

counterpart I leave as a "puzzle for Peter," who has been interested in Faroese and the Faroes for a long time.

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1. Introduction

The construction *fjöldi manns* and *30 manns* in (1) will probably look (or sound) odd to somebody acquiring Icelandic as a second language:

- (1) a. *Fjöldi manns tók óhagstæð lán.*
 large-number man(gen.sg.) took unfavorable loans
 'A large number of people took unfavorable loans.'
- b. *Stofan tekur 30 manns.*
 the-room takes 30 man(gen.sg.)
 'The room holds 30 people.'

For one thing, the fact that *manns* is obviously a singular form seems unexpected. A native speaker of English might, however, think of expressions like *a 30-man team/roster...*, where *man* also looks like a singular form, but here Icelandic can only use the genitive plural:

- (2) *Bretar sendu 30 *manns/manna lið.*
 Brits sent 30 man(gen.*sg/pl.) team
 'Brits sent a 30-man team.'

The expression *X manns* does not seem to have been discussed in any detail in the Icelandic linguistic literature, probably because it sounds very natural to the native Icelandic ear. It does, however, have several interesting properties and the purpose of this article is to point these out and discuss them. Section 2 gives a standard dictionary definition of the expression and shows that it does not tell the whole story about the restrictions on its use. Section 3 gives an overview of relevant case and agreement facts, partly based on some corpus searches. Section 4 briefly compares the expression to a similar expression involving the genitive plural form *mannna*. Finally, section 5 summarizes the results,

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A Number of People A Puzzle for Peter

Abstract

This article¹ discusses the Icelandic expression *X manns*, where *X* is typically either a noun meaning roughly 'a large number' or else some numeral and *manns* is the gen.sg. of *maður* 'man'. Illustrative examples are given in a–b:

- a. *Fjöldi manns tók óhagstæð lán.*
 large-number man(gen.sg.) took unfavorable loans
 'A large number of people took unfavorable loans.'
- b. *Stofan tekur 30 manns.*
 the-room takes 30 man(gen.sg.)
 'The room holds 30 people.'

It is shown that this expression has several interesting properties. In the first place, most speakers cannot use it with the numerals 1–4 or any numbers ending in 1–4 (21, 32, etc.). Secondly, if this construction is a subject, the verb usually agrees in number with the head *X*, but there are some exceptions to this, especially if *X* is an abstract noun. Besides, this only holds when *X* is in the nominative – or would have been if it could be inflected. Third, a cognate construction can be found in Faroese (e.g. *fimm mans* 'five people'), but it does not seem to obey the same restrictions. Why it should be so different from its Icelandic

1 Thanks are due to the editors of this volume and to two anonymous reviewers for useful comments and corrections.

briefly discusses a corresponding expression in Faroese and raises the puzzling question why it does not seem to obey the same restriction as the Icelandic one.

2. A dictionary definition

Having searched in vain in the Icelandic linguistic literature for an enlightening discussion of the expression *X manns*, a linguist, a second language learner or just a curious language user might just try to look it up in an Icelandic dictionary. And in *Íslensk orðabók* (2002) one does indeed find the following definition in a separate paragraph under *maður* 'man':

manns EF ET • notað við talningu manna fleiri en fjögurra, gefur til kynna áætlaða tölu, yfirleitt aðeins með tugatölum, hundruðum o.s.frv. þegar komið er yfir 20 (tekur et. eða ft. af sögn) Δ þetta verða sennilega 7–8 manns / það var svona 30 manns
[Roughly: 'manns gen.sg. • used when counting more than four people, gives an approximate number, usually only with even tens, hundreds etc. when the number is higher than 20 (takes sg. or pl. of the verb) Δ this will[pl.] probably be 7–8 manns / there was[sg.] approximately 30 manns']

Although this definition gives some helpful information on the meaning and use of this expression, it does not by any means tell the whole story, and it is not entirely accurate either. First, it does not mention the fact that *manns* in this sense cannot only be used with numbers "higher than four" but also with nouns meaning 'crowd, (large) number', as shown in (1a) above. Additional examples of that kind are given in (3):

- (3) a. Múgur manns kom saman á Austurvelli.
crowd man(gen.sg.) came together on Austurvöllur
'A crowd of people gathered on Austurvöllur.'
- b. Hópur manns var þar um páskana.
group man(gen.sg.) was there over Easter
'A group of people was there over Easter.'

