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Dimensions of variation

Agreement with nominative objects in Icelandic

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This chapter provides an in-depth investigation of both inter-speaker and intra-speaker variation in agreement with nominative objects and ECM nominative subjects. We both build on previous observations and report the findings of recent fieldwork. We show that in addition to a general dative intervention effect, clause boundaries, expletives, and singular datives are interveners for some speakers. We propose that Icelandic ECM clauses are either TP or *v*P and that the number feature on datives is visible for some speakers, contra previous research.

Keywords: Icelandic, object agreement, intervention effects, datives, restructuring, expletives

1. Introduction

This chapter investigates the complexity of verbal morphology in dative-nominative constructions in Icelandic and provides both descriptive and theoretical insight into this phenomenon.[1] While Icelandic verbs obligatorily agree with nominative subjects, agreement with nominative objects is optional. This optionality surfaces as both inter-speaker and intra-speaker variation and is a pervasive and long-standing

1. Many thanks to Höskuldur Thráinsson, whose support was a contributing factor in Carleton granting me extended sabbatical so that I could conduct research in 2013 and 2014, and to Halldór Ármann Sigurðsson for being a generous host during my visit to Lund University, where some of these ideas were presented. Thank you to Thórhallur Eyþórsson, Jóhannes Gísli Jónsson, Matthew Whelpton, Jim Wood, and the audience at the 87th Annual Meeting of the Linguistic Society of America for helpful conversations and generous feedback. Finally, thank you to current and former students at Háskóli Íslands who have worked with me to construct examples and have given me grammaticality judgments: Sigríður Mjöll Björnsdóttir, Iris Edda Nowenstein, and especially, Tinna Frímann Jökulsdóttir for many, many hours of consultation and assistance gathering judgments. All errors are mine.

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element of Icelandic grammar, dating at least back to the Sagas (Jónsson 2017). In recent years, researchers have examined whether there are systematic patterns to this variation.[2] For instance, Holmberg and Hróarsdóttir (2004) report that the number of the dative subject can affect agreement with the nominative. For some speakers, the verb agrees with a plural nominative object when the dative subject is also plural, but does not agree with the nominative when the dative is singular.[3] Additionally, Sigurðsson and Holmberg (2008) propose that there are three different varieties of Icelandic with respect to agreement and argue that agreement with the nominative object depends on whether the dative subject intervenes at the point in the syntactic derivation when the agreement head tries to establish a relationship with the nominative. Building on this work, Ussery (2009) investigates the effect of expletives and ostensible ECM clause boundaries on agreement and reports that agreement is least preferred in expletive constructions with an embedded ECM nominative subject. Agreement with nominative objects and nominative ECM subjects was also investigated as part of the project Variation in Icelandic Syntax (the results are reported in Thráinsson, Sigurðsson and Jónsson 2015). One finding of this study is that agreement is generally more degraded with ECM subjects than with objects in monoclausal constructions (see Jónsson 2017, Thráinsson, Sigurðsson and Jónsson 2015).

The goal of this chapter is two-fold. We present the findings of recent fieldwork and use variation in agreement with nominative objects as a window into complex syntactic and morphological issues. Our aim is both to contribute new data and to provide a deeper understanding of previously observed patterns. We show that this particular kind of variation has implications for the following theoretical issues: (1) the structure and size of ECM clauses; and (2) the visibility of the features of dative DPs. In particular, we build a theory which captures the gradation in agreement preferences based on whether the ECM clause is restructuring and on the "strength" of the dative as an intervener.

There are two primary elements to this proposal. First, we argue that restructuring clauses are *v*Ps in Icelandic as opposed to bare VPs in German (Wurmbrand 2001) or a TP-like structure in Hindi-Urdu (Bhatt 2005).[4] Second, we propose that a singular feature on a dative strengthens the blocking effect of the dative for

2. See also Andrews 1982a,b for a discussion of case and variation in monoclausal and biclausal constructions.

3. Holmberg and Hróarsdóttir (2003) primarily focuses on accounting for a contrast between how main clause WH dative subjects differ from non-WH dative subjects with respect to allowing agreement with and movement of embedded nominative subjects in raising constructions. We do not discuss these data.

4. The ambiguity surrounding the status of these clauses in Hindi-Urdu is discussed in footnote 13.

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some speakers. This proposal builds on observations reported in Holmberg and Hróarsdóttir (2004) and Sigurðsson and Holmberg (2008).

This chapter is organized as follows. Section 2 provides a general overview of agreement in Icelandic and the theoretical context in which variation in agreement has been analyzed. Section 3 examines the intervention effects of clause boundaries and (singular) datives, both in Icelandic and cross-linguistically. Section 4 reports the findings of the current investigation. We describe the grammars of individual speakers and examine these patterns through the theoretical lens provided in Section 3. Section 5 concludes and outlines questions for future research.

2. Background and overview of the data

2.1 Overview of optional agreement

It is well-established that Icelandic has both nominative and non-nominative subjects.[5] While all four of the morphological cases in Icelandic appear on subjects, the most common non-nominative subject case is dative. Additionally, some verbs which have historically taken accusative or genitive subjects are shifting to dative subjects (for discussion see e.g. Barðdal 2011 and Svavarsdóttir 2013 and references cited therein). As such, dative-nominative constructions are the focus of this chapter. Icelandic verbs obligatorily agree in person and number with nominative subjects. The default verbal form is homophonous with the third singular and this form is ungrammatical in constructions such as (1) and (2). The sentence in (1) has an accusative object and the sentence in (2) has a dative object,[6] but since the subject is nominative, the verb necessarily agrees with the subject.

(1) a. *Við* *lásum/*las* *bókina.*
we.NOM.PL read.1PL/*3SG book-the.ACC.SG
'We read the book.'

b. *Þið* *lásuð/*las* *bókina.*
you.NOM.PL read.2PL/*3SG book-the.ACC.SG
'You read the book.' (cf. Sigurðsson 1996, examples 14/15a)

(2) a. *Við* *klæðumst/*klæðist* *dýrum* *fötum.*
we.NOM.PL wear.1PL/*3SG expensive clothes.DAT.PL
'We wear expensive clothes.'

5. See, for instance, Jónsson (1996, 2003), Sigurðsson (2004), Thráinsson (2007), Zaenen, Maling, and Thráinsson (1985), among others.

6. See e.g. Maling 2002 for a detailed discussion of verbs with dative objects.

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b. *Margir prófessorar klæðast/*klæðist dýrum fötum.*
many professors.NOM.PL wear.3PL/*3SG expensive clothes.DAT.PL
'Many professors wear expensive clothes.'

By contrast, in sentences with non-nominative subjects, the verb does not agree with the subject. Rather, the default form is required in sentences such as (3).

(3) a. *Okkur vantaði/*vöntuðum bókina.*
us.ACC/DAT.PL lacked.3SG/*1PL book-the.ACC.SG
'We lacked the book.'

b. *Ykkur vantaði/*vöntuðuð bókina.*
you. ACC/DAT.PL lacked.3SG/*2PL book-the.ACC.SG
'You lacked the book.' (cf. Sigurðsson 1996, examples 16/17a)

However, when the object is nominative and plural we can "see" that the verb optionally agrees in number with the object. (As discussed in Section 3.2, there is ostensibly not person agreement with nominative objects.) In sentences such as (4), the default and the agreeing forms are in free variation. The sentence in (4b) demonstrates that the default form in (4a) is not agreeing with the dative. Both the dative and the nominative are plural in (4b). Yet the default form is allowed.

(4) a. *Henni líkaði/líkuðu dýrir skór.*
her.DAT.SG liked.3SG/PL expensive shoes.NOM.PL
'She liked expensive shoes.'

b. *Mörgum prófessorum líkaði/líkuðu dýrir skór.*
many professors.DAT.PL liked.3SG/PL expensive shoes.NOM.PL
'Many professors liked expensive shoes.'

Likewise, in (5) there is a dative matrix subject and an embedded ECM nominative subject and there is optional agreement. (In ECM constructions that have a nominative matrix subject and accusative embedded subject, the matrix verb obligatorily agrees with the nominative.)

(5) *Mér finnst/finnast skot af brennivíni bragðgóð.*
me.DAT find.3SG/PL shots.NOM.PL of Brennivín tasty
'I find shots of Brennivín tasty.'

