Towards an analysis of concord (in Icelandic)

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**Introduction:** A central question for the theory of agreement is whether DP-internal agreement (concord) and argument-predicate agreement (A-P agreement) are instances of the same phenomenon occurring in different syntactic domains. From a simplistic standpoint they are the same phenomenon: Both involve features of one linguistic item being morphologically marked on another. While there is a rich literature analyzing A-P agreement, there is comparatively little focusing on concord, and most seems to presuppose that concord is the correlate of A-P agreement in the nominal domain, and thus, the theory of A-P agreement (for example, the AGREE relation (Chomsky, 2000, 2001)) must account for concord (Baker 2008; Kramer 2009, a.o.). In this paper, I present several arguments why this belief should not be maintained. I then develop a novel theory of concord to account for the unique puzzles it poses, building on insights from research on AGREE and Distributed Morphology (Halle, 1990; Halle and Marantz, 1993). I conclude by showing how the theory captures some particularly recalcitrant data from the rich system of gender, number, and case concord in Icelandic.

**Puzzles:** Firstly, concord and A-P agreement involve different features. A-P agreement can involve gender, number, and person, whereas concord can involve gender, number, and case (Corbett, 2006). Secondly, concord generally shows up on more items in more positions than A-P agreement does. A-P agreement features show up on heads in the main spine (e.g., T) and often only one element, while concord shows up on heads in the main spine (D), specifiers (e.g., Numerals), and on adjuncts (if adjectives are adjuncts) and generally on more than one element. Finally, and most strikingly, the features have different sources. Features involved in A-P agreement all originate in a DP-argument of some element of the verbal projection, whereas the features of concord come from heads in the nominal’s extended projection (N for gender, Num(ber) for number) or from something external to the DP (case). Thus, with respect to the inventory and distribution of features, concord is clearly different from A-P agreement: different features are involved, they are expressed in more/different places, and they have differing origins.

Although the features involved in concord come from different places, they still generally pattern together. The form of each agreeing element depends on gender, number, and case:

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(1) a. all-ir  hin-ir  fjó-ir  litt-u  snigl-ar
    all-NOM.M.PL the-NOM.M.PL four-NOM.M little-NOM.M.PL.DEF snail-NOM.M.PL
    mín-ir
    my-NOM.M.PL
    ‘all my four little snails’

b. frá  fjór-um  falleg-um  hest-um
    from-four-DAT.M.PL pretty-DAT.M.PL horse-DAT.M.PL
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**Proposal:** To start, I assume that the highest nominal projection is KP (Lamontagne and Travis, 1987). K enters the derivation with unvalued features for gender and number and is thus a probe. When K probes, it finds the values for gender and number on N and Num (assuming Multiple Agree (Hiraiwa, 2001)). Once K receives a value for case (through whatever mechanism is responsible), it will possess a value for all three features (see (2)).

I argue that the distribution of the features in the DP is best captured using the postsyntactic devices of AGR-node insertion and feature copying from Distributed Morphology. At PF, heads showing concord trigger insertion of an adjoined AGR-node, and features from the closest c-commanding K are copied into that node. Thus, we have an explanation for why the features of concord pattern together: they are copied from the same source.
In Icelandic partitives, gender apparently reaches farther than case:

(3) sum-ir af þess-um snigl-um eru gul-ir.
    some.NOM.F.PL of these-DAT.F.PL snail-DAT.F.PL are yellow-DAT.F.PL

In (3), *sumir* agrees in gender and number with the noun *sniglum* inside the PP, but they disagree in case. These facts are straightforward if we assume two different K heads (as two cases are assigned), schematized below:

(4) \[
    \begin{array}{c}
    \text{KP}_1 \quad \text{[QP sumir [PP af [KP}_2 \text{ DAT MASC PL sniglum ]]])} \\
    \text{K} = \text{[NOM, MASC, PL]}, \quad \text{K} = \text{[DAT, MASC, PL]}
    \end{array}
\]

Since nothing intervenes between K\(_1\) and K\(_2\), K\(_1\) finds the gender and number values of K\(_2\). As it is the features of the closest c-commanding K which are copied, we have an explanation for the feature mismatch in Icelandic partitives in terms the requirements of c-command and locality.

**Conclusion:** To sum up, A-P agreement denotes a particular syntactic relationship between a head and one of its arguments. The relationship is an exchange: the head agrees and the argument receives case. In contrast, concord is not indicative of any particular syntactic relationship— it is pure morphology. Together with the featural differences discussed above, this strongly suggests that concord and A-P agreement are not instances of the same phenomenon occurring in different domains. This paper distinguishes two different kinds of agreement, one syntactic and one morphological, and future work must investigate other empirical cases of agreement to see how similar/different these two notions of agreement truly are.

Word count: 748