- c. Þar var saman komin mergð manns.
there was together-come mass man(gen.sg.)
'A huge group of people had gathered there.'

The expression *múgur manns* (as in (3a)) is quite common and sounds very natural to my ear but *hópur manns* (as in (3b)) somewhat less so, although *hópur* by itself is a much more frequent word than *múgur*. With *hópur* it seems much more natural to use the gen.pl. form *mannna*, i.e. *hópur manna* 'a group of people' and it is much more common (Google claims today that it finds almost 280,000 examples of *hópur manna* and only about 350 of *hópur manns*). There are also more examples of the plural variant with *mergð manna* (pl.) than the singular *mergð manns* (cf. (3c)) but the ratio is the other way around with *múgur manns* (sg.) vs. *múgur manna* (pl.) and also with *fjöldi manns* (cf. (1a)) vs. the plural variant *fjöldi manna* (gen.pl.). We will briefly return to the plural variant in section 4 below. The main point here is just that the expression *X manns*, where *X* is a noun meaning 'large number', is not mentioned in the dictionary definition although it is commonly used, albeit with a very restricted set of nouns.

Another inaccuracy in the dictionary definition is the implication that *X manns* normally gives an approximate number. It is true that the examples given in the dictionary involve an approximation (7–8, svona 30 manns 'approximately 30 people'), and such usage is quite common, but *X manns* can also be used to give an exact number. Thus the following are fine – and in fact found in Icelandic newspapers as shown (for convenience I am not giving any translation for *manns* in the word-for-word translation here nor in the following sets of examples, but it is formally the gen.sg. of *maður* 'man', as already pointed out):

- (4) a. Hryðjuverkamenn taka 37 manns í gíslingu.
terrorists take 37 manns in hostage
'Terrorists take 37 people hostage.'
(*Morgunblaðið*, April 27, 2000)
- b. 89 manns meiddust í götuóeirðum.
89 manns got-hurt in street-riots

'89 people got hurt in riots.'

(*Alþýðublaðið*, September 15, 1968)

These examples were found in the very useful digital library *timarit.is*, where Icelandic (and Faroese and Greenlandic) newspapers and periodicals are accessible and searchable. Here one can randomly pick any numeral + *manns* and find a large number of examples (e.g. 469 with 37 *manns* and 150 with 89 *manns*). So the expression *X manns* is obviously quite common with *X* as a fixed accurate number and not simply some sort of approximation.

A more interesting claim in the dictionary definition is the statement that *X manns* is used when "counting" **more than four** people. This is not entirely accurate as it stands. What is meant is the fact that *X* cannot be any of the numerals 1–4, but for most speakers this **also includes higher numbers** if they end in the numerals 1–4. This is illustrated in (5):

- (5) Stofan tekur *einn/*tvo/*þrjá/*fjóra/fimm/sex.../tuttugu/*tuttugu og einn *manns*.
the-room takes one two three four five six twenty
twenty one man(gen.sg.)
'The room holds five/six ... /twenty people.'

It should be pointed out, however, that a few examples involving the starred numerals can be found on the Internet or on *timarit.is*, including the following:

- (6) a. Þrjátíu og tveir *manns* voru handteknir.
thirty and two *manns* were arrested
'Thirty two people were arrested.'

(*Morgunblaðið*, November 9, 1949)

- b. ... að þrír *manns* létu lífið.
that three *manns* let the-life
'... that three people lost their life.'