As mentioned in the introduction, one of the findings of the Variation in Icelandic Syntax Project is that there is a contrast between monoclausal and biclausal constructions. Some speakers who prefer agreement in (4) prefer the default form in (5) and this pattern is consistent with what is reported elsewhere in the literature (e.g., Sigurðsson 1996, Ussery 2009).

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It is important to note that the variation in verbal morphology that surfaces in Icelandic is not simply a consequence of word order, even though post-verbal nominatives force "impoverished" agreement in some other languages. For instance, the word-order effect on agreement in Standard Arabic has been well-documented. As shown in (6a), the verb agrees in person, gender, and number with the pre-verbal subject. However, the verb agrees only in person and gender with the post-verbal subject in (6b).

(6) a. *L-banaat-u* *darab-na/*-at l-ʔ* *awlaad-a*
the-girls.NOM.PL.F hit.PST.3PL.F/*3SG.F the-boys.ACC
'The girls hit the boys.'

b. *Darab-at/*-na* *ʔal-banaat-u* *Zayd-an.*
hit.PST.3SG.F/*3PL.F the-girls.NOM.PL.F Zayd.ACC
'The girls hit Zayd.' (Samek-Lodovici 2003, example 5)

Samek-Lodovici (2003) provides a cross-linguistic typology of the relationship between word order and agreement and shows that if a language allows both pre- and postverbal subjects, agreement is either the same or is impoverished with postverbal subjects (see also Fassi Fehri 1993). However, the reverse is not true; Samek-Lodovici does not find languages in which agreement with preverbal subjects is impoverished with respect to agreement with postverbal subjects. Given the data in (1)–(5), Icelandic ostensibly has impoverished agreement with postverbal nominatives. However, agreement is obligatory in expletive constructions with a postverbal nominative and no dative. The default form is ungrammatical in both the unaccusative in (7a) and the unergative in (7b). (See also Thráinsson 2007, p. 246 and references cited therein for a discussion of agreement in expletive constructions in Icelandic and other Scandinavian languages.)

(7) a. *Það* *opnuðu/*opnaði* *öll kaffihús* *í* *Kringlunni*
there opened.PL/*SG all coffeehouses.NOM.PL in Kringlan
klukkan *tíu.*
clock ten
'All coffeehouses in Kringlan opened at 10.'

b. *Það* *dönsuðu/*dansaði* *þrír* *bræður.*
there danced.PL/*SG three brothers.NOM.PL
'Three brothers danced.'

There is, however, a contrast between dative-nominative expletive and non-expletive constructions and this contrast is particularly stark for one group of speakers discussed in Sigurðsson and Holmberg (2008). For speakers of their Variety B, agreement is optional in (8a) but strongly dispreferred in (8b).

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(8) a. *Einum málfræðingi líkaði/líkuðu þessar hugmyndir.*
one linguist.DAT.SG liked.SG/PL these ideas.NOM.PL
'One linguist liked these ideas.'

b. *Það líkaði/*líkuðu einum málfræðingi þessar hugmyndir.*
there liked.SG/*PL one linguist.DAT.SG these ideas.NOM.PL
'One linguist liked these ideas.'
(cf. Sigurðsson and Holmberg 2008, examples 15/16)

Variety A speakers prefer agreement in (8a) but agreement is optional in (8b), and for Variety C speakers, agreement is marginal or ungrammatical in both sentences. As we will see in Section 3, the patterns exhibited by some of the speakers in the current investigation correspond to what would be expected from the groups proposed in Sigurðsson and Holmberg (2008), while others do not.

Another point of variation is that for some speakers the number of the dative subject affects agreement. Holmberg and Hróarsdóttir (2004) report that in transitive expletive constructions with dative subjects and nominative objects only the default form is allowed when the dative is singular, as illustrated in (10) and (12).

(9) *Manninum virðist/virðast hestarnir vera seinir.*
man-the.DAT.SG seem.SG/PL horses-the.NOM.PL be slow
'The man finds the horses slow.'

(10) *Það virðist/*virðast einhverjum manni hestarnir vera seinir.*
there seem.SG/*PL some man.DAT.SG horses-the.NOM.PL be slow
'A man finds the horses slow.'

(11) *Það finnst/finnast mörgum stúdentum tölvurnar ljótar.*
there find.SG/PL many students.DAT.PL computers-the.NOM.PL ugly
'Many students find the computers ugly.'

(12) *Það finnst/*finnast einhverjum stúdent tölvurnar ljótar.*
there find.SG/*PL some student.DAT.SG computers-the.NOM.PL ugly
'Some student finds the computers ugly.'
(cf. Holmberg and Hróarsdóttir 2003, examples 11–14)

Two caveats are in order here. First, while expletive constructions are allowed in Icelandic, they seem to be somewhat degraded in general, independent of the number of the dative subject.[7] Second, not all speakers have the contrast reported in Examples (10) and (12): for them the number of the dative does not affect the form of the verb. Nonetheless, it is surprising that some speakers do show this

7. General conversations with native speakers reveal that some people have an aversion to *það* clauses. A reviewer points out that this may be because *það*-clauses are considered less formal and, therefore, are not used much in the more formal writing style typically discussed in schools.

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contrast. Given that Icelandic verbs do not agree with datives, the number of the dative should not affect agreement at all. Yet, in Section 4.2, we provide data which show that the dative's value for number matters even beyond transitive expletive sentences for some speakers.

To summarize, we find optional number agreement in constructions with dative subjects and nominative objects. For some speakers, agreement is degraded in constructions with singular datives as opposed to plural datives. Additionally, agreement between the matrix verb and an ECM nominative subject is degraded with respect to agreement with nominative objects, and agreement in expletive constructions is degraded with respect to agreement in non-expletive constructions. This leads us to the conclusion that datives, singular datives, clause boundaries, and expletives are all possible interveners for agreement. In the next section, we outline our theoretical assumptions. Then we continue with a more detailed discussion of intervention effects.

2.2 Theoretical background and assumptions

In line with previous work on agreement that is generally couched within the Minimalist framework, we assume that there is an operation which establishes a relationship between two items in the syntax. This operation, Agree, is defined in (13).

(13) $\alpha > \beta$ Agree (α, β),

where α is a probe and β is a matching goal, '>' is a c-command relation and uninterpretable features of α and β are checked/deleted.

(Chomsky 2000: 122)

In general, (13) means that some item, a probe, searches its c-command domain for another item, a goal, that has the relevant information that the probe needs: features. For Icelandic dative-nominative constructions, the probe is an agreement head, the head of TP/IP, and the goal is the nominative object. The agreement head needs to inherit number information from the nominative object in order for the verb to agree with the object. Within the Minimalist framework, Agree is assumed to be a fundamental operation at work in syntactic derivations. As such, we might expect that when an Agree relation is "supposed" to be established, but is not, the result would be an ungrammatical construction. Yet, as we know, agreement with nominative objects is optional.

This brings us to another assumption, which we show is crucial to explaining the optionality in Icelandic. In line with previous work, we assume that an Agree relation between a probe and its intended goal may fail, and that this failure does not necessarily result in ungrammaticality. That is, we assume that an intervener can disrupt

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the probe-goal relationship. This idea is also articulated in Preminger (2010/2011). In particular, we adopt the principle that Preminger (2010) proposes in (14).

(14) "You can fail, but you must try."
Applying Φ agreement to a given structure is obligatory, but if the structure happens to be such that Φ agreement cannot culminate successfully, this is an acceptable outcome. (Preminger 2010, example 58)

In essence, if one item is supposed to agree with another item, then an attempt must be made. However, if something about the structure prevents the relationship from being established – e.g., a clause boundary or the presence of a dative in a particular position – we still get a grammatical sentence, just one without agreement. Preminger (2010) proposes the principle in (14) to account for the fact that default verbal forms are allowed in some Hebrew constructions in which a dative intervenes between a verb and a nominative DP.[8] Building on this proposal, we argue that both the structure of the syntactic domain in which agreement is attempted and the strength of the intervener in Icelandic dative-nominative constructions may prevent agreement from succeeding. In the next section, we provide a more detailed examination of the idea that datives and clause boundaries are interveners.

3. Intervention effects

3.1 Clause boundaries

It is not surprising that there is a contrast for some speakers between monoclausal and ECM constructions, since there is ostensibly a clause boundary between the verb and the nominative DP in the latter case. The complexity of ECM constructions has been well documented in the literature (see, for instance Davies and Dubinsky 2004 for a cross-linguistic historical overview of approaches to these kinds of constructions). Although the ECM "subject" is semantically an argument of the embedded verb, it bears the morphological case of an object and can undergo object shift in Scandinavian languages (see Holmberg 1986 for extensive discussion). For these reasons, there is debate surrounding the surface structural position of ECM subjects. This debate is embodied in the various names for this kind of construction. While we have adopted the Exceptional Case Marking (ECM) terminology, these constructions are also referred to as Raising-to-Object. There is consensus, though, that the subject is semantically related to the lower verb.

