.NOM

b. Einhverjum stúdent finnast tölvurnar ljótar.
some **student.DAT** find.PL computers.DEF.NOM ugly.NOM

'Some student finds the computers ugly.'

Second, if a Dative argument linearly intervenes between the finite form and the Nominative argument, LDA is sometimes blocked (Watanabe 1993; Schütze 1997), as in (10).

(10) a. Það virðist einhverjum manni hestarnir vera
EXPL seems.SG **some** **man.DAT** horses.DEF.NOM be
seinir.
slow.NOM

b. *Það virðast einhverjum manni hestarnir vera
EXPL seem.PL **some** **man.DAT** horses.DEF.NOM be
seinir.
slow.NOM

'A man finds the horses slow.'

Third, there are some Dative arguments that may linearly appear between the finite verb and the Nominative argument, yet LDA is still licit, as in (4), which we saw earlier.

(4) a. Það finnst mörgum stúdentum tölvurnar
EXPL finds.SG **many** **students.DAT** computers.DEF.NOM
ljótar.
ugly.NOM

b. Það finnast mörgum stúdentum tölvurnar
EXPL find.PL **many** **students.DAT** computers.DEF.NOM
ljótar.
ugly.NOM

'Many students find the computers ugly.'

Before I proceed with a further examination of the data, a note on the data collection is in place. Not all Icelandic speakers agree with the judgments in (4), i.e., the judgments reported in Holmberg and Hróarsdóttir (2003). For some speakers, Dative arguments always block LDA, and for some speakers LDA is excluded altogether. The data reported in this paper are only from those speakers who agree with the contrast between (10) and (4).[6] I will have nothing to say about the grammar of the speakers who don't share the critical contrast.[7]

As mentioned already, Holmberg and Hróarsdóttir (2003) were the first to observe that not all Dative arguments behave as interveners – Datives in the plural are transparent to LDA. This generalization cannot be correct, however, because the speakers who have a contrast between (10) and (4), do not find LDA across certain other plural Datives equally acceptable. As the examples in (11)–(14) demonstrate, there are Dative arguments in the plural that systematically block LDA.

(11) a. Það finnst fáum börnum tölvurnar
EXPL finds.SG. **few** **children.DAT.PL** computer.DEF.NOM.PL
ljótar.
ugly

b. *Það finnast fáum börnum tölvurnar
EXPL find.PL. **few** **children.DAT.PL** computer.DEF.NOM.PL
ljótar.
ugly

'There are few children that find the computers ugly.'

(12) a. Það finnst báðum köttumum mýsnar góðar.
EXPL finds.SG. **both** **cats.DEF.DAT** mice.DEF.NOM tasty

b. *Það finnast báðum köttumum mýsnar góðar.
EXPL find.PL. **both** **cats.DEF.DAT** mice.DEF.NOM tasty

'Both the cats find the mice tasty.'

[6]For the sociological data of the speakers and the method of data collection see ft. 2.

[7]Note that if the proposal is on the right track, LDA arises only in a particular syntactic configuration which is sensitive to Object Shift, head movement, phase-hood and Agree properties of the relevant phase head. The variation in Long-Distance Agreement thus might stem from a variation in any of these domains, not only from the domain of ϕ-feature Agree. A careful exploration of the relevant variables goes beyond the scope of the present work.

(13) a. Það finnst næstum öllum börnum
EXPL finds.SG. **almost all children.DAT.PL**
tölvurnar ljótar.
computer.DEF.NOM.PL ugly
b. *Það finnast næstum öllum börnum
EXPL find.PL. **almost all children.DAT.PL**
tölvurnar ljótar.
computer.DEF.NOM.PL ugly
'Almost all children find the computers ugly.'

(14) a. Það finnst hverjum ketti mýsnar góðar.
EXPL finds.SG. **each cat.DAT** mice.DEF.NOM tasty
b. *Það finnast hverjum ketti mýsnar góðar.
EXPL find.PL. **each cat.DAT** mice.DEF.NOM tasty
'Each cat finds the mice tasty.'

Yet, the observation made by Holmberg and Hróarsdóttir does not seem to be entirely accidental as other Dative arguments in the plural systematically allow for LDA. Note that there are non-trivial limitations to testing the properties of the interveners as the relevant configuration seems to arise only in transitive expletive constructions, and the set of Dative DPs that can occur in this type of construction is rather restricted. For instance, non-quantificational DPs and proper nouns are excluded from the relevant position (e.g., Vangsnes (2002) and references cited therein). Yet, some other plural Datives behave as predicted by Holmberg and Hróarsdóttir (2003), as seen in (15)–(16).