(*Morgunblaðið*, April 4, 1984)

- c. Í farþegaklefanum geta fjórir *manns* setið
in the-passenger-cabin can four *manns* sit
'Four people can sit in the passenger cabin'

(*Þjóðviljinn*, October 13, 1956)

All of these sound quite odd to me but they do occur and they seem to have annoyed some readers. Thus one finds the following comment in an article complaining about different kinds of mistakes and errors in newspapers and on the radio, but also commenting on some improvements:

Líka eru horfnir úr sögunni „þrír *manns*“ og „hundrað og einn *manns*“, sem gengu eins og grár ketir á sömu slóðum í eina tíð. Ber að þakka það. [Roughly: 'Expressions like "three *manns*" and "hundred and one *manns*," which used to be quite common in these places [i.e. in the media], have also disappeared. One should be thankful for this.']

(*Þjóðviljinn*, June 10, 1954)

Judging from this, one might assume that the restrictions on *X manns* were not as strict for a while as they are now, or as they are in the language of some speakers, at least not in the media, but it would require detailed research to determine this. Nevertheless, although examples of the kind illustrated in (6) can be found, there is a huge difference in their frequency compared to the frequency of the expression *X manns* where *X* involves a numeral higher than four. This is shown in table 1.²

Table 1: Frequency in *timarit.is* of the expression *X manns* with the numerals 1–9 for *X*.

numeral involved:	einn <i>manns</i>	tveir <i>manns</i>	þrír <i>manns</i>	fjórir <i>manns</i>	fimm <i>manns</i>	sex <i>manns</i>	sjö <i>manns</i>	átta <i>manns</i>	níu <i>manns</i>
number of examples:	1	4	11	34	5,255	4,605	3,495	3,585	2,437

² Numbers higher than 20 ending in 1–9 are included here if they were spelled out (e.g. *hundrað og einn manns* "hundred and one *manns*"). The low figures (i.e. those involving one through four) should be fairly accurate since irrelevant examples were weeded out (e.g. examples involving the compound *manns-aldur*, such as *einn mannsaldur* 'one life time'). The higher figures undoubtedly contain some false hits, but that does not affect the main conclusion.

Although the frequency increases slightly from the numeral *einn* 'one' to the numeral *fjórir* 'four', the numerals 1–4 are clearly in a class by themselves compared to the numerals from 5 and up. To simplify things I only searched for numerals that were spelled out (e.g. *fjórir* and not 4 for 'four', *fimm* and not 5 for 'five', etc.). As is well known, the numerals 1–4 can be inflected for case (and gender) in Icelandic so I searched for all case forms for these, and the non-nominative forms are included in the figures in table 1.³ It is thus clear that the observed difference in frequency between the numerals 1–4, on the one hand, and 5 and up, on the other, cannot be due to certain inflected forms of 1–4 being left out. So by and large, the results shown in table are consistent with (a modified version of) the dictionary definition and also with my intuition and that of the person cited above, who criticized the language of the media.

Let us next consider the claim made in the dictionary that the expression *X manns* (when used as a subject) can either trigger a singular or plural agreement of the verb.

3. Agreement, case and number

3.1 What triggers the agreement?

The examples illustrating the agreement possibilities in the dictionary definition of *manns* cited above are the following:

- (7) a. Þetta verða sennilega 7–8 manns.
 this will-be(pl.) probably 7–8 manns
 'This will probably be 7–8 people.'
- b. Það var svona 30 manns.
 there was(sg.) about 30 manns
 'There were approximately 30 people [there].'

3 The form of the inflected numeral always agrees with the masculine *manns* in gender but it should be possible to find different case forms of these numerals in the expression *X manns*. Three examples involving the gen. form *þriggja* 'three' were in fact found (i.e. *þriggja manns*), six involving the accusative *fióra* and five the dative *fiórum* of 'four'. Other instances of non-nominative cases of these numerals in the expression *X manns* were not found in *timarit.is*.

