Agreement and the Icelandic Passive

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0 Goals of this Talk

- Illustrate the difference in agreement patterns in different types of Icelandic passives.
- Motivate a smuggling approach (Collins 2005) for auxiliary passives, and a non-smuggling approach for *–st* passives.
- Argue for iterative applications of Agree.

1 Background: Actives, Passives, and Agreement

1.1 Actives

- Icelandic main verbs/auxiliaries agree in person and number with nominative DPs. =(1)a
- Icelandic famously has non-nominative subjects. (Jónsson 1996/2003, Sigurðsson 2004, Thráinsson 2007, Zaenen, Maling, and Thráinsson 1985, among others)[1]
- If there is no nominative, the verb appears in the default form (homophonous with 3rd sg). = (1)b

(1) a. Við lásum/*las bókina.
we.nom.pl read.1pl/dft book-the.acc
'We read the book.' (Sigurðsson 1996, Ex 14)

b. Stelpunum leiddist/*leiddust.
girls-the.dat.pl bored.dft/*3pl
'The girls felt bored.'

- In transitive constructions with non-nominative subjects, the object is nominative and the verb optionally agrees with the object. (Sigurðsson & Holmberg 2008, Ussery 2009/2012)[2]

(2) Einum málfræðingi líkuðu/líkaði þessar hugmyndir.
one.dat linguist.dat liked.3pl/dft these.nom.pl ideas.nom.pl
'One linguist liked these ideas.' (Sigurðsson &Holmberg 2008, Ex 12)

1.2 Passives: Some Background

- Thematic restrictions on passivization are murky. Passivization is more likely to occur with – but is not restricted to – verbs that take agentive subjects.
- For nominative-accusative actives, the semantic direct object surfaces as nominative and triggers agreement. The auxiliary agrees in person and number and the participle agrees in case, gender, and number. =(3)b.

(3) a. Varnarliðið hrakti óvininn á brott.
defense-force-the.nom.sg drove.3sg enemy-the.acc.masc.sg away.
'The defense force drove the enemy away.'

[1] Tests that the dative really is a subject – as opposed to a fronted object – include subject-auxiliary inversion in questions, control of PRO, appearing as the subject of an ECM clause, and reflexivization. Non-nominative subjects tend to be experiencers of some sort.

[2] The matrix verb also optionally agrees with an embedded nominative subject of a nonfinite clause when the matrix subject is dative. This kind optionality is also discussed in Sigurðsson &Holmberg 2008 and Ussery 2009/2012, as well as Hiraiwa 2005, Holmberg and Hróarsdóttir 2003, and Nomura 2005.

b. Óvinurinn var hrakinn á brott (af varnarliðinu).
enemy-the.nom.masc.sg was.3sg driven.nom.masc.sg away (by defense-force-the.dat)
'The enemy was driven away (by the defense force). (Thráinsson 2007, EX 5.2/5.3)

- Dative-nominative actives generally do not passivize.

(4) a. Öllum líka þessir hundar. b *Þessir hundar eru líkaðir (af öllum).
all.dat.pl like.3pl these.nom.pl dogs.nom.pl these.nom.pl dogs.nom.pl are liked (by everyone)
'Everybody likes these dogs.' 'These dogs are liked (by everyone).
(Thráinsson 2007, EX 5.31/5.32)

- Focus on the passivization of (s0me) ditransitives because we're interested in the agreement patterns in dative-nominative constructions.
- Indirect and direct objects appear in numerous case combinations.

(5) a. Þeir leyndu Ólaf sannleikanum. Acc-Dat
they.nom concealed.3pl (from) Olaf.acc truth-the.dat
'They concealed from Olaf the truth.'

b. Jón bað mig bónar. Acc-Gen
Jon.nom asked.3sg me.acc favor-a.gen
'Jon asked me a favor.'

c. Ólafur lofaði Maríu þessum hring. Dat-Dat
Olaf.nom promised.3sg Mary.dat this.dat ring.dat
'Olaf promised Mary this ring.'

d. María óskaði Ólafi alls goðs. Dat-Gen
Mary.nom wished.3sg Olaf.dat everything.gen good.gen
'Mary wished Olaf everything good.'