(15) a. Það finnst akkúrat þremur börnum
EXPL finds.SG. **exactly three children.DAT.PL**
tölvurnar ljótar.
computer.DEF.NOM.PL ugly
b. Það finnast akkúrat þremur börnum
EXPL find.PL. **exactly three children.DAT.PL**
tölvurnar ljótar.
computer.DEF.NOM.PL ugly
'Exactly three children find the computers ugly.'

(16) a. Það finnst nokkrum köttum mýsnar góðar.
EXPL finds.SG. **few-of.DEF cats.DAT** mice.DEF.NOM tasty

b. Það finnast nokkrum köttum mýsnar góðar.
EXPL find.PL. **few-of.DEF cats.DAT** mice.DEF.NOM tasty
'Few of the cats find the mice tasty.'

In light of these facts, it is clear that restrictions on LDA across a Dative argument cannot be reduced to the ϕ-feature properties of the goal and the potential intervener. The question then is whether there is another syntactically relevant property which would account for the attested distribution. I argue that there indeed is a syntactic correlation which groups together the Dative arguments transparent to LDA, to the exclusion of the Dative arguments that systematically block LDA; namely, the intervention behavior of a Dative argument correlates with its Object Shift properties (Holmberg 1986; Thráinsson 2001). A new generalization stating the correlation is given in (17).

(17) *New generalization:*
A Dative argument is transparent to LDA only if the Dative DP can independently undergo Object Shift (OS).

Thus, for the speakers for whom, for instance, *fáum köttum* 'few cats.DAT.PL' blocks LDA, the same quantificational DP cannot undergo Object Shift. As we see in (18)–(19), if such a DP appears as an object in a finite clause in which the main verb undergoes head movement to T, the DP must follow the sentential negation *ekki*.

(18) a. Mýs elska *ekki* **fáa ketti**.
mice love not few cats
b. *Mýs elska **fáa ketti** *ekki*.
mice love few cats not
'Mice do not love few cats.'

(19) a. Mýsnar elska *ekki* **hvern kött**.
mice love not each cat
b. *Mýsnar elska **hvern kött** *ekki*.
mice love each cat not
'The mice do not love each cat.'

In contrast, quantificational DPs that are transparent to LDA can independently undergo Object Shift, i.e., as we see in (20)–(21), they may linearly precede the sentential negation. The relevant fact here is that full DPs in Icelandic, unlike their pronominal counterparts, undergo Object Shift optionally.

(20) a. Mýsnar elska *ekki* **akkúrat þrjá ketti**.
mice.DEF love not exactly three cats
b. Mýsnar elska **akkúrat þrjá ketti** *ekki*.
mice.DEF love exactly three cats not
'The mice do not love exactly three cats.'

(21) a. Mýsnar elska *ekki* **nokkra ketti**.
mice.DEF love not few-of.DEF cats
b. Mýsnar elska **nokkra ketti** *ekki*.
mice.DEF love few-of.DEF cats not
'The mice do not love few of the cats.'

The correlation between LDA and Object Shift is summarized in the table in (22). The data in the table are averaged over all the speakers.[8]

(22) *Correlation between* LDA *and Object Shift:*

Quantifier	Is LDA possible?	Is OS possible?
almost all	no	no
few	no	no
all	no	no
both the	no	no
almost all the	no	no
each	no	no
many	yes	yes
three	yes	yes
exactly three	yes	yes
few of the	yes	yes
some pl	yes	yes

3 The Analysis

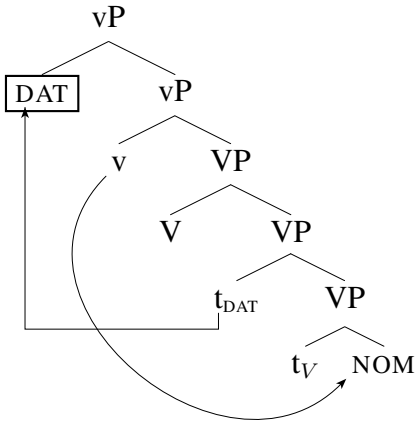
I follow the previous line of thought on Object Shift which assumes, following the insight of analyses such as that of Thráinsson (2001), that Object Shift is A-movement, i.e., a syntactic operation that targets a specifier of vP (Holmberg

[8]For three of the speakers tested, a couple of the quantificational DPs fell into the opposite group than indicated in the table; however, it has always been the case that if such a DP didn't undergo Object Shift, it blocked LDA, and vice versa.