As the reader may have noted, the finite verbs in (6) all show up in the plural form. Thus they seem to be agreeing with the (head) numeral (which is always higher than one) in the *X manns* expression. As a matter of fact, almost all the examples of *X manns* found in *timarit.is* show this kind of agreement. Searching the text collection *textasafn* of The Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies (cf. http://www.arnas-tofnun.is/page/gagnasofn_textasafn) gives a similar result. An overview is given in table 2.

Table 2: Singular vs. plural forms of the verbs *hafa* 'have' and *vera* 'be' with the subject *X manns*, where *X* is some numeral higher than one.

Source:	Singular:	Plural:
<i>timarit.is</i> (pres.ind. only)	5	339
<i>textasafn</i> (pres. and past, ind. and subjunct.)	2	77

In the text collection it is possible to search for all inflectional forms of a given word in the same search and hence all present and past tense forms of *hafa* and *vera*, indicative and subjunctive, are included in the figures for *textasafn* in table 2. The search possibilities are more limited for *timarit.is* so here only present tense indicative forms were searched for (*eru* for *vera* 'be' and *hefur*, *hafa* for *hafa* 'have').

As Table 2 indicates, it is truly exceptional to follow the subject *X manns* with a singular form of the verb if *X* is a numeral higher than one. Such examples can be found, however, although some of them can be explained away. Thus, consider the following:

- (8) a. að skrílljón manns **hefur** lagt á sig langa ferð
 that scrillion *manns* has(sg.) laid on REFL long journey
 'that a scrillion people have taken upon themselves a long journey'
 (*textasafn*, from a collection of blogs 2001–06)
- b. Á annað hundrað manns **hefur** látið lífið
 on second hundred *manns* has(sg.) lost the-life
 'Over one hundred people have lost their lives.'
 (*textasafn*, from *Morgunblaðið* 2000–07)
- c. Um 20 manns er í áhöfninni.
 about 20 *manns* is(sg.) in the-crew

'About 20 people are in the crew.'

(*Dagur*, May 14, 1997)

- d. að 20 manns hefur fallið í átökum
that 20 *manns* has(sg.) fallen in fight
'that 20 people have been killed in battles'

(*Morgunblaðið*, August 31, 1986)

Examples (8a,b) sound pretty good to me, and they can in fact be interpreted as containing the (singular) nouns *skrilljón* and *hundrað* rather than the homophonous numerals. As is well known, nouns can take genitive nouns as "modifiers" or attributes of various kinds, and this holds of nouns referring to numbers, such as the following (see also Þráinsson et al. 2005, 106):

- (9) a. Hann átti tvær tylftir bræðra.
he had two(f.pl.) dozens(f.pl.) brothers(gen.pl.)
'He had two dozen brothers.'
- b. Tveir tugir manna sóttu um starfið.
two(m.pl.) tens(m.pl.) people(gen.pl.) applied for the-job
'Twenty people applied for the job.'

As the reader may have noted, the examples in (9) involve the genitive plural rather than singular and are thus not exactly comparable to (8a,b). The plural is more natural here, but the noun *tugur*, for instance, can also take the genitive singular form *manns* as in (10) (we will return to expressions involving the plural form *manna* in section 4):

- (10) a. og þar starfar tugur manns við gæzlu
and there works(sg.) ten(sg.) *manns* at guarding
'and ten people work there as guards'

(*Vikan*, 21, 16 (1959): 23)

- b. Um tugur manns var í rútunni
about ten *manns* var(sg.) in the-bus
'About ten people were in the bus'

(*Morgunblaðið*, June 30, 2005)

Here *tugur* is a singular noun taking the singular form of the verb (*starfar*, *var*). So examples (8a,b) could be of the same kind, i.e. they need not involve non-agreement with a numeral.

The examples in (8c,d) cannot be explained away in the same fashion. Although they sound degraded to me, they would sound even worse without the genitive *manns* (hence the added *):

- (11) a. *Um 20 er í áhöfninni.
about 20 is in the crew.
- b. *að 20 hefur fallið í átökum
that 20 has(sg.) fallen in fight

It is possible, therefore, that the genitive *manns* can influence agreement. We will discuss that possibility presently.