8. Possessor dative constructions in Hebrew have been discussed in the literature with respect to whether a raising-type analysis or a control-type analysis is a more suitable option. See Landau 1999 and references therein for discussion.

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Interestingly, there is a contrast between ECM clauses and control clauses. In control constructions such as (15), the embedded object is nominative because the lower verb takes a dative subject (PRO) and the matrix verb cannot agree with the object.[9]

(15) *Krökkunum líkar/*líka að áskotnast nýir litir.*
kids-the.DAT.PL like.SG/*PL to get.INF new crayons.NOM.PL
'The kids like to get new crayons.'

Unlike a nominative ECM subject, the nominative object here is in no way a syntactic object of the matrix verb. Further, the complementizer/infinitival marker *að* seen in (15) does not appear in ECM constructions in Icelandic, as shown in examples such as (5). Assuming that ECM clauses are TPs and control clauses are CPs (see Thráinsson 2007, chapter 8 for extensive discussion about the structure of infinitives in Icelandic), the difference is between a CP boundary and a TP boundary, with CPs blocking agreement and TPs allowing agreement. However, given the optionality in agreement with nominative ECM subjects, we argue that TP actually blocks agreement and that only ECM clauses that are smaller than TP allow agreement. These smaller clauses are *v*Ps.

Restructuring is an optional mechanism by which the matrix verb selects for a "small" infinitive. Wurmbrand (2001) provides a detailed discussion of restructuring focused on German in order to account for the long passive construction in (16a). Here, the embedded object is nominative and the matrix auxiliary agrees with it.[10]

(16) a. *dass der Traktor zu reparieren versucht wurde*
that the tractor.NOM.SG to repair tried was.3SG
'that they tried to repair the tractor' (Wurmbrand 2001, example 6a)

b. *weil Hans den Traktor zu reparieren versuchte*
since Hans the tractor.ACC.SG to repair tried.3SG
'since Hans tried to repair the tractor' (Wurmbrand 2001, example 5a)

c. **dass der Traktor zu reparieren geplant wurde*
that the tractor.NOM.SG to repair planned was.3SG
'that they planned to repair the tractor' (Wurmbrand 2001, example 25a)

9. Judgment courtesy of Tinna Frímann Jökulsdóttir.

10. As is common, Wurmbrand (2001) uses embedded clauses in order to control for the V2 effect in German main clauses. Wurmbrand (2001) also provides parallel examples in which the noun is plural, and in which we can see that the matrix verb agrees with the nominative in examples such as (16a) but does not agree with the accusative in examples such as (16b/d). Since the determiner is syncretic in the nominative and accusative plural, we have used examples with the singular noun here.

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d. *dass den Traktor zu reparieren geplant wurde*
that the tractor.ACC.SG to repair planned was.3SG
'that they planned to repair the tractor' (Wurmbrand 2001, example 26a)

Wurmbrand's (2001) central claim is that restructuring infinitives are bare VPs; there is no *v*P, TP, CP, PRO or negation.[11] Because restructuring infinitives are "structurally deficient", they are permeable for an Agree relation between an item in the higher clause and an item in the lower clause. Wurmbrand (2001) argues that the infinitive in (16a) is restructuring. As such, there is no source for accusative in the lower clause and 'the tractors' in (16a) receives nominative from the higher clause. By contrast, the infinitive in (16b) is full CP clause and, consequently, contains all of the functional projections that are lower in the structure than CP. Since there is a *v*P projection, the embedded object is accusative. Wurmbrand (2001) argues that the construction in (16c) is ungrammatical because the infinitive is not restructuring. It is a full clause containing a *v*P and, as such, accusative is required on the embedded object in (16d), just as it is in (16b).

Another analysis which employs restructuring is found in Bhatt's (2005) account of long-distance agreement in Hindi-Urdu. Hindi-Urdu is a split ergative language and constructions in the perfective aspect (glossed as *pfv* below) have an ergative subject. Nominative and non-specific accusative nouns are unmarked, while ergative nouns are marked with *-ne*. Verbs agree in gender and number with the highest noun in the clause that is morphologically unmarked for case. Since ergative nouns are marked with *-ne*, verbs do not agree with ergatives. While the participle and auxiliary agree with the subject in (17a), the verbs agree with the object in (17b).[12]

(17) a. *Rahul kitaab parh-taa thaa.*
Rahul.M book.F read.HAB.SG.M be.PST.SG.M
'Rahul used to read a/the book.'

b. *Rahul-ne kitaab parh-ii thii.*
Rahul.ERG.M book.F read.PFV.F be.PST.SG.F
'Rahul had read the book.' (Bhatt 2005, example 2)

11. Wurmbrand (2001) proposes that there are two types of restructuring infinitives. Lexical Restructuring is optional. The matrix verb selects either a full clausal complement or a smaller infinitive. Functional Restructuring is obligatory. The matrix verb necessarily selects a smaller infinitive. Wurmbrand argues that, at least for German, control infinitives belong to the lexical category, while raising infinitives belong to the functional category.

12. We have only indicated case on the ergative. Bhatt (2005) identifies the case on the subject in (17)a as nominative and the case on the objects in both (17)a/b as accusative, though he does not include nominative and accusative in his glosses. Because there is no morphological indication of nominative or accusative in these examples, it is not clear that the object in (17)b is accusative, as opposed to being nominative/absolutive.

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When there is an infinitival complement and an ergative matrix subject, the matrix verbs optionally agree with the embedded object. In (18a), the verbs agree with the feminine object, 'branch,' while in (18b), the verbs are in the default masculine form.

(18) a. Long-distance agreement: Restructuring
Shahrukh-ne [$_{TP}$ *tehnii* *kaat-nii/*naa]* *chaah-ii* *thii.*
Shahrukh.ERG branch.F cut.INF.F/*M want.PFV.F be.PST.SG.F
'Shahrukh had wanted to cut the branch.'

b. Default forms: Non-restructuring
Shahrukh-ne [$_{CP}$ *tehnii* *kaat-naa/*nii]* *chaah-aa* *thaa.*
Shahrukh.ERG branch.F cut.INF.M./*F want.PFV.SG.M be.PST.SG.M
'Shahrukh wanted to cut a/the branch.' (Bhatt 2005, example 6)

Like Wurmbrand (2001), Bhatt (2005) proposes that the morphological alternation is due to restructuring. *Want* in Hindi can select for either a restructuring or non-restructuring complement. When *want* selects for the smaller clause, the agreement probe in the higher clause, the T head, is able to establish a relationship with the embedded object. The result is that all of the verbs agree with the embedded object. The infinitive agrees with the embedded object only when the matrix verb does as well. A "larger" complement, on the other hand, blocks a relationship between the agreement probe and the embedded object. Hence the verbs appear in the default (masculine singular) form.

Bhatt's (2005) proposal differs from Wurmbrand's (2001) proposal in that Bhatt (2005) argues that restructuring clauses in Hindi-Urdu are larger than a bare VP. Bhatt shows that accusative is available in some restructuring clauses (there is a morphological distinction between nominative and accusative in pronouns), which suggests the presence of a *v*P. Additionally, Bhatt (2005) proposes that the agreement on the infinitive in (18a) is a result of the probe in the matrix clause establishing a relationship with both the embedded object and with the infinitival head – Inf^0 – which is higher in the structure than the embedded *v*P.[13]

Considering these two proposals, restructuring infinitives are argued to come in different sizes. Given the presence of an embedded subject in ECM clauses (which is merged in the specifier of *v*P) and the availability of accusative on the object of embedded clauses such as (19), Icelandic ECM clauses are minimally *v*Ps.

(19) *Ég* *tel* *hana* *borða* *marga ávexti.*
I.NOM believe.1SG her.ACC eat.INF many fruits.ACC.PL.M
'I believe she eats many fruits.'

13. Bhatt (2005) does not make a definitive proposal about whether the restructuring clause is a TP/IP, even though he argues for the existence of the Infinitival head. This is because there is debate about whether infinitives and gerunds in Hindi-Urdu are NPs (see Bhatt 2005: 783–784 and references therein for discussion).