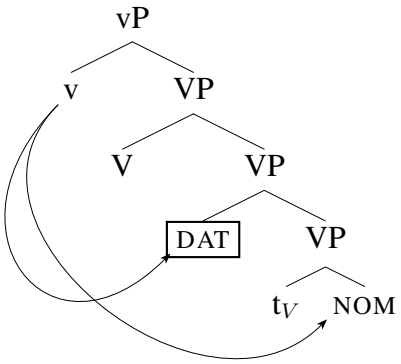
1999; Nilsen 2003; Fox and Pesetsky 2005). Furthermore, I assume phase-based Agree, i.e., that all unvalued features must be checked and valued before Transfer (Chomsky 2001, 2004, 2013, among others). Consequently, if vP is a phase, the ϕ-features that act as a probe for agreement within the vP are located on v (see Boeckx 2004; Pesetsky and Torrego 2007 for ideas in a similar direction). If the relevant ϕ-features appear on T, it must be via Agree between T and v (modulo Agree with other functional heads potentially intervening between T and v).

As for propositional predicates such as *seem*, I assume that they do not have any external argument. The Dative argument, i.e., the 'experiencer' with respect to whom beliefs expressed by the predicate are evaluated, is an internal argument of the infinitival complement VP (VP-shell; Larson 1988; Hale and Keyser 2002, among others). Consequently, after Object Shift of the experiencer Dative takes place, v is free to probe the Nominative argument, as schematized in (23a). On the other hand, if the experiencer does not undergo Object Shift, as in the structure schematized in (23b), the Dative is the closest potential goal for v; however, since it is not Nominative, it cannot value the ϕ-features on v, and in turn LDA cannot be established.

(23) a. *Derivation I (*DAT *undergoes OS):*



b. *Derivation II (*DAT *does not undergo OS):*

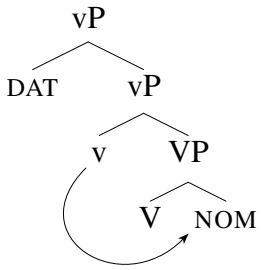


This is, of course, only a rough sketch of the analysis. It crucially relies on a particular order of syntactic operations, namely, that Object Shift needs to precede Agree. The empirical question is whether Agree may take place before the movement as well but LDA arises only if Agree takes place after Object Shift, or whether Agree always takes place only after Object Shift. In Section 3.1, we will see evidence that Agree must take place after Object Shift, hence the timing of

these two operations is fixed. The other question we will need to answer is how the values of v interact with the higher phase, namely, the ϕ-features on T. We will investigate these two questions in Section 4. But before we look into these questions, let us consider why a Dative argument never behaves as an intervener in a mono-clausal environment.

The crucial difference between mono-clausal and bi-clausal environments is that in a mono-clausal environment (of the type that allows for Nominative objects) a Dative argument is an external argument which means that it is either merged at Spec,vP, or it moves there (see, for instance, Bobaljik and Jonas (1996) on heights of Icelandic subjects). Thus, in this configuration, schematized in (24), v is always free to probe the Nominative argument. Consequently, the finite verb in a mono-clausal environment[9] always agrees with the Nominative argument. Consequently, there is no interesting difference between agreement in mono-clausal and bi-clausal environment: agreement with non-subject Nominative argument is possible only if no Dative argument intervenes between v and the Nominative argument at the point of the derivation when Agree takes place.

(24) *Agreement in a mono-clausal environment:*



3.1 Predictions

The proposed analysis crucially relies on the assumption that LDA arises only if the potentially intervening Dative argument undergoes Object Shift. In this section we will investigate the predictions this analysis makes. We know that Object Shift is limited to constructions in which a verb has overtly moved outside of VP. Furthermore, Object Shift can take place across an adverb (Holmberg 1986, 1999).

The analysis proposed here makes a clear prediction about the correlation between Object Shift and LDA; namely, we predict that if LDA is dependent on

[9]Modulo passing on the valued ϕ-features on T.

Object Shift, LDA should not be possible if a low adverb linearly precedes the Dative argument. As we see in (25)–(26), this prediction is borne out. In the examples in (25a) and (26a), the adverb precedes the Dative argument which means that the Dative argument did not undergo Object Shift. Consequently, the finite verb cannot agree with the Nominative argument and the verb surfaces with the default 3.SG inflection. The plural agreement is possible only if the adverb is not present, as witnessed by the examples in (25b) and (26b). In other words, LDA is possible only if the Dative argument might have undergone Object Shift; even though in this case it would have to be a string-vacuous movement. If Object Shift is blocked, so is LDA, which is correctly predicted by the current analysis.