The general rule, however, is that the subject *X manns* triggers plural agreement of the verb with the numeral when *X* is a number higher than one, as shown in table 2. Typical examples are shown in (12):

- (12) a. Þegar 6 manns hafa beðið mann
when 6 *manns* have(pl.) asked one
'When 6 people have asked you'

(*textasafn*, from a collection of blogs 2001–06)

- b. fimm manns eru í fullu starfi
five *manns* are(pl.) in full job
'Five people have a full-time job'

(*textasafn*, from *Golfblaðið* 2007)

- c. Um 20 manns hafa gengið í félagið
about 20 *manns* have(pl.) joined in the-society
'About 20 people have joined the society'

(*Verkamaðurinn*, December 18, 1937)

- d. 20 manns eru við afgreiðslu
20 *manns* are at attendance
'20 people serve the customers'

(*Vísir*, December 19, 1926)

As hinted at above, the most natural account of this would be to say that the verb is simply agreeing with the head numeral X of the phrase *X manns*, as all of these examples would be perfect, of course, with the same kind of agreement without the genitive *manns*:

- (13) a. Þegar 6 hafa beðið mann
'When 6 have asked you'
b. fimm eru í fullu starfi
'Five have a full-time job'
c. Um 20 hafa gengið í félagið
'About 20 have joined the society'
d. 20 manns eru við afgreiðslu
'20 serve the customers'

But if this is the correct explanation, i.e. that the form *manns* does not affect the agreement possibilities, then we would predict that subjects like *fjöldi manns* 'great number of people' and *múgur manns* 'crowd of people' should never trigger plural agreement since *fjöldi* and *múgur* are singular nouns that cannot normally trigger plural agreement in Icelandic:

- (14) a. Mikill fjöldi var/*voru á fundinum.
big number was(sg./*pl.) on the-meeting
'A large number attended the meeting.'
b. Æstur múgur kastaði/*köstuðu eggjum í lögregluna.
angry crowd threw(sg./*pl.) eggs in the-police
'An angry crowd threw eggs at the police.'

Interestingly, however, it seems that plural agreement becomes possible for some speakers when *fjöldi* is combined with *manns*:

- (15) a. Fjöldi manns komu og gerðu góð kaup
number(sg.) manns came(pl.) and did good deal
'Many people came and made good deals.'

(<http://www.seltjarnarnes.is/frettingutgefufn/frettin/nr/6803>)

- b. sem fjöldi manns hafa aðgang að
that number(sg.) manns have(pl.) access to
'that a number of people have access to'
(*Fréttablaðið*, December 18, 2009)
c. Fjöldi manns tóku þátt í athöfninni
number(sg.) manns took(pl.) part in the-ceremony
'A number of people participated in the ceremony.'
(*Valsblaðið*, 45, 1 (1993):6)
d. Fjöldi manns voru viðstaddir
number(sg.) manns were(pl.) present(m.pl.)
'A number of people were present'
(*Alþýðublaðið*, November 22, 1921)
e. Fjöldi manns voru handteknir í gær
number(sg.) manns were(pl.) arrested(m.pl.) yesterday
'A number of people were arrested yesterday'
(*Þjóðviljinn*, January 8, 1988)

Although I find most of these sentences quite odd, a number of examples of this kind can be found, both on the Internet and on *timarit.is*. Examples (15d,e) are particularly interesting since here we get the m.nom.pl. forms *viðstaddir* 'present' and *handteknir* 'arrested' although there is no m.nom.pl. noun around to trigger this agreement (*fjöldi* being m.nom.sg. and *manns* being m.gen.sg.). So this seems to be a "semantically triggered" agreement rather than a syntactic one.

I have not been able to find similar examples of semantic agreement involving *múgur manns* 'big crowd, mob' and if one substitutes *múgur* (m.sg.) for *fjöldi* in examples like the ones in (15), singular rather than plural agreement seems clearly called for:

- (16) a. Múgur manns kom/*komu ...
'A big crowd came(sg./*pl.) ...'
b. sem múgur manns hefur/*hafa ...
'that a big crowd has(sg./*pl.) ...'