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We therefore propose that the variation in agreement with the ECM subject in Icelandic derives from whether the ECM clause is a TP or a *v*P. TPs in Icelandic block agreement while *v*Ps do not.[14] We propose that Icelandic speakers who prefer the default verbal form have a selectional preference for TP and speakers who prefer the agreeing form have a selectional preference for *v*P. Speakers who show no difference between monoclausal and ECM constructions have TP and *v*P in free variation.[15]

(20) a. Dat V [$_{TP}$ Nom …] default on matrix verb
b. Dat V [$_{vP}$ Nom …] agreement on matrix verb

A consequence of this proposal is that we have a mini-typology of restructuring infinitives. In German, a VP complement is permeable for a relationship between an item in the higher clause and an item in the lower clause; in Hindi-Urdu, a complement that is somewhat larger than *v*P is permeable; and in Icelandic a *v*P complement is permeable. While a structural explanation in which the embedded clause boundary is either an intervener or not accounts for the optionality with ECM clauses, accounting for the intervention effects of singular datives requires a more nuanced approach.

3.2 Datives and singular datives

The observation that datives are interveners for agreement is well-documented in the literature and extends far beyond Icelandic. As discussed in Section 2.2, possessor dative constructions in Hebrew have been discussed in the literature. Additionally, analyses of dative intervention effects permeate the literature on the Person Case Constraint (PCC). In languages that have PCC effects, there is a restriction on the person features that direct and indirect objects can have, as described in (21) and exemplified in the Greek examples in (22) (Bonet 1991: 177).

(21) *Person Case Constraint*
a. In a combination of a direct object and an indirect object (clitic, agreement marker, or weak pronoun), the direct object has to be third person.
b. Both the direct object and the indirect object are phonologically weak.

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14. In nominative-accusative ECM constructions, we cannot see an effect of clause size, since the matrix verb necessarily agrees with the matrix subject.

15. In Hindi-Urdu, agreement with the embedded object corresponds to a subtle difference in meaning; the object is more specific/definite than when the verb is in the default. This is not the case in Icelandic. Speakers who show this contrast were asked if there was a meaning difference between the agreeing and default forms and none reported any difference.

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In (22a,b), the indirect object clitics (genitive) are first and second person, respectively, and the direct object clitic (accusative) is third person. Conversely, in the sentences in (22c,d), the direct object clitics are first and second person, respectively, and these cannot co-occur with an indirect object clitic.

(22) a. *Tha mu to stilune.* (Greek)
fut cl.GEN.1SG cl.ACC.3SG.N send.3PL
'They will send it to me.'

b. *Tha su to stilune.*
fut cl.GEN.2SG cl.ACC.3SG.M send.3PL
'They will send him to you.'

c. **Tha su me sistisune.*
fut cl.GEN.2SG cl.ACC.1SG introduce.3PL
'They will introduce me to you.'

d. **Tha tu se stilune.*
fut cl.GEN.3SG.M cl.ACC.2SG send.3PL
'They will send you to him.'
(see Bonet 1991: 182, Anagnostopoulou 2005, example 2)

The PCC has been argued to be similar to the Person Restriction in Icelandic, which generally disallows first and second person nominative objects, as shown in (23).

(23) a. **Henni höfðum leiðst við.*
her.DAT.SG had.1PL found-boring we.NOM.PL
'She found us boring.'

b. **Henni höfðuð leiðst þið.*
her.DAT.SG had.2PL found-boring you.NOM.PL
'She found you boring.' (Sigurðsson and Holmberg 2008, example 56)

Several researchers have proposed analyses which unify the PCC and the Icelandic Person Restriction. A distillation of these proposals is found in Rezac (2007) and is discussed in Boeckx (2008). The critical characterization of PCC/Person Restriction analyses is stated below.

(24) The closer DP γ1 has "quirky" Case which has the following properties: it is inherent (theta-related) Case that is nevertheless visible to a φ-probe and consequently available to A-movement; it values a φ-probe's person feature to 3 regardless of the φ-features of the DP it contains, but does not value its number feature. The farther DP, γ2, needs structural Case. (Boeckx 2008, 90, example ii)

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The statement in (24) is a technical formulation of three main ideas. First, since dative case is inherent (or non-structural), it is not assigned by the heads which assign structural case (T, *v*). However, since datives undergo the same kind of movement as other DPs, they must somehow be visible to the head which motivates that movement. For instance, in Icelandic, dative subjects move to Spec,TP just like nominative subjects do. Second, the consequence of the relationship between T and the dative is that T inherits a third person value, irrespective of the actual person of the dative; first and second person datives transmit a third person value just as third person datives do. The rationale is that since verbs do not agree with datives, the actual person value is not available. Third, and most importantly, T does not inherit *any* number value from the dative. Since T needs some number value, and since the nominative DP needs its structural case checked, T is forced to establish a relationship with the nominative. However, the third person value that T has inherited from the dative "clashes" with a first or second person value, rendering constructions with first or second person nominative objects ungrammatical. The crucial element of these kinds of approaches is that while the dative is able to assign a person value to T (even if the value that is transmitted to T is different from the actual value), the dative is *not* able to assign a number value to T.

The prediction is, therefore, that the number feature of the dative should not affect agreement. Yet, for some Icelandic speakers, agreement is more degraded when the dative is singular, as noted in Holmberg and Hróarsdóttir (2004). The data from Section 2.1 are repeated below.

(25) *Manninum virðist/virðast hestarnir vera seinir.*
man-the.DAT.SG seem.SG/PL horses-the.NOM.PL be slow
'The man finds the horses slow.'

(26) *Það virðist/*virðast einhverjum manni hestarnir vera seinir.*
there seem.SG/*PL some man.DAT.SG horses-the.NOM.PL be slow
'A man finds the horses slow.'

(27) *Það finnst/finnast mörgum stúdentum tölvurnar ljótar.*
there find.SG/PL many students.DAT.PL computers-the.NOM.PL ugly
'Many students find the computers ugly.'

(28) *Það finnst/*finnast einhverjum stúdent*
there find.SG/*PL some student.DAT.SG
tölvurnar ljótar.
computers-the.NOM.PL ugly
'Some student finds the computers ugly.'
(cf. Holmberg and Hróarsdóttir 2004, examples 11–14)

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As will be discussed in detail in Section 3, the current investigation reveals that the effect of a singular dative extends beyond *það*-initial clauses. For some speakers, agreement is consistently less acceptable in clauses with singular dative subjects than in clauses with plural dative subjects. That this pattern surfaces in dative-initial as well as adverb-initial clauses for some speakers is evidence that the influence of the number of the dative is not simply an effect of word order.

One possible explanation is that speakers are actually allowing the finite verb to agree with the dative. As discussed in Jónsson (2009), some Faroese speakers accept agreement with dative subjects. In (29c), 48.8% of speakers (out of forty-one participants) accept the plural form of the verb. As Jónsson (2009) discusses in greater detail, the acceptance of agreement in (29c) is lower than the acceptance of agreement in the nominative subject construction in (29a) but higher than the acceptance of the default form with the dative subject, shown in (29b).[16]

(29) a. *Nógvar kvinnur dáma mannfólk við eitt sindur*
many women.NOM.PL like.3PL men.ACC.PL with a bit
av búki. (92.7%)
of belly
'Many women fancy slightly fat men.'

b. *Nógvum kvinnum dámar mannfólk við eitt sindur av*
many women.DAT.PL like.3SG men.ACC.PL with a bit of
búki. (24.4%)
belly

c. *Nógvum kvinnum dáma mannfólk*
many women.DAT.PL like.3.PL men.ACC.PL
við eitt sindur av búki. (48.8%)
with a bit of belly (cf. Jónsson 2009, example 3)

We might, therefore, suspect that some Icelandic speakers are also exhibiting agreement with dative subjects. If this is the case, the prediction is that some speakers will find the plural form of the verb better in examples such as (30), where the dative subject is plural and the nominative object/ECM subject is singular, than in sentences in which both the dative and the nominative are singular.

16. Jónsson (2009) proposes that there is a covert nominative feature on the dative, as evidenced by the fact that some verbs which have historically taken dative subjects now allow both dative and nominative subjects.

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(30) a. *Einhverjum stelpum leiddist/leiddust þessi æfing.*
some girls.DAT.PL bored.SG/PL this exercise.NOM.SG
'Some girls found this exercise boring.'

b. *Mörgum skiptinemum fannst/fundust þetta próf vera ósanngjarnt.*
many exchange students.DAT.PL found.SG/PL this exam.NOM.SG be unfair
'Many exchange students found this exam to be unfair.'