e. Ég sagði þér söguna. Dat-Acc ⇦
I.nom told.1sg you.dat story-a.acc
'I told you a story.' (Zaenen, Maling, and Thráinsson 1985, EX 37)

- For some ditransitives only the first post-verbal DP passivizes. E.g., for Dat-Dat verbs, dative is retained on both DPs and the verb appears in the default form.
- Nom-Dat-Acc is the canonical ditransitive and either the direct object or the indirect object can passivize.
- When the direct object is passivized, it surfaces as nominative and the auxiliary and participle agree with it.
- The non-structural dative case is preserved when the indirect object is passivized. (6)b is analogous to (2). The syntactic subject is dative and the object is nominative. BUT, (6)b differs from (2) in that agreement is <u>obligatory</u>. Both the auxiliary and the participle agree with the nominative. This is unexpected, given the optionality in (2).

(6) a. Ambáttir voru/*var gefnar konunginum.
maidservants-the.nom.pl were.pl/dft given.nom.fem.pl king-the.dat.sg
'The maidservants were to the king.'

b. Konunginum voru/*var gefnar ambáttir. ⇦
king-the.dat.sg were.pl/dft given.nom.fem.pl maidservants.nom.fem.pl
'The king was given female slaves.' (based on Zaenen, Maling, and Thráinsson 1985, EX 44)

1.3 New Data: Agreement and The *-st Passive*

- *-st* verbs in Icelandic have a number of interpretations, and a subset have a middle interpretation – reflexive, reciprocal, passive, inchoative. (See Thráinsson 2007, Wood 2012a/b for discussion.)
- *No external theta role*, so incompatible with a *by* phrase.

(7) a. Dyrnar voru opnaðar (af dyraverði).
door.the.nom.fem.pl were.pl opened.nom.fem.pl by doorman.dat.masc.sg
'The doors were opened by the doorman.'

b. Dyrnar opnuðust (*af dyraverði).
door.the.nom.fem.pl opened.pl by doorman.dat.masc.sg
'The doors were opened (*by the doorman).' (Thráinsson 2007, EX 5.80)

- No auxiliary. The *–st* verb agrees with the nominative.[3]
- *-st* passives pattern like Dat-Nom actives. Based on a survey of 61 native Icelandic speakers, agreement is optional (at least for some *–st* forms).[4]

(8) a. Sumum börnunum leyfast/leyfist allir hlutir. *79.4% agreement*
some.dat children.dat.pl (were) allowed.pl/dft all.nom.pl things.nom.pl
'Some children were allowed all things.'

b. Einhverjum útlendingum buðust/bauðst betri kjör. *81.5% agreement*
some.dat foreigners.dat.pl (were) offered.pl/dft better.nom.pl conditions.nom.pl
'Some foreigners were offered better conditions.'

c. Þjófunum fyrirgáfust/fyrirgafst allir glæpirnir. *76.5% agreement*
thieves-the.dat.pl (were) forgiven.pl/dft all.nom.pl crimes-the.nom.pl
'Thieves were forgiven all crimes.

d. Mörgum fyrirtækjum opnuðust/opnaðist nýjir möguleikar. *100% agreement*
many.dat companies.dat (were) opened.pl/dft (to) new.nom.pl possibilities.nom.pl
'Many companies were opened to new possibilities.'

(9) Summary of data and analysis

Construction	**Agreement**	**Analysis**
Nominative Subject Active/Passive	obligatory	Dative does not intervene
Nominative Object Active	optional	Dative intervenes
Nominative Object Auxiliary Passive	obligatory	Dative does not intervene
Nominative Object *–st* Passive	optional	Dative intervenes

- Obligatory agreement in the auxiliary passive is due to the absence of intervention and not the presence of an auxiliary. The auxiliary optionally agrees with the nominative in (10).

(10) Mörgum kennurum höfðu/hafði fundist stelpurnar vera gáfaðar.
many.dat.pl teachers.dat.pl had.3pl/dft found girls-the.nom.pl be intelligent
'Many teachers had found the girls intelligent.'

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[3] Some *–st* verbs are compatible with the auxiliary passive.