- c. Múgur manns tók/*tóku þátt ...
'A big crowd participated (sg./pl.) ...'
- d. Múgur manns var viðstaddur/*voru viðstaddir
'A big crowd was (sg./pl.) present (m.sg./pl.) ...'
- e. Múgur manns var handtekinn/*voru handteknir ...
'A big crowd was (sg./pl.) arrested (m.sg./pl.) ...'

A possible reason for this difference between *fjöldi* and *múgur* is the fact that *fjöldi* is a more abstract noun which does not inflect for number and hence it does not really contain a number feature of its own. Thus it can either be followed by the default singular form of the verb or, in the language of some speakers at least, give in to a semantically triggered number agreement, as in (15). If this is true, we would expect to find a comparable difference between, say, the expressions *hópur manns* 'group *manns* ', where *hópur* is a concrete noun that can inflect for number, and *ótal manns* 'large-mass *manns* ', where *ótal* can be interpreted as an abstract noun and does not inflect for number (cf. *Íslensk orðabók* : *ótal* НК 1 mikil mörð, ótölulegur fjöldi ... 'ótal NEUT. 1 large mass, innumerable number ...').⁴ This prediction seems to be borne out, as illustrated in (17):

- (17) a. Hópur manns hefur/*hafa tekid prófið.
group (sg.) *manns* has (sg./pl.) taken the-exam
'A group of people has taken the exam.'
- b. Ótal manns hafa... tekid eigið líf.
innumerable-number (sg.) *manns* have (pl.) taken own life
'An innumerable-number of people have taken their own life.'
(*Fréttablaðið* , March 8, 2012)

4 I owe this idea to Sigríður Magnúsdóttir. The word *ótal* can also function as an uninflected adjective or adverb, cf. *ótal menn* 'innumerable men (nom.pl.)' and *ótal margir* 'innumerbly many', as shown in *Íslensk orðabók* (2002). But adjectives and adverbs do not normally "govern" genitive.

As a matter of fact, *ótal manns* seems odd with the singular form of the verb (*ótal manns hefur ...*), although that would be the "syntactically expected" form.

It is easy, however, to find a different type of instances of singular verbal forms following a subject like *X manns* , even when *X* is a numeral higher than one. These are discussed in the next subsection.

3.2 The case of uninflected numerals

First, consider the following examples:

- (18) a. fimm manns hefur verið sagt upp störfum
five *manns* has (sg.) been said up jobs
'five people have been fired'
(*Pressan* , October 1, 1992)
- b. tuttugu og sex manns hefur verið bjargað
twenty and six *manns* has (sg.) been saved
'Twenty six people have been saved'
(*DV* , December 22, 1987)
- c. Átta manns var sagt upp á Akureyri
eight *manns* was (sg.) said up on Akureyri
'Eight people were fired in Akureyri'
(*Morgunblaðið* , June 17, 1999)
- d. Þrír fórust og sjö manns var saknað
three perished and seven *manns* was (sg.) missed
'Three perished and seven people were missing'
(*Vísir* , August 7, 1947)
- e. 10 manns hefur rekið lifandi að ströndum landsins
10 *manns* has (sg.) drifted alive to shores the-country (gen.)
'10 people have drifted ashore alive'
(*Morgunblaðið* , June 29, 2008)