(25) a. Það finnst alltaf þremur börnum
EXPL finds.SG always **three** **children.DAT**
tölvurnar ljótar.
computers.DEF.NOM ugly

b. Það finnast (*alltaf) þremur börnum tölvurnar
EXPL find.PL always **three** **children.DAT** computers.D.NOM
ljótar.
ugly

'Three children always find the computers ugly.'

(26) a. Það finnst fljótt mörgum köttum mýsnar góðar.
EXPL finds.SG quickly **many** **cats.DAT.PL** mice.DEF tasty

b. Það finnast (??/* fljótt) mörgum köttum mýsnar
EXPL find.PL quickly **many** **cats.DAT.PL** mice.DEF
góðar.
tasty

'Many cats quickly find the mice tasty.'

On the other hand, the analysis predicts that if the Dative argument precedes a low adverb, which is possible only if the Dative argument underwent non-string vacuous Object Shift, LDA should be obligatory. As we can see in (27), this prediction is borne out as well. Notice that for LDA to be obligatory in this configuration, it is necessary that Agree takes place only after Object Shift.

(27) a. Það finnst mörgum köttum (??/* fljótt) mýsnar
EXPL finds.SG **many** **cats.DAT.PL** quickly mice.DEF
góðar.
tasty

b. Það finnast mörgum köttum fljótt mýsnar góðar.
EXPL find.PL **many** **cats.DAT.PL** quickly mice.DEF tasty

'Many mice find quickly the mice tasty.'

As we have seen, the current analysis makes clear predictions about cases in which we can test whether or not Object Shift took place, based on the relative position of the Dative argument and a low adverb. The analysis makes a clear prediction about cases in which Object Shift must have been a string vacuous movement as well. Note that Object Shift has an interpretive effect (e.g., Diesing and Jelinek 1995; Diesing 1992; Thráinsson 2001). Consequently, if LDA is dependent on Object Shift, LDA should be correlated with the Dative argument being interpreted as if it underwent Object Shift. On the other hand, if the default agreement is a reflex of the Dative argument staying *in situ*, we expect the default verbal agreement to correlate with the *in situ* interpretation of the Dative argument. In other words, the current analysis predicts that there is no optionality in LDA. The presence or absence of LDA has interpretive consequences, which in turn correspond to two distinct syntactic structures. As we see in (28), this prediction is borne out as well. If the verb does not agree with the Nominative argument, as in (28a), the Dative argument is interpreted as an unspecified group of students. This is exactly what we expect if the quantificational DP stays *in situ*. In contrast, if the verb agrees with the Nominative argument, as in (28b), the Dative argument must denote a group of students already established in the discourse. This is exactly the interpretation we expect if the Dative argument underwent Object Shift.

(28) a. Það finnst mörgum stúdentum tölvurnar
EXPL finds.SG **many** **students.DAT** computers.DEF.NOM
ljótar.
ugly.NOM
'(In general,) many students find the computers ugly.'

b. Það finnast mörgum stúdentum tölvurnar
EXPL find.PL **many** **students.DAT** computers.DEF.NOM

ljótar.
ugly.NOM
'There are many students (and I know who they are) who find the computers ugly.'

3.2 Quantifier Movement

Note that the key property of the proposed analysis is that a potential Dative intervener may move out from the probing domain of v before Agree between v and the Nominative argument takes place. If this is correct, we predict that any other type of movement which would move the Dative argument to the edge of vP should yield LDA as well. A case to investigate is so-called Quantifier Movement (Svenonius 2000, following Jónsson 1996). While Object Shift is dependent on V-to-T movement (Holmberg 1986), Quantifier Movement is possible even if there is no V-to-T movement in the structure (Fox and Pesetsky 2005). In (29) we see an example of such a movement. While the quantifier *miklu grjóti* 'much rock' remains *in situ*, i.e., it follows the verbal participle in (29a), the quantifier may linearly precede the participle as well, (29b).

(29) a. Strákarnir höfðu hent miklu grjóti í bílana.
boys.DEF had thrown much rock in cars.DEF
b. Strákarnir höfðu miklu grjóti hent í bílana.
boys.DEF had much rock thrown in cars.DEF
'The boys had thrown many rocks at the cars.'