(i) a. Þeir kröfðust peninganna.
they.nom.pl demanded money.the.gen.pl
'They demanded the money.'

b. Þeninganna var krafist (af þeim).
money.the.gen.pl was.sg demanded.nom.sg.neut by them.Dat.pl
'The money was demanded by them.' (Thráinsson 2007, EX 5.28)

[4] The survey was conducted in Fall 2008 at the University of Iceland. The survey was a forced choice task in which speakers were asked to select either the agreeing or the default form of the verb as the form they would be most likely to use in casual conversation. With the exception of one speaker for one item, speakers never selected the default for the auxiliary passives. Examples are based on those appearing throughout Thráinsson (2007) and were developed in consultation with Jóhannes Gísli Jónsson. The rate of agreement in dative-nominative actives was also tested.

2 Analysis: The Auxiliary Passive

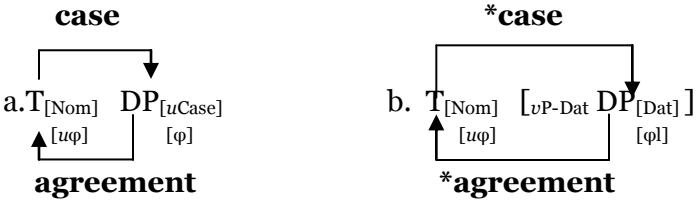
2.1 Theoretical Assumptions

2.1.1 Case Assignment and Agreement

- T is merged with a valued case feature [Nom] and unvalued phi features [*u*φ]. DPs are merged with an unvalued case feature [*u*Case] and valued phi features – e.g.[person=1/2], [number=pl].
- T values nominative on a DP and that DP values φ on T. If T does <u>not</u> value [*u*Case] on a DP, that DP does not value [*u*φ] on T. Verbs don't agree with datives in Icelandic because T does not value dative case.

(11) α > β 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)

(12)



- Non-structural case is assigned by *v* head specified for that case. Dative is assigned to the DP merged in Spec,*v*P $_{Dat}$. (see Legate 2008 Woolford 2006 a/b, among others)
- Dative is assigned to the specifier of *v*P$_{Dat}$ in both actives and passives.

➢ My proposal: In the auxiliary passive, necessarily probes the nominative and the participle.

2.1.2 Smuggling (Passives in English): Collins 2005

- Agent is merged in Spec,*v*P in both actives and passives. *by* heads VoiceP, which is merged higher than *v*P.
- Contra the standard account of passives, in which the agent is merged in an adjunct *by*-phrase. Collins' primary argument against the standard account is that generating the agent in different syntactic positions violates the Uniformity of Theta-Assignment Hypothesis – UTAH – (Baker 1988/1997).
- The participle and the direct object are merged inside PartP. *PartP moves to Spec,VoiceP* via Smuggling.

(13) Smuggling: Z [$_{YP}$ XP] W <[$_{YP}$ XP]> YP smuggles XP past W; Z probes XP (Collins 2005: 97)

➢ My proposal: The movement of PartP to Spec,VoiceP in the auxiliary passive smuggles the nominative past the dative (or its trace), thereby avoiding an intervention effect. Obligatory agreement with the nominative.

2.1.3 Covaluation (Long-Distance Agreement in Hindi-Urdu): Bhatt 2005

- In Hindi-Urdu, verbs agree with the highest DP within the clause that is morphologically unmarked for case. Ergative DPs are marked with *–ne*, so verbs do not agree with ergatives. When there is an infinitival complement and an ergative matrix subject, a matrix verb <u>may</u> agree with an embedded object.
  - When the matrix verb agrees, so does the infinitive. = (14)a
  - When the matrix verb appears in the default, so does the infinitive. = (14)b

(14) a. LDA, matrix verb and infinitive agree with embedded object[5]
Shahrukh-ne [tehnii kaat -nii] chaah-ii thii.
Shahrukh-erg branch.fem cut-inf.fem. want-pfv.fem. be.past.fem.sg
'Shahrukh had wanted to cut the branch.'

b. No LDA, default agreement on matrix verb and infinitive
Shahrukh-ne [tehnii kaat-naa] chaah-aa thaa.
Shahrukh-erg branch.fem cut-inf.masc. want-pfv.masc.sg. be.past.masc.sg.
'Shahrukh wanted to cut a/the branch.' (Bhatt 2005, EX 6)

[5] Bhatt proposes that the construction in (14)a is restructuring. Therefore, the matrix verb and the embedded object are in the same clause.