As we will see in Section 3, one speaker does indeed prefer the plural form in constructions such as (30). The other speakers who show a contrast between singular and plural dative subjects when the object is plural prefer the singular form in (30). We can conclude, then, that these speakers are not allowing agreement with the dative. Descriptively, it seems that for these speakers, a plural dative helps agreement with the nominative and a singular dative hinders it. We propose that the singular feature has the effect of "strengthening" the dative's force as an intervener and the source of the variation is the strength of the intervener. Crucially, though, for these speakers and the speaker who exhibits agreement with the dative, the number feature of the dative is visible.

The visibility of the dative also provides evidence against a derivational timing analysis of dative intervention effects, such as the one proposed in Sigurðsson and Holmberg (2008). As discussed in Section 2.1, some speakers who allow agreement in non-expletive constructions find agreement marginal or ungrammatical in expletive constructions. This contrast is exemplified, in particular, in the Variety B speakers that Sigurðsson and Holmberg (2008) describe, as shown in (31).

(31) Varieties of Agreement (Sigurðsson and Holmberg 2008)

	Variety A	*Variety B*	*Variety C*
Dat – V – Nom	preferred agreement	optional agreement	preferred non-agreement
Expl – V – Dat – Nom	optional agreement	no agreement	no agreement

Sigurðsson and Holmberg (2008) propose that Person and Number are separate heads, with each being distinct from T. The dative is merged lower than Person and Number, and higher than the nominative, as shown in (32).

(32) $[_{CP}$…Topic…Finiteness… $[_{TP}$ Person…Number…T…*v*…Dat…Nom]]
(Sigurðsson and Holmberg 2008, example 20)

The dative subject moves to a position higher than the Person and Number heads. However, the dative may move before or after the nominative is probed. As shown

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in (33a), an intervening dative forces the default form to be realized. However, in (33b) the dative does not intervene, the Number probe Agrees with the nominative, resulting in verbal agreement.[17]

(33) a. *default*
***
Per Num Dat Nom$_{[pl.]}$

b. *agreement*
Dat Per Num ~~Dat~~ Nom$_{[pl.]}$

Importantly, the number of the dative should not matter on this proposal, since the analysis hinges on whether the dative intervenes at the point in the derivation when the nominative is probed. As we will see in Section 3, though, the singular dative can be an intervener on its own or it can work in conjunction with other interveners to degrade agreement.

4. A detailed look at agreement variation

4.1 Summary of data under investigation

The patterns reported in this section are based on field work conducted in fall 2013 through summer 2014 and build heavily on the observations discussed in Section 2.1. These data have been gathered from surveys and a series of follow-up speaker consultations. While we focus on the pattens observed in monoclausal and ECM constructions in this chapter, three other kinds of nominative object constructions were examined: passives, *-st* constructions, and predicates which alternate between a Dat-Nom and a Nom-Dat case frame. We do not address these constructions here.[18]

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17. We are simplifying the analysis. Part of Sigurðsson and Holmberg's (2008) motivation for having Person and Number be distinct heads is to account for the Person Restriction, shown in (23). There is an additional complexity to the Person Restriction, which is that a first or second person nominative object is allowed in some circumstances. The generalization is stated below.

(i) Syncretism Generalization: For most speakers, no Person Restriction arises in Dat-Nom constructions if, for morphological (paradigmatic) reasons, the 'would be' first or second person agreeing form is homophonous with the third person (in the same number). (Sigurðsson and Holmberg 2008, example 55)

18. See Sigurðsson (2011) and Ussery (2015) for discussion of the Icelandic passive, including the New Passive; see Wood (2014) for discussion of *-st* constructions; and see Barðdal et al. (2014) and Wood and Sigurðsson (2014) for discussion of alternating predicates.

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There were four verbs in each category and each verb appeared in six different contexts in order to examine the influence of word order, the number feature of the dative subject, and the presense of an expletive. The sentences in (34) and (35) are monoclausal constructions and illustrate the six different contexts. The dative subject is plural in (34) and is singular in (35). The a-sentences show the subject-verb-object word order; the b-sentences are transitive expletive constructions; and the c-sentences are adverb-initial constructions. As discussed in Section 2.1, previous research has shown that some speakers show a contrast between the a-type sentences and the b-type sentences. However, it is not clear as to whether this contrast is the effect of the expletive or of the word order. That is, do we find the same degradation in agreement in constructions with some other clause-initial item and a post-verbal dative subject? The sentences in (36) and (37) illustrate these six environments for ECM constructions.

(34) Plural Dative – Monoclause[19]

a. *Sumum gömlum mönnum líkar/líka pípuhattar.*
some old men.DAT.PL like.SG/PL top hats.NOM.PL
'Some old men like top hats.'

b. *Það líkar/líka sumum gömlum mönnum pípuhattar.*
there like.SG/PL some old men.DAT.PL top hats.NOM.PL
'Some old men like top hats.'

c. *Augljóslega líkar/líka sumum gömlum mönnum pípuhattar.*
obviously like.SG/pl some old men.DAT.PL top hats.NOM.PL
'Obviously, some old men like top hats.'

(35) Singular Dative – Monoclause

a. *Einum viðskiptavini í búðinni líkar/líka pípuhattar.*
one customer.DAT.SG in store-the like.SG/PL top hats.NOM.PL
'One customer in the store likes top hats.'

b. *Það líkar/líka einum viðskiptavini í búðinni pípuhattar.*
there like.SG/PL one customer.DAT.SG in store-the top hats.NOM.PL
'One customer in the store likes top hats.'

c. *Augljóslega líkar/líka einum viðskiptavini í*
obviously like.SG/PL one customer.DAT.SG in
búðinni pípuhattar.
store-the top hats.NOM.PL
'Obviously, one customer in the store likes top hats.'

19. The other verbs that were examined in monoclausal constructions are *leiddist*(SG)/*leiddust*(PL) 'feel bored', *barst*(SG)/*bárust*(PL) 'get', *áskotnaðist*(SG)/ *áskotnuðust*(PL) 'get'.

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(36) Plural Dative – ECM[20]

a. *Mörgum skiptinemum* *fannst/fundust* *þessi* *próf*
many exchange students.DAT.PL found.SG/PL these exams.NOM.PL

vera *ósanngjörn.*
be unfair

'Many exchange students found these exams to be unfair.'

b. *Það* *fannst/fundust* *mörgum skiptinemum*
there found.SG/PL many exchange students.DAT.PL

þessi próf *vera* *ósanngjörn.*
these exams.NOM.PL be unfair

'Many exchange students found these exams to be unfair.'

c. *Í fyrra* *fannst/fundust* *mörgum skiptinemum*
last year found.SG/PL many exchange students.DAT.PL

þessi próf *vera* *ósanngjörn.*
these exams.NOM.PL be unfair

'Last year, many exchange students found these exams to be unfair.'

(37) Singular Dative – ECM

a. *Einhverjum nemanda* *fannst/fundust* *þessi próf* *vera ósanngjörn.*
some student.DAT.SG found.SG/PL these exams.NOM.PL be unfair
'Some student found these exams to be unfair.'

b. *Það* *fannst/fundust* *einhverjum* *nemanda* *þessi próf*
there found.SG/PL some student.DAT.SG these exams.NOM.PL

vera *ósanngjörn.*
be unfair

'Some student found these exams to be unfair.'

c. *Í fyrra* *fannst/fundust* *einhverjum* *nemanda*
last year found.SG/PL some student.DAT.SG

þessi próf *vera* *ósanngjörn.*
these exams.NOM.PL be unfair

'Last year, some student found these exams to be unfair.'

A survey was constructed after initial consultations with other speakers (who were not given the survey) and disseminated to ten speakers in winter 2014. There were six counterbalanced questionnaires, with either the singular or plural form of the verb appearing in all six environments. Speakers were asked to rate the acceptability

20. The other verbs that were examined in ECM environments are *þykir*(SG)/*þykja*(PL), 'find' *þótti*(SG)/*þóttu*(PL), 'find', *heyrðist*(SG)/*heyrðust*(PL) 'seemed to hear'.

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of either the singular or the plural form of the verb in each environment, in terms of how likely they were to use that verb form – 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest. Speakers were instructed to consider the sentences in the context of normal, casual speech and were told that there were no right or wrong responses. Three weeks later, speakers received the corresponding version of the survey with the other verbal form and were instructed to perform the same task. The speakers are residents of Reykjavík and Akureyri and range in age from 20 to 28. While the survey was designed in close consultation with a native Icelandic speaker who has formal training in both Icelandic and linguistics, the speakers who completed the survey do not have formal training in either.