The prediction of the current analysis is straightforward. If the correlation between Object Shift and LDA concerns the syntactic configuration at the point when Agree takes place, we expect that even a Dative argument that never undergoes Object Shift should become transparent to LDA as long as it undergoes Quantifier Movement. Following the same logic, if the Dative argument undergoes Quantifier Movement, LDA should be obligatory. As the examples in (30)–(32) demonstrate, both of these predictions are borne out.

(30) a. ??/*Það hefur næstum öllum köttum fundist fiskarnir góðir.
EXPL has almost all cats found fish.DEF.PL good
a. Það hafa næstum öllum köttum fundist fiskarnir góðir.
EXPL have almost all cats found fish.DEF.PL good
'Almost all cats have found the fish tasty.'

(31) a. ??/*Það hefur fáum köttum fundist fiskarnir góðir.
EXPL has few cats found fish.DEF.PL good
a. Það hafa fáum köttum fundist fiskarnir góðir.
EXPL have few cats found fish.DEF.PL good
'Few cats have found the fish tasty.'

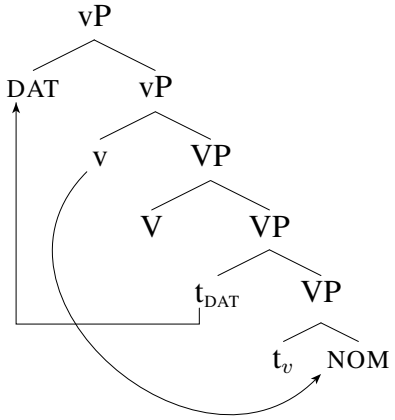
(32) a. ??/*Það hefur báðum köttunum fundist fiskarnir góðir.
EXPL has both cats.DEF found fish.DEF.PL good
a. Það hafa báðum köttunum fundist fiskarnir góðir.
EXPL have both cats.DEF found fish.DEF.PL good
'Both of the cats have found the fish tasty.'

Note that since Quantifier Movement is insensitive to adverbs, the presence of an adverb immediately following the auxiliary does not have any impact on LDA. As we can see in (33), the finite verb (the auxiliary here) agrees with the Nominative argument across the adverb and the Dative argument.

(33) a. Það hafa öllum köttunum fundist fiskarnir góðir.
EXPL have all cats.DEF found fish.DEF.PL good
b. ?Það hafa alltaf öllum köttunum fundist fiskarnir góðir.
EXPL have always all cats.DEF found fish.DEF.PL good
'All the cats have always found the fish tasty.'

The tree in (34) schematically gives the configuration which allows v to enter into local Agree after the Dative argument undergoes Quantifier Movement to vP.

(34) *Quantifier Movement in a bi-clausal environment:*



Note that the examples in (30)–(32) contain Dative interveners that in an Object Shift configuration always block LDA (conf. the table in (22)). The fact that the very same Dative intervener blocks LDA in an Object-Shift configuration but not in a Quantifier-Movement configuration is entirely unexpected under a theory which attempts to reduce argument-intervention effects to ϕ-feature configurations or restructuring. On the other hand, the contrast straightforwardly follows from the analysis put forward in this paper.

4 Phases, Transfer, and Agreement

The crucial assumption underlying the proposed analysis is that v is the source of agreement with the Nominative argument. In other words, LDA is possible only if (i) v agrees with the Nominative argument, and (ii) there is no other argument intervening between v and the Nominative argument at the point when Agree takes place. The fact that the morphological reflex of the agreement appears on T is a result of a later Agree between T and v. As we have seen, however, there is another crucial component, namely, the timing of Agree within the vP. The empirical evidence presented so far strongly suggests that Agree between v and the Nominative argument is established only after the potential Dative intervener moves to the Spec of vP.[10] This raises the question of the timing of Agree with respect to phase-hood and Transfer (Chomsky 2001, 2004, 2008, 2013, among others).

I assume, following Chomsky (2008, 2013), among others, that unvalued ϕ-features are brought to the derivation by a phase head. If they appear on lower functional heads, it is by Feature Inheritance (Richards 2007; Chomsky 2008, 2013). Furthermore, if unvalued features must be valued[11] prior to Transfer, Agree must take place before Transfer but only after Feature Inheritance takes place.[12]

I argue that the timing effect we observe in the domain of LDA is a direct consequence of Agree being dependent on Transfer and Feature Inheritance, and of an inherent flexibility of Transfer. While it is fairly uncontroversial that every vP

[10] Or perhaps adjoins to vP.

[11] And uninterpretable features deleted. (If we assume that there is a difference between interpretable and uninterpretable features.)