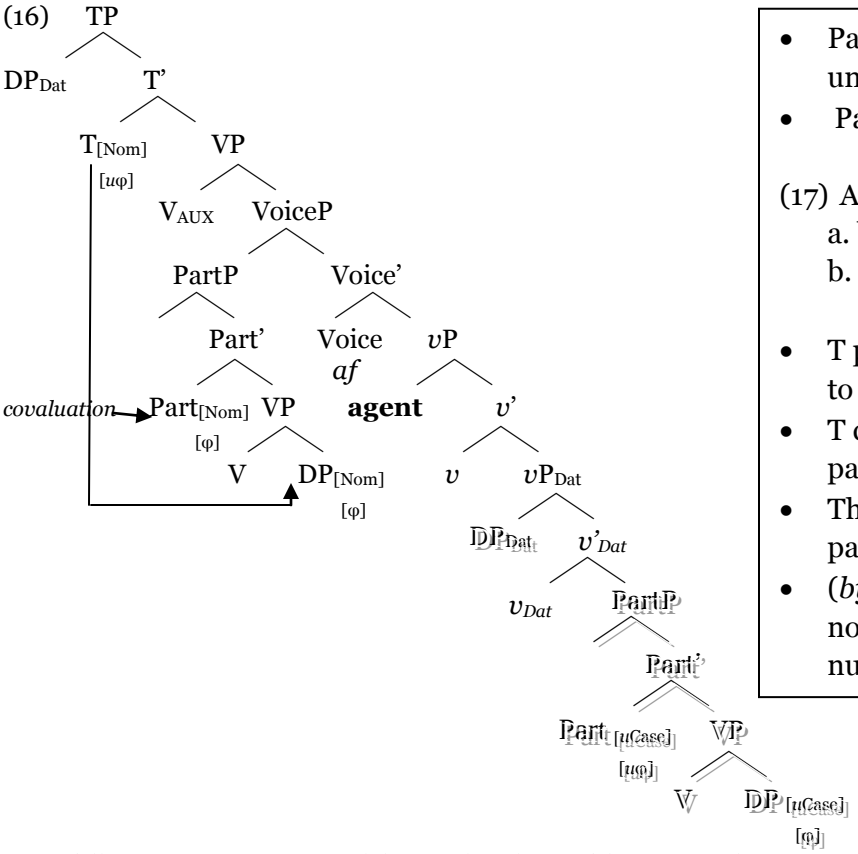
- Bhatt proposes that when the matrix T probes the φ-features on the embedded object in (14)a, the embedded object *covaluates* the φ-features on the nonfinite T. (The matrix T does not probe the embedded object in (14)b, so the object cannot covaluate the φ-features on nonfinite T.)

(15) [$T_{+fin, [u\varphi]}$ DP_{Erg} [$T_{-fin, [u\varphi]}$ DP_{φ}]] *covaluation*

➢ My proposal: T values nominative on the DP and covaluates nominative on the participle. The DP values φ on the DP and covaluates φ on the participle.

2.2 Analysis

(16)



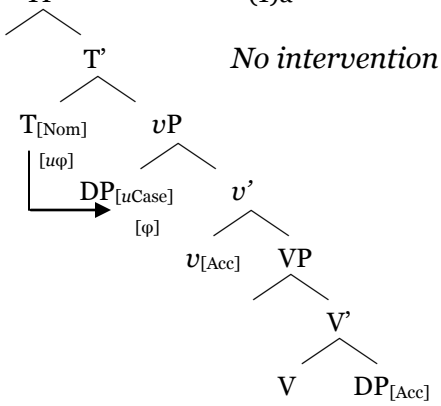
- Participle is merged with unvalued case and unvalued φ.
- PartP moves to Spec,Voice P.