Readers familiar with the intricacies of Icelandic syntax will immediately recognize that examples (18a–c) involve passives of verbs taking

dative objects in the active (*segja upp* 'fire', *bjarga* 'save') and the dative, being a lexical case, would be preserved when the object shows up as the subject in the passive (cf. e.g. Þráinsson 2007, 181 ff. and references cited there). Similarly, (18d) contains a passive of the verb *sakna* 'miss', which takes a genitive object, and the genitive, being a lexical case like the dative, would also be preserved on the passive subject. If the passive has a non-nominative subject, be it dative or genitive, the finite auxiliary will show up in the default singular form. This must be the explanation for the singular form of the finite verbs in (18a–d), even though the head *X* of the *X manns* construction in all of the examples is a numeral that does not inflect for case. The same holds for the “impersonal” active (18e). Here the verb *reka* 'drift' presumably takes an accusative subject in the language of the speaker (writer) involved (for some speakers, however, it takes a nominative subject). Hence it does not agree in number with the head *X* of the expression *X manns*, suggesting that this head is interpreted as an accusative although it is a numeral (*10* or *tíu* 'ten') that does not show any case distinctions.

The observation just described suggests that these numeral heads carry “case features” although they do not inflect for case. This is not surprising considering the fact that even “unspeakable” invisible subjects like the so-called PRO-subject of infinitives arguably carry case features and can trigger case agreement (see e.g. Sigurðsson 1991 and much later work). This can be illustrated with examples like the following (cf. Þráinsson 2007, 417):

- (19) a. [Að PRO koma einn í tíma] er vandræðalegt.
to PRO(nom.) come alone(nom) to class is embarrassing
'Coming alone to class is embarrassing.'
- b. [Að PRO vanta einan í tíma] er of áberandi.
to PRO(acc.) lack alone(acc.) in class is too conspicuous
'Being the only one missing from class is too conspicuous.'

But now let us turn to something more concrete!

3.3 The number of concrete heads *X*

All the examples of *X manns* cited above, where *X* is some concrete noun which can be inflected for number, have in fact involved the singular form of this *X*. This is not an accident. If we change the number to the plural form, the plural *mann* becomes (virtually) obligatory and the singular form *manns* impossible. Consider the examples in (20):

- (20) a. En nokkrir hópar manna urðu útundan
but several groups(pl.) people(gen.pl.) became left-out
'But several groups of people were left out'
(*Andvari*, 93, 1 (1968):40)
- b. Múgar manna geistust um götur
crowds people(gen.pl.) rushed over streets
'Big crowds of people rushed through the streets'
(*Vísir*, October 5, 1957)
- c. Tveir flokkar manna hafa slegið sér saman
two groups(pl.) people(gen.pl.) have joined REFL together
'Two groups of people have merged'
(*Aldamót*, 9 (1899):66)

Examples of this kind, i.e. with a plural head *X* and the gen.pl. *mann* are very common but here it seems that the singular form *manns* is virtually impossible:

- (21) a. *En nokkrir hópar manns ...
but several groups *manns*
- b. ?*Múgar manns geistust...
herds *manns* rushed
- c. *Tveir flokkar manns hafa...
two groups *manns* have

I have only found two possible counter-examples to this generalization in *timarit.is*, namely the following:

- (22) a. og hópar manns erlendis báru beinlínis ábyrgð
and groups *manns* abroad carried directly responsibility
'and groups of people abroad were directly responsible'
(*Morgunblaðið*, April 3, 1969)

- b. Hópar manns munu koma ríðandi
groups *manns* will come riding
'Groups of people will come on horseback'
(*Alþýðublaðið*, June 24, 1966)

- c. þar sem múgar manns skaut á bifreið
there where crowds(pl) *manns* shot(sg.) at car
'where big crowds of people shot at a car'
(*Morgunblaðið*, April 28, 1936)

All of these sound odd to me and there is obviously something wrong with the last one since the head *múgar* is in the plural form but the verb form *skaut* in the singular (cf. the discussion in section 3.1 above).

We can conclude, then, that the expression *X manna*, where *X* is a plural noun and *manna* the gen.pl., are quite common, whereas *X manns* with a plural noun *X* and the gen.sg. *manns* sound distinctly odd and are virtually non-existent. The reverse is not true, on the other hand, i.e. the expression *X manna* is also quite common with a singular noun as the head *X*, e.g. expressions like *fiöldi manna*, where *fiöldi* 'large number' is formally singular (or at least not plural) and *manna* is the genitive plural form. So let us compare this construction briefly to *X manns*.