[12] For an Agree chain to be established, there must be unvalued features in the structure but this is the case only after Feature Inheritance takes place.

projecting an external argument is a strong phase, in the sense of a syntactic unit being sent to Transfer (Legate 2003), it is still an open empirical question whether vP without an external argument may become a strong phase under certain conditions. Specifically, I argue that v is a phase head (in the sense of triggering Transfer) only if Spec,vP is independently projected (Richards 2003; Kučerová 2012).

Such a configuration may come about via two different routes: either (i) there is an external argument merged in Spec,vP, or (ii) the specifier is created by Internal Merge. I argue that the cases that concern us here are of the latter type, i.e., vP is a phase because the Dative argument moved to vP. But to see how exactly it works we need to look carefully at the timing interactions.

While features necessary for External Merge are trivially associated with the c-selecting head (see, for instance, Adger 2003), the status of features necessary for Internal Merge is less clear. We could assume that the features are part of the lexical item (LI) taken from the lexicon but such a move brings about non-trivial complications in the domain of cyclic wh-movement etc.[13] To avoid these problems, I instead adopt Chomsky's recent suggestion that Internal Merge to the edge of a phase takes place before Feature Inheritance (Chomsky 2014a,b). Consequently, we can assume the following timing of syntactic operations:

(35) *Internal-Merge dependent timing of syntactic operations*

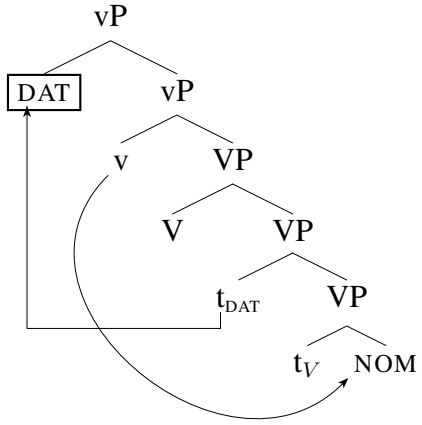
a. Internal Merge of the Dative argument as Spec of vP
b. Feature Inheritance
c. Agree
d. Transfer

With this order of operations, v probes the Nominative argument only after the Dative argument has been merged at the edge of the phase. Thus we do not expect any intervention effect in bi-clausal structures in which the Dative argument underwent either Object Shift or Quantifier Movement because Agree takes place only after the Dative argument evacuated the probing domain, as schematized in (36a).

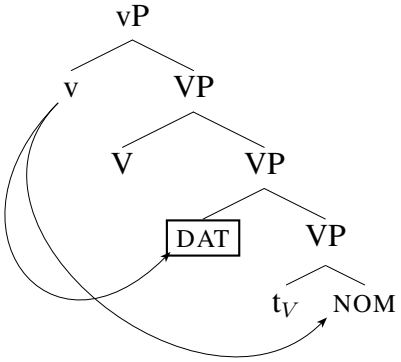
In contrast, if vP is not a strong phase in the sense of v sending its complement to Transfer, v still brings unvalued ϕ-features to the structure and triggers Agree. If there is a Dative argument in the structure, it means the Dative argument has not raised to Spec,vP, and consequently it blocks agreement between v and the Nominative argument, as schematically shown in (36b).

[13] See Chomsky (2008) for a solution in terms of Edge Feature or Heck and Müller (2006)'s idea of adding unvalued features to the derivation if needed for Transfer.

(36) a. *Internal Merge before Agree:*



b. *Agree with Dative in situ:*



4.1 Timing in wh-movement: the role of d-linking

The proposal makes a striking prediction. If vP is not a strong phase, the timing of Agree and Transfer do not necessarily coincide because Agree takes place but there is no Transfer. Consequently, the Dative argument may move out from the probing domain of v *after* v attempts to agree with the Nominative argument. Consequently, even if in the final representation, the Dative argument does not linearly intervene between v and the Nominative argument because it moved to the left periphery, LDA should still be blocked. The order of syntactic operations highlighting this interaction is given in (37).

(37) *Opaque blocking of* LDA

a. v is merged
b. no Internal Merge of the Dative argument to vP
c. v probes Nominative but Dative intervenes[14]
d. LDA blocked
e. no strong phase $\rightarrow$ no Transfer
f. higher structure is merged
g. Internal Merge of the Dative argument in the higher structure

In other words, we expect to find opacity effects whenever the Dative argument undergoes Internal Merge after v establishes Agree. The empirical case that lends

[14]I discuss how exactly the intervention arises in Section 4.2.

itself to testing this prediction is wh-movement of the Dative argument. As we will see in this section, this prediction is borne out.