(17) A participle (PartP) must be licensed by:
a. being c-selected by the auxiliary or
b. moving to Spec,VoiceP. (Collins 2005:90)

- T probes the DP to value case on the DP and to value the unvalued φ-features on T.
- T covaluates the case feature on the participle.
- The DP covaluates the φ-features on the participle.
- (*by* heads VoiceP if in the numeration. If not, Voice (and Spec,*v*P) are spelled out as null.)

➢ Obligatory agreement with nominative subjects. T values case on the closest DP and that DP values φ on T.

(18) TP =(1)a



No intervention effect with auxiliary passives or nominative subject constructions.

3 Analysis: The –*st* Passive

3.1 Theoretical Assumptions

3.1.1 Sequential Agree: Nomura 2005

(19) Sequential AGREE:
a. Primary AGREE must take place if there is an active Goal.
b. Subsequent AGREE (if any) takes places if there is an unvalued Goal.
c. AGREE respects Locality.[6] (Nomura 2005:27)

- Distinct from Multiple Agree (Hiraiwa 2001/2005), in which multiple goals are Agreed with simultaneously.

(20) MULTIPLE AGREE/MOVE
MULTIPLE AGREE (multiple feature checking) with a single probe is a single simultaneous syntactic operation; AGREE applies to all the matched goals at the same derivational point derivationally simultaneously. MULTIPLE MOVE (movement of multiple goals) is a simultaneous syntactic operation that applies to all the AGREEd goals. (Hiraiwa 2001, EX 7)

➢ My proposal: Primary Agree is obligatory. Subsequent Agree is optional. Agree applies iteratively and can fail to apply after the first application.

3.1.2 The "Failure" of Agree: Preminger 2010

(21) "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. (2010, EX 58)

- In the possessor dative constructions in Hebrew, the possessed DP may appear pre or post-verbally.
  - Agreement is obligatory with the pre-verbal DP. =(22)
  - Lack of agreement is acceptable with the post-verbal DP. =(23)
  - When there is no dative, agreement is obligatory with the post-verbal subject. = (24)

(22) SV – Agreement Obligatory

a. ha-cincenet	nafl-a	le-Dani	b. * ha-cincenet	nafal	le-Dani
the-jar.fem	fell-3sg.fem	dat-Dani	the-jar.fem	fell-3sg.masc	dat-Dani
'Dani's jar fell.'			'Dani's jar fell.'		(Preminger 2010, EX 1)

(23) VS with dative– Lack of Agreement tolerated

a. nafl-a	le-Dani	ha-cincenet	b. ? nafal	le-Dani	ha-cincenet
fell-3sg.fem	dat-Dani	the-jar.fem	fell-3sg.masc	dat-Dani	the-jar.fem
'Dani's jar fell.'			'Dani's jar fell.'		(Preminger 2010, EX 2)

(24) VS without dative– Agreement Obligatory

a. nafl-a	ha-cincenet	b. *nafal	ha-cincenet
fell-3sg.fem	the-jar.fem	fell.3sg.masc	the-jar.fem
'The jar fell.'		'The jar fell.'	(Preminger 2010, EX 7)

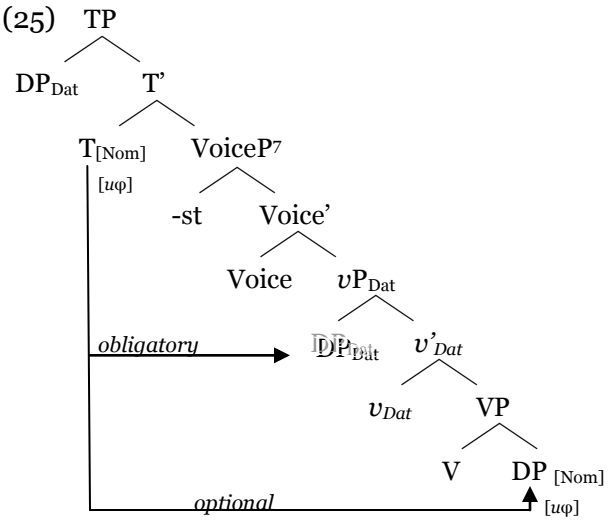
- Φ-agreement is not actually optional. It must be attempted, but the structure may prevent agreement from succeeding.