The aim of the current investigation is to document and analyze the depth of variation. As such, having a relatively small pool of informants has allowed for follow-up consultations with some speakers in order to gather additional data and to clarify speakers' initial judgments. One substantial difficulty in investigating agreement patterns in Icelandic is that there is considerable intra-speaker variation. As reported in Jónsson (2017), 'very few speakers accept only agreement or non-agreement' (see also Thráinsson, Sigurðsson and Jónsson 2015). The rating task was, therefore, used in order to capture the gradation in judgments.

In what follows, we provide a sketch of the grammars of the ten informants involved in the current investigation. We present the results of the initial survey, discuss the patterns that are revealed, and when applicable discuss follow-up judgments that have been obtained. Given the discussion above, we comment on the following dimensions of variation:

(38) a. TP vs *v*P for ECM clauses
b. the dative as an intervener and the degree to which a singular feature strengthens the intervention effect
c. the degree to which there is an expletive effect

We will see evidence for a general preference for ECM clauses that are TPs and a general dative intervention effect. We will also see a less pervasive effect of the number of the dative and the presence of an expletive.

4.2 The grammars of individuals

In the summary charts below, the numeric value is the average rating that the speaker gave each form of the verb in each condition and the figure at the bottom is the average for the entire set of default or agreeing forms in mono- and biclausal constructions. The abbreviations correspond to the following conditions/word orders:

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(39)

a. DAT.PL-V-NOM.PL:	Dat.pl. – Verb – Nom.pl.	=	(34a)/(36a)
b. DAT.SG-V-NOM.PL:	Dat.sg. – Verb – Nom.pl.	=	(35a)/(37a)
c. EXP-V-DAT.PL-NOM.PL:	Expl. – Verb – Dat.pl. – Nom.pl.	=	(34b)/(36b)
d. EXP-V-DAT.SG-NOM.PL:	Expl. – Verb – Dat.sg. – Nom.pl.	=	(35b)/(37b)
e. ADV-V-DAT.PL-NOM.PL:	Adv. – Verb – Dat.pl. – Nom.pl.	=	(34c)/(36c)
f. ADV-V-DAT.SG-NOM.PL:	Adv. – Verb – Dat.sg. – Nom.pl.	=	(35c)/(37c)

(40) *Speaker 1 – singular dative effect*

	Monoclause		ECM	
	SG.	PL.	SG.	PL.
DAT.PL-V-NOM	3	2	4.5	1.25
DAT.SG-V-NOM	4	1	4.75	1
EXP-V-DAT.PL-NOM	3.5	3	4	1.5
EXP-V-DAT.SG-NOM	4	1	4.5	1
ADV-V-DAT.PL-NOM	4	2.5	4.5	1.5
ADV-V-DAT.SG-NOM	4	1	4.75	1
Mean	*3.75*	*1.75*	*4.5*	*1.21*

Speaker 1 exhibits a strong preference for default forms and patterns like Sigurðsson and Holmberg's Variety C, described in (31). The dative is, therefore, a strong intervener, regardless of where it ends up in the surface structure. The complete unacceptability of agreement with the plural nominative in clauses with the singular dative suggests that the singular feature further strengthens the intervention effect. Follow-up consultations reveal that the speaker is not making the verb agree with the dative. As shown in Examples (41)–(42), the speaker has a strong preference for the singular form of the verb in constructions with a plural dative subject and singular nominative object. The speaker completely rejects the plural form, as shown below (figures in parentheses reflect the score on the scale 1–5, where 1 is the lowest score (least likely to use the form) and 5 the highest, as explained above):

(41) Plural Dative, Singular Nominative Object – Singular Verb

a. *Einhverjum stelpum leiddist þessi æfing.* (4)
some girls.DAT.PL bored.SG this exercise.NOM.SG
'Some girls found this exercise boring.'

b. *Það leiddist einhverjum stelpum þessi æfing.* (2)
there bored.SG some girls.DAT.PL this exercise.NOM.SG

c. *Trúlega leiddist einhverjum stelpum þessi æfing.* (4)
probably bored.SG some girls.DAT.PL this exercise.NOM.SG

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(42) Plural Dative, Singular Nominative Object – Plural Verb

a. *Einhverjum stelpum leiddust þessi æfing.* (1)
some girls.DAT.PL bored.PL this exercise.NOM.SG

b. *Það leiddust einhverjum stelpum þessi æfing.* (1)
there bored.PL some girls.DAT.PL this exercise.NOM.SG

c. *Trúlega leiddust einhverjum stelpum þessi æfing.* (1)
probably bored.PL some girls.DAT.PL this exercise.NOM.SG

Additionally, because there is a preference for the default in both monoclausal and ECM constructions, we cannot gauge the size of the ECM clause. There is also no clear contrast between expletive-initial and adverb-initial constructions.

(43) *Speaker 2 – clause boundary effect and singular dative effect*

	Monoclause		ECM	
	SG.	PL.	SG.	PL.
DAT.PL-V-NOM	3	4	4	3
DAT.SG-V-NOM	4	3	5	1
EXP-V-DAT.PL-NOM	2	2	3	2
EXP-V-DAT.SG-NOM	2	2	3	1
ADV-V-DAT.PL-NOM	3	3	4	2
ADV-V-DAT.SG-NOM	4	3	4	1
Mean	*3*	*2.83*	*3.83*	*1.67*

Speaker 2 shows a marginal preference for the default in monoclausal cases and a more substantial preference in ECM clauses, suggesting a preference for ECM clauses that are TPs. The preference for the default in ECM clauses is amplified by the fact that agreement in constructions with a singular dative is completely unacceptable. Follow-up consultations reveal that this speaker, like Speaker 1, is not exhibiting agreement with the dative. As shown in (44)–(47), with the exception of the expletive sentences, the speaker gives the singular form the highest rating in both monoclausal and ECM sentences with a plural dative and singular nominative. As with Speaker 1, the plural form of the verb is completely rejected (rating on a five point scale shown in parentheses as before).[21]

(44) Plural Dative, Singular Nominative Object – Singular Verb

a. *Einhverjum stelpum leiddist þessi æfing.* (5)
some girls.DAT.PL bored.SG this exercise.NOM.SG
'Some girls found this exercise boring.'

b. *Það leiddist einhverjum stelpum þessi æfing.* (3)
there bored.SG some girls.DAT.PL this exercise.NOM.SG

21. This speaker provides the same judgments for sentences with *þótti*(SG)/ *þóttu*(PL) 'found'.

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c. *Trúlega leiddist einhverjum stelpum þessi æfing.* (5)
probably bored.SG some girls.DAT.PL this exercise.NOM.SG

(45) Plural Dative, Singular Nominative Object – Plural Verb

a. *Einhverjum stelpum leiddust þessi æfing.* (1)
some girls.DAT.PL bored.PL this exercise.NOM.SG

b. *Það leiddust einhverjum stelpum þessi æfing.* (1)
there bored.PL some girls.DAT.PL this exercise.NOM.SG

c. *Trúlega leiddust einhverjum stelpum þessi æfing.* (1)
probably bored.PL some girls.DAT.PL this exercise.NOM.SG

(46) Plural Dative, Singular Nominative ECM Subject – Singular Verb

a. *Mörgum skiptinemum fannst þetta próf vera*
many exchange students.DAT.PL found.SG this exam.NOM.SG be
ósanngjarnt. (5)
unfair

'Many exchange students found this exam to be unfair.'

b. *Það fannst mörgum skiptinemum þetta próf*
there found.SG many exchange students.DAT.PL this exam.NOM.SG
vera ósanngjarnt. (1)
be unfair

c. *Í fyrra fannst mörgum skiptinemum þetta*
last year found.SG many exchange students.DAT.PL this
próf vera ósanngjarnt. (5)
exam.NOM.SG be unfair

(47) Plural Dative, Singular Nominative ECM Subject – Plural Verb

a. *Mörgum skiptinemum fundust þetta próf vera*
many exchange students.DAT.PL found.PL this exam.NOM.SG be
ósanngjarnt. (1)
unfair

b. *Það fundust mörgum skiptinemum þetta próf*
there found.PL many exchange students.DAT.PL this exam.NOM.SG
vera ósanngjarnt. (1)
be unfair

c. *Í fyrra fundust mörgum skiptinemum þetta próf*
last year found.PL many exchange students.DAT.PL this exam.NOM.SG
vera ósanngjarnt. (1)
be unfair

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Additionally, the consistently low ratings for the default form in the *það*-construction suggests that this speaker has a dispreference for this type of expletive construction in general.