The idea we are pursuing here is that LDA strictly reflects the order of syntactic operations. If this is indeed correct, we expect LDA to interact with the exact path of cyclic wh-movement of wh-Dative argument. Specifically, we expect that if a wh-Dative argument must move through the specifier of vP, be it for Object Shift or Quantifier Movement, v will probe the Nominative argument only after the Dative argument moves out from the probing domain. Consequently, we expect LDA to be obligatory. In contrast, if the wh-Dative argument does not move to the specifier of vP before v probes the Nominative argument,[15] LDA will be blocked even though the wh-Dative will move to CP later in the derivation.

(38) *Summary of the predictions:*

a. v probes NOM after DAT moves $\rightarrow$ LDA obligatory
b. v probes NOM before DAT moves $\rightarrow$ LDA blocked

I argue that whether or not LDA is established depends on whether the wh-argument is interpreted as d-linked (Pesetsky 1987, 2000; Heim 1987; Enç 1991, among others). Specifically, I argue that for a wh-argument to be interpreted as d-linked, it must move through the specifier of vP, in a way that is analogical to Object Shift.[16] Consequently, since such a wh-Dative argument will evacuate the probing domain of v before v probes for the Nominative argument, we expect LDA to be obligatory. In contrast, if a wh-Dative argument is to be interpreted as non-d-linked, such a wh-argument will move to CP only after v probed the Nominative argument. In turn, we expect LDA to be blocked.

Note that Icelandic wh-phrases, exactly like their English counterparts, may or may not have a specified d-linked form. Thus, for instance, *hverjum* 'to whom' may be interpreted as d-linked or non-d-linked, depending on the context . In contrast, a phrase like *hvaða köttum* 'which cat' can only be d-linked. Consequently, we expect the following interactions:

(i) If the wh-argument did not block LDA, it must have undergone Object Shift. Consequently, if LDA is established, the wh-argument must be interpreted as d-linked (specific); (ii) If LDA is blocked, the wh-argument did not undergo Object

[15]Note that since v will not trigger Transfer, the wh-word is free to move later in the derivation as there would be no linearization violation. See, for instance, Fox and Pesetsky (2005) for an extensive discussion of the interactions between Transfer and linearization.

[16]See the discussion of semantic consequences of Object Shift in Thráinsson (2001) for more details.

Shift. Consequently, the wh-argument must be interpreted as non-d-linked (not specific).

If we take into account the morphological status of d-linking on the wh-argument, we make three predictions: (i) If the wh-word must be interpreted as d-linked (as in *hvaða köttum* 'which cat'), we predict LDA to be obligatory; (ii) If the wh-word must be interpreted as non-d-linked, LDA should be blocked; (iii) If the wh-word could be interpreted either as d-linked or non-d-linked, LDA appears to be optional but the agreement disambiguates the interpretation of the wh-word.

As the examples in (39)–(41) demonstrate, the predictions are borne out. If the wh-word must be interpreted as d-linked because of its morphological form, as in (39), LDA is obligatory. If the wh-word is not morphologically specified but the context determines that there is no specific group the wh-word inquires about, LDA is blocked, as approximated in (40). As exemplified in (41), if the agreement appears to be optional, native speakers associate the plural agreement with a question about a specific group, while the singular agreement signifies that no specific group was established.[17]

(39) LDA *obligatory = d-linked:*

a. *Hvaða köttum virðist mýsnar góðar?
which cats.DAT seems.SG mice.DEF.NOM tasty

b. Hvaða köttum virðast mýsnar góðar?
which cats.DAT seem.PL mice.DEF.NOM tasty

'To which cats do the mice seem to be tasty?'

(40) LDA *blocked = non-d-linked:*

a. Hverjum mundi hafa virst hestarnir vera seinir?
whom.DAT would.SG have seemed horses to-be slow

b. *Hverjum mundu hafa virst hestarnir vera seinir?
whom.DAT would.PL have seemed horses to-be slow

'To whom (in general) would have seemed the horses to be slow?'

(41) LDA *optional = if* LDA *then d-linked, if no* LDA *then non-d-linked:*

a. Hverjum virðast mýsnar góðar?
whom.DAT seems.SG mice.DEF.NOM tasty
'To whom (in general) do the mice seem to be tasty.'

