

Person effects in low nominative agreement

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Abstract:

In recent years, there has been a great deal of interest in differences between Person and Number agreement (see among others Baker 2008, Bejar & Rezac 2009, Preminger 2011, 2014) both empirically in a wide range of languages as well as from a theoretical point of view. Within this literature, there have been several proposals, considering the Icelandic pattern of restrictions in person agreement in DAT-NOM structures: agreement in number with a low nominative is possible while agreement in person is not. The restriction in Icelandic has been accounted for in terms of (i) a person licensing condition (=PLC) (see e.g. accounts along the lines of Boeckx 2000 & Preminger 2011) or (ii) multiple agree (see accounts along the lines of Schütze 2003, Sigurðsson & Holmberg 2008). In this talk, we discuss empirical evidence that supports the multiple agree approach (and DAT being a defective intervener) from two different sources. First, we provide experimental evidence for syncretism effects in Icelandic DAT-NOM constructions; second, we consider a case of low nominative agreement, namely person agreement in Icelandic (and Faroese) Specificational Copular Constructions, which show that a low nominative can but need not be agreed with, contra what has been proposed by the PLC approaches. To account for the differences, we suggest that nominatives halt the probe, while the dative argument does not; as a result multiple agree arises in DAT-NOM, but not in SCCs.

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