(48) *Speaker 3 – clause boundary effect and agreement with the dative*

	Monoclause		ECM	
	SG.	PL.	SG.	PL.
DAT.PL-V-NOM	2	4	1	3.25
DAT.SG-V-NOM	4.75	2	2.5	1
EXP-V-DAT.PL-NOM	2	3.75	1.75	3.5
EXP-V-DAT.SG-NOM	3.5	1	2.75	1
ADV-V-DAT.PL-NOM	1.25	3.5	1.75	3.25
ADV-V-DAT.SG-NOM	3.75	1	2.25	1
Mean	*2.88*	*2.54*	*2*	*2.17*

Speaker 3 shows a slight contrast between monoclausal constructions and ECM clauses, with agreement being more preferred in the former. This suggests some selectional preference for ECM clauses that are TPs, as opposed to *v*Ps, but this does not appear to be a strong preference. A clearer contrast emerges when we examine plural dative versus singular dative constructions. In both monoclausal sentences and ECM clauses, there is not only a consistent preference for agreement when the dative is plural, but also almost a complete rejection of the singular. Follow-up consultations reveal that the speaker is actually exhibiting agreement with dative subjects, akin to the dative subject agreement that is found in some varieties of Faroese. In both monoclausal and ECM constructions with a plural dative and singular nominative, the default verbal form is rated as 1 for all three conditions and the agreeing form has an average of 4.17, as shown in (49)–(52).

(49) Plural Dative, Singular Nominative Object – Singular Verb

a. *Einhverjum stelpum leiddist þessi æfing.* (1)
some girls.DAT.PL bored.SG this exercise.NOM.SG
'Some girls found this exercise boring.'

b. *Það leiddist einhverjum stelpum þessi æfing.* (1)
there bored.SG some girls.DAT.PL this exercise.NOM.SG

c. *Trúlega leiddist einhverjum stelpum þessi æfing.* (1)
probably bored.SG some girls.DAT.PL this exercise.NOM.SG

(50) Plural Dative, Singular Nominative Object – Plural Verb

a. *Einhverjum stelpum leiddust þessi æfing.* (4)
some girls.DAT.PL bored.PL this exercise.NOM.SG
'Some girls found this exercise boring.'

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b. *Það leiddust einhverjum stelpum þessi æfing.* (5)
there bored.PL some girls.DAT.PL this exercise.NOM.SG

c. *Trúlega leiddust einhverjum stelpum þessi æfing.* (4)
probably bored.PL some girls.DAT.PL this exercise.NOM.SG

(51) Plural Dative, Singular Nominative ECM Subject – Singular Verb

a. *Mörgum ferðamönnum þótti kjóllinn í glugganum*
many tourists.DAT.PL found.SG dress-the. NOM.SG in window-the
vera dýr. (1)
be expensive
'Many tourists found the dress in the window to be expensive.'

b. *Það þótti mörgum ferðamönnum kjóllinn*
there found.SG many tourists.DAT.PL dress-the.NOM.SG
í glugganum vera dýr. (1)
in window-the be expensive

c. *Trúlega þótti mörgum ferðamönnum kjóllinn*
probably found.SG many tourists.DAT.PL dress-the.NOM.SG
í glugganum vera dýr. (1)
in window-the be expensive

(52) Plural Dative, Singular Nominative ECM Subject – Plural Verb

a. *Mörgum ferðamönnum þóttu kjóllinn í glugganum*
many tourists.DAT.PL found.PL dress-the. NOM.SG in window-the
vera dýr. (4)
be expensive

b. *Það þóttu mörgum ferðamönnum kjóllinn í*
there found.PL many tourists.DAT.PL dress-the. NOM.SG in
glugganum vera dýr. (4)
window-the be expensive

c. *Trúlega þóttu mörgum ferðamönnum kjóllinn í*
probably found.PL many tourists.DAT.PL dress-the. NOM.SG in
glugganum vera dýr. (4)
window-the be expensive

These findings are extremely interesting and provide evidence that, for some speakers, the features of the dative are not only visible but are also accessible for agreement. Additional research is needed in order to test the implications of these speakers' patterns for the PCC/Person Restriction analyses. Recall that, on the approaches described in Section 3.2, the agreement head is forced into a relationship

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with the nominative object because the number feature on the dative is not visible. If the agreement head gets its number value from the dative, there is no motivation for it to establish a relationship with the nominative. Consequently, there should be no feature clash and constructions with first or second person nominative objects should be allowed for speakers such as this.

(53) *Speaker 4 – clause boundary and expletive effect*

	Monoclause		ECM	
	SG.	PL.	SG.	PL.
DAT.PL-V-NOM	3.75	2.25	4.75	1
DAT.SG-V-NOM	3.5	2	5	1
EXP-V-DAT.PL-NOM	2	1.25	2.75	1
EXP-V-DAT.SG-NOM	2	1.75	3	1
ADV-V-DAT.PL-NOM	3.25	2.25	4.5	1
ADV-V-DAT.SG-NOM	2.75	2	4.75	1
Mean	*2.88*	*1.92*	*4.13*	*1*

Speaker 4 patterns like Sigurðsson and Holmberg's (2008) Variety C, as there is a preference for the default form. Moreover, whereas agreement is marginal in monoclausal sentences, agreement is completely unacceptable in ECM constructions. This suggests the consistent presence of a TP boundary. Additionally, in the monoclausal construction there is a slight contrast between expletive-initial and adverb-initial clauses. Adverb-initial clauses pattern like dative-initial constructions, with agreement being slightly better in both of these constructions than in expletive constructions, suggesting a subtle expletive intervention effect.

(54) *Speaker 5 – multiple intervener effect*

	Monoclause		ECM	
	SG.	PL.	SG.	PL.
DAT.PL-V-NOM	3.5	4.5	4	4.75
DAT.SG-V-NOM	3	3.75	4	3.25
EXP-V-DAT.PL-NOM	1.75	3	2.75	2.5
EXP-V-DAT.SG-NOM	2	2.5	2.5	1.5
ADV-V-DAT.PL-NOM	3.25	4	3.25	3.5
ADV-V-DAT.SG-NOM	2.75	2.75	3	2
Mean	*2.71*	*3.42*	*3.25*	*2.92*

As with the next three speakers, this speaker shows an effect of all three interveners – the TP clause boundary, the singular dative, and the expletive – though to varying degrees. Speaker 5 displays a general preference for agreement in the monoclausal construction, and a general preference for the default in ECM clauses. This suggests that there is a preference for ECM clauses that are TPs, though this

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preference is not strong. Additionally, in monoclausal and ECM constructions, agreement is consistently worse with singular datives, suggesting that the singular feature strengthens the force of the intervener. Agreement is worst with expletive singular dative ECM clauses, which suggests that the three interveners are working in conjunction to severely degrade agreement. Additionally, agreement is somewhat better with adverb-initial clauses than with the expletive-initial clauses, suggesting an expletive effect as opposed to an effect of linear order.

(55) *Speaker 6 – multiple intervener effect*

	Monoclause		ECM	
	SG.	PL.	SG.	PL.
DAT.PL-V-NOM	3.5	4.25	4.25	3.75
DAT.SG-V-NOM	3.5	3.25	4.5	3.25
EXP-V-DAT.PL-NOM	3.25	3	3.75	2.75
EXP-V-DAT.SG-NOM	3	2.25	3.75	1.75
ADV-V-DAT.PL-NOM	3.5	3.25	3.75	3
ADV-V-DAT.SG-NOM	3.25	2.5	3.75	1.5
Mean	*3.33*	*3.08*	*3.96*	*2.67*

Speaker 6 also shows an effect of multiple interveners, with agreement in monoclausal sentences with initial plural dative subjects having the highest average, 4.25. In both monoclausal and ECM sentences, agreement is consistently worse with singular datives than with plural datives. The singular feature, therefore, strengthens the intervention effect. Overall, there is a slight preference for the default in the monoclausal construction and a more substantial preference for the default in ECM clauses, suggesting a selectional preference for ECM clauses that are TPs. There is a marginal difference between expletive-initial and adverb-initial monoclausal constructions, with agreement being slightly better in the adverb clauses. As with the speaker illustrated in (54), this pattern suggests a very subtle expletive intervention effect.