[17] When collecting judgments I created a series of scenarios based in an animal-testing laboratory because it allows for a straightforward, yet precise, modification of the context. Hence, the somewhat strange animal examples.

b. Hverjum virðist mýsnar góðar?
whom.DAT seem.PL mice.DEF.NOM tasty
'To whom (from a specified group) do the mice seem to be tasty?'

4.2 Agreement with Nominative

Note that one of the hallmarks of the Icelandic agreement system is that it tracks morphological case, instead of abstract case, i.e., a case which would correspond to a particular syntactic configuration (Marantz 1991). Yet, the proposed analysis crucially assumes that finite-verb agreement is determined in syntax, unlike proposals such as that of Bobaljik (2008) who argues that agreement must happen in the post-syntactic component because it is dependent on morphologically realized case, i.e., something which is determined after the narrow syntax.

I argue that this conclusion is not inevitable. First of all, notice that Nominative in Icelandic is not determined lexically, in the sense of being a quirky case. Instead, Nominative is the default case, which is the case assigned to the structurally highest noun phrase in the T+v domain that does not receive lexically determined case.[18] One way to understand this is to adapt the proposal put forward by Rezac (2008) and later by Pesetsky (2013) who argue that Nominative, unlike other cases, corresponds to a DP structure without any additional case/prepositional level. In other words, while the Dative, for instance, is a structure which contains a DP embedded within a K(ase)/prepositional functional projection, Nominative corresponds to a structure in which the DP is the outermost maximal projection.

I suggest that the fact that only Nominative triggers finite agreement follows from two assumptions. First, Nominative is a morphological realization of a DP without any additional functional layer.[19] Second, a K head carries an unvalued PERSON feature, which is necessary for K to be a licensor of a DP it selects for. When the relevant functional head probes a Nominative DP for a valued PERSON feature, it searches for the content of D. Since D is the source of unvalued ϕ-features (by the virtue of being a phase head) and since by the time Agree with the verbal head takes place, these features have been valued, the finite verbal probe gets automatically valued by all the valued ϕ-features on D, not only by the PERSON feature. In turn, v/T becomes valued for PERSON, number, and possibly gender.

[18] Adapting the original proposal from Marantz (1991).

[19] I assume that a non-lexically assigned Accusative is a DP as well but since it never appears without a Nominative argument being structurally closer to a probing functional head, it will never trigger finite agreement as Nominative does.

What happens if the closest goal is Dative? Notice first that for a Dative DP to behave as an argument, it must be grammatically marked as such, in other words it must carry a valued PERSON feature. I follow the spirit of Rezac's (2008) analysis and argue that the case assigning functional head – let us call it K – probes D as part of the c-selection Agree between DP and K. However, since K carries only an unvalued PERSON feature and not the complete set of unvalued ϕ-features, K gets valued only for the PERSON feature. If the finite verbal head probes for a valued PERSON feature and if the structurally closest argument is Dative, the PERSON feature on the verbal head will get valued. However, since K is not valued for any other ϕ-feature, the other ϕ-features will fail to be valued, and in turn will be realized as the default (Preminger 2011). Consequently, only Nominative will trigger agreement with the full set of ϕ-features.

5 Conclusions

The paper provides further evidence to the existing debate that agreement is always strictly local, and that illusions of Long-Distance Agreement result from a local configuration being undone in the process of derivation (see Bhatt 2003 and Boeckx 2004 for Hindi, Nomura 2005 and Bobaljik 2008 for Icelandic for a somewhat different approach to the subject). Consequently, there is no optionality in agreement. A distinct agreement always corresponds to a distinct structure (and possibly to a distinct interpretation).[20] The novel contribution of this paper lies in new empirical generalizations about the nature of Long-Distance Agreement in Icelandic, and in providing empirical support for a phase-based notion of Agree and the nature of Spell-out vs Transfer interactions in the process. Finally, the paper provides an empirical motivation for predicate agreement to take place in syntax, even if the Agree itself seems to be sensitive to the morphological output. I argue that the pattern is a side-effect of the morphological case realization and Agree being sensitive to the same syntactic property, i.e., to whether or not D is the head minimally searchable by the probing verbal head.

[20]The empirical pattern described in this pattern is strikingly parallel to the LDA facts in Hindi as reported in Keine (2013). Keine's theoretical approach is rather different in that it relies on an independent notion of restructuring and it relativizes Agree to the height of the probe. The present account does not rely on any assumptions that have not been motivated independently, but ultimately it is a matter of further theoretical investigation to evaluate which of the proposals is empirically more adequate. I am not aware of any data that would make one approach empirically superior to the other.

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