➢ My proposal: Agree applies iteratively and can fail to apply after the first application. Failure of Agree results in the default form of the verb.

[6] Nomura (2005) also proposes that as long as the probing head is highest in the derivation, Agree is not counter-cyclic.

3.2 Analysis

(25)



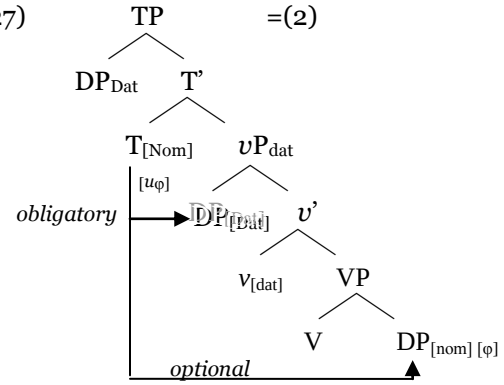
- No agent → No *v*P.
- *-st* is merged in Spec,VoiceP.
- Wood (2012) argues that *–st* is merged in Spec,VoiceP in anticausatives.

(26) Rúðan splundraðist.
window.the.nom shattered
'The window shattered.' (Wood 2012, EX 3b)

- T first probes the dative and the dative moves to Specc,TP.
- The dative cannot value the φ-features on T and T optionally probes the object.
- When T probes the object, the verb agrees.
- When T fails to probe the object, the verbs appears in the default.

- Optional agreement with nominative objects. Also an intervention effect.

(27) =(2)



Note: The object necessarily bears nominative even though it optionally triggers agreement. One option is that case and φ-agreement is established via different operations. (Ussery 2009/2012). Another option is that T fails to probe the object at all and nominative surfaces as a default.

4 Summary, Conclusion, and Future Directions

- ***-st*** passives pattern like dative-nominative actives in exhibiting an optional intervention effect.
- Evidence that Agree applies iteratively.

A Problem: The Expletive Effect

- When auxiliary passives contain an expletive, agreement is *not* obligatory.

(28) a. Það voru/var öllum bændunum seldar kýr *77.8% agreement*
expl were.pl/dft all.dat farmers-the.dat.pl sold cows .nom.pl
'All farmers were sold cows.'

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[7] An alternative is that *-st* heads VoiceP. Kiswahili has a morphological passive and Collins (2005) proposes that the suffix *–w* heads VoiceP.

(ii) a. Mama yangu a-li-tengenez-a shati langu. b. Shati langu li-li-tengenz-w-a na mama yangu.
mother my 1AGR-PAST-made-FV shirt my shirt my 5AGR-PAST-made-PASS-FV by mother my
'My mother made my shirt.' 'My shirt was made by my mother.' (Collins 2005, EX 12)

Since there is V → T movement in Icelandic, no item can intervene between T and the Voice head at the point of spell out. If *–st* heads VoiceP, then perhaps VoiceP does not project a specifier.

b. Það voru/var öllum bornum gefnar kökur *76.4% agreement*
expl were.pl/dft all.dat children-the.dat.pl given cakes.nom.pl
'All children were given cakes.'

c. Það voru/var öllum knopunum sýndir hestarnir *74.1% agreement*
expl were.pl/dft all.dat jockeys-the.dat.pl shown horses-the.nom.pl
'All jockeys were shown the horses.'

d. Það voru/var öllum logfraedingunum sendir samningarnir *79.4% agreement*
expl were.pl/were.3pl all lawyers-the.dat.pl sent contracts-the.nom.pl
'All lawyers were sent the contracts.'

- Suggests that the expletive induces an intervention effect. But, the acceptability of lack of agreement may be due to the New Passive, in which the object remains VP-internal and bears accusative.

(29) a. Stúlkan var lamin í klessu. *Old Passive*
girl-the.nom.sg.fem was.sg beaten.nom.sg.fem in mess agreement with the nominative
'The girl was badly beaten up.'

b. Það var lamið stúlkuna í klessu *New Passive*
there was.sg beaten.dft girl-the.acc.sg.fem in mess no nominative, default agreement
'The girl was badly beaten up.' (Thráinsson 2007, EX 5.64)

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