(56) *Speaker 7 – multiple intervener effect*

	Monoclause		ECM	
	SG.	PL.	SG.	PL.
DAT.PL-V-NOM	2.25	4.25	3.25	3.75
DAT.SG-V-NOM	3.25	2.75	2.75	3.25
EXP-V-DAT.PL-NOM	3.75	2.25	3.25	3.25
EXP-V-DAT.SG-NOM	3.25	2	3.5	1.25
ADV-V-DAT.PL-NOM	3.75	2.75	4.5	3.25
ADV-V-DAT.SG-NOM	3.25	2	4	2.5
Mean	*3.25*	*2.67*	*3.54*	*2.88*

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Speaker 7 more subtly illustrates the multiple intervener effect. Overall, there is little difference between monoclausal and ECM constructions, but the default is slightly better with ECM than with the monoclausal construction, suggesting some marginal preference for ECM clauses that are TPs. However, agreement is most acceptable in plural dative-initial monoclausal constructions, with an average of 4.25, and least acceptable in ECM expletive constructions with a singular dative, which have an average of 1.25. Additionally, in both monoclausal constructions and ECM clauses, agreement is consistently worse with singular datives.

(57) *Speaker 8 – multiple intervener effect*

	Monoclause		ECM	
	SG.	PL.	SG.	PL.
DAT.PL-V-NOM	1.75	4.75	2	4
DAT.SG-V-NOM	3.25	3.5	5	2
EXP-V-DAT.PL-NOM	3.25	4	4.75	3
EXP-V-DAT.SG-NOM	4	4	4.75	1
ADV-V-DAT.PL-NOM	3.25	4.5	4.25	2.75
ADV-V-DAT.SG-NOM	4.75	3.75	5	1.75
Mean	*3.38*	*4.08*	*4.29*	*2.42*

Speaker 8 exhibits an even stronger multiple intervener effect, with agreement in plural dative-initial monoclausal constructions having an average of 4.75 and agreement in ECM expletive constructions with a singular dative being completely unacceptable. Additionally, there is a clear contrast between monoclausal and ECM constructions, with a strong preference for agreement in the monoclausal construction and an even stronger preference for the default in ECM clauses, suggesting a strong selectional preference for TP. Except for monoclausal expletive constructions, agreement is consistently worse with singular datives, suggesting that the singular feature of the dative generally strengthens its intervention effect.

(58) *Speaker 9 – clause boundary effect*

	Monoclause		ECM	
	SG.	PL.	SG.	PL.
DAT.PL-V-NOM	3.5	2.5	3.5	3.25
DAT.SG-V-NOM	2.25	2.5	4	2.25
EXP-V-DAT.PL-NOM	2	2.5	3.75	3.5
EXP-V-DAT.SG-NOM	2.25	2.75	4	2.75
ADV-V-DAT.PL-NOM	2.25	2.75	3.75	2.25
ADV-V-DAT.SG-NOM	3.25	2.5	3.75	2.75
Mean	*2.58*	*2.58*	*3.79*	*2.79*

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Speaker 9 exhibits a great deal of optionality. For monoclausal constructions, there is no overall difference between the default and agreeing forms. Additionally, unlike the previous four speakers, the agreeing form in ECM expletive constructions with a singular dative is rated slightly higher than the agreeing form in plural dative-initial monoclausal constructions. In ECM clauses, however, the default is preferred overall, suggesting a selectional preference for TP over *v*P.

(59) *Speaker 10 – no intervention effect*

	Monoclause		ECM	
	SG.	PL.	SG.	PL.
DAT.PL-V-NOM	1	5	1	5
DAT.SG-V-NOM	1	5	1	5
EXP-V-DAT.PL-NOM	1	3	1	3
EXP-V-DAT.SG-NOM	1	3	1	3
ADV-V-DAT.PL-NOM	1	5	1	5
ADV-V-DAT.SG-NOM	1	5	1	5
Mean	*1*	*4.33*	*1*	*4.33*

The final speaker is a seemingly perfect exemplar of Sigurðsson and Holmberg's (2008) Variety A. The contrast between the default and the agreeing forms is mitigated only by the presence of the expletive. Even though agreement is rated lower in the expletive sentences, the default form is not rated higher, so the speaker could be demonstrating a dispreference for this type of *það*-initial sentence.[22]

The patterns exhibited by all of the speakers are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of speaker variation

	Clause bondary effect (preference TP over *v*P)	**Dative number effect**	**Expletive effect**	**Agreement with dative subjects**	**No intervention effect (agree only)**
Speaker 1		✓			
Speaker 2	✓	✓			
Speaker 3	✓			✓	
Speaker 4	✓		✓		
Speaker 5	✓	✓	✓		
Speaker 6	✓	✓	✓		
Speaker 7	✓	✓	✓		
Speaker 8	✓	✓	✓		
Speaker 9	✓				
Speaker 10					✓

22. See footnote 7 for discussion.

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4.3 Additional complexities – Where's *það*?

As noted by Sigurðsson and Holmberg (2008) and as reported above, for some speakers, agreement is more degraded in expletive constructions. Additionally, as discussed above, for some speakers, agreement is slightly more acceptable in adverb-initial sentences than in expletive-initial sentences. For these speakers, the degradation in agreement cannot be attributed to linear order. For other speakers, expletive and adverb constructions pattern similarly and linear order may be the relevant factor; when the dative intervenes betwen the verb and the nominative on the surface this leads to a degradation in agreement. The first set of speakers, however, present a substantial challenge to which we do not have a definitive answer. Making the argument that the expletive is an intervener is a non-trivial endeavor.

Expletive constructions have received a great deal of attention in the literature and the position of the expletiveas well as its associatehave been thoroughly discussed (see Thráinsson 2007, Chapter 7 and references therein for detailed discussion). It has traditionally been argued that clause-initial items occupy SpecCP in V2 languages. However, as noted in Thráinsson (2007), items that occupy SpecCP in Icelandic are usually foregrounded, and since expletive *það* is not foregrounded, it likely occupies a lower positionSpecIP/TP or SpecAgrSP.[23] Crucially, though, in none of these positions does the expletive intervene between an agreement probe and a nominative. The question remains: if *það* is indeed an intervener, where does it reside in the structure?[24] Unfortunately, we do not have a clear answer to this question.

5. Conclusion

In line with previous research, we have shown that there is a considerable amount of variation in Icelandic with respect to agreement with nominative objects and ECM subjects. As shown in the summary in Table 1, we find some kind of intervention effect in nine of the ten speakers. The clause boundary effect is pervasive. Eight of the speakers indicate some preference for TP over *v*P as the structure of an ECM clause, though as discussed above, there is a great deal of both interspeaker and intraspeaker variation. There is, likewise, variation in whether and to what extent

23. Also see Jónsson 1996 for a discussion of the distribution of *það* and other clause-initial items.

24. In her analysis of the expletive in English, Deal (2009) proposes that *there* is merged at the edge of a *v*P that lacks an external argument or an event argument. This captures the observation that English *there* is allowed only with noninchoative unaccusatives. Icelandic, obviously, does not have the same semantic restrictions on the expletive as English does.

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a singular dative and an expletive are interveners. Six speakers show an effect of the number of the dative and five speakers exhibit some indication of an expletive intervention effect. There is evidence, though, that the interveners are working in conjunction with each other for most speakers who show any kind of intervention effect. The expletive effect does not exist by itself for any of the ten speakers. Only one speaker exhibits just the dative number effect and two speakers exhibit just the clause boundary effect. Finally, we have evidence that one speaker utilizes the dative subject agreement pattern found in some varieties of Faroese.

Notably absent from our discussion is the issue of case assignment. We have remained non-committal about whether case is necessarily decided in the narrow syntax. The standard approach is that case and agreement go hand in hand. A DP whose features value the unvalued phi features on T is assigned nominative/absolutive case by T (see Woolford 2006, among many others, for discussion). This approach is criticized in Sigurðsson (2012 and earlier work), wherein case is argued to be the output of other syntactic relationships but has no special syntactic status on its own. Other PF approaches to case and agreement (e.g. McFadden 2004, Bobaljik 2008) assume a close relationship between the two types of features, although this relationship is established post-syntactically. Given the enormous interspeaker and intraspeaker variation in agreement, any approach to case has to somehow divorce it from agreement, but we leave the precise nature of the relationship open for future research.

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