4. A brief comparison with *X manna*

4.1 Different restrictions

First, it is easy to show that the expressions *X manns* and *X manna* obey different restrictions. Consider the following, for instance:

- (23) a. Fjöldi manns/manna tók óhagstæð lán.
large-number man(gen.sg./pl.) took unfavorable loans
'A great number of people took unfavorable loans.'

- b. Stofan tekur 30 manns/*manna.
the-room takes 30 men(gen.sg./pl.)
'The room holds 30 people.'

The generalizations in (24) account for this pattern:

- (24) a. Words meaning 'large number, crowd' or the like can license⁵ the restricted special gen.sg. *manns*, but like other nouns they can also govern⁶ a regular genitive such as the gen.pl. *manna* (cf. (23a) and the discussion in the preceding sections).
b. Numerals (higher than 4) can also license the special and restricted gen.sg. *manns* (cf. (23b) and the discussion in the preceding sections) but they cannot govern a regular genitive as nouns can.

Thus (23b) is bad with the "regular" genitive *manna* but the numeral 30 licenses the special genitive *manns*.

But what about examples like the ones in (25), where it might seem that the gen.pl. *manna* is licensed by a numeral (20, 30) but the gen.sg. *manns* is not acceptable (cf. also the discussion around (2) above, repeated here as (25b))?

- (25) a. Þetta er 20 *manns/manna stofa.
this is 20 man(gen.*sg./pl.) room
'This room holds 20 people.'
b. Bretar sendu 30 *manns/manna lið.
Brits sent 30 man(gen.*sg./pl.) team
'Brits sent a 30-man team.'

5 I use the term *license* here since I want to be able to distinguish this relationship from "government" in the sense described in the next footnote.

6 I am using the term *govern* in a fairly traditional and non-technical sense here, assuming that verbs and prepositions govern the case of their objects and that nouns taking a genitive attribute (which can have various semantic functions, e.g. possessive) govern the case of this attribute.

Sentences of this kind are actually not counter-examples to the generalizations in (24). What governs the regular genitive *manna* in these examples is not the numeral but the following noun, i.e. *stofa* 'room', and *lið* 'team', just as it does in constructions like the following:

(26) a. Þetta er fjögurra manna stofa.
this is four(gen.pl.) man(gen.pl.) room
'This is a four man room.'

b. Bretar sendu bara eithvert ungra manna lið.
Brits sent just some young(gen.pl.) man(gen.pl.) team
'Brits just sent some young men's team.'

So the general conclusion is that the plural genitive *manna* in the construction *X manna* is a regular genitive of the sort governed by nouns, whereas the singular genitive *manns* in *X manns* is a special genitive licensed by numerals higher than four and by nouns meaning 'a large number, crowd, mob, group', etc.

4.2 Modification of *manna* vs. *manns*

A further, but related, difference between *manna* and *manns* is that the former can often be modified like a regular noun whereas the latter cannot:

(27) a. Múgur (reiðra) manna kom saman á Austurvelli.
herd angry(gen.pl.) man(gen.pl.) came together on Austurvöllur
'A crowd of (angry) people gathered on Austurvöllur.'

b. Hópur (erlendra) manna var þar um páskana.
group foreign(gen.pl.) man(gen.pl.) was there over Easter
'A group of (foreign) people was there over Easter.'

(28) a. Múgur (*reiðs/*reiðra) manns kom saman á Austurvelli.
crowd angry(gen.sg./pl.) man(gen.sg.) came together on Austurvöllur
'A crowd of people gathered on Austurvöllur.'

b. Hópur (*erlends/*erlendra) manns var þar um páskana.
group (foreign(gen.sg./pl.) man(gen.sl.) was there over Easter
'A group of people was there over Easter.'

As (27) shows, the gen.pl. form *manna* can easily be modified by an appropriate adjective, like 'angry' or 'foreign', and the adjective will then agree in case and number with *manna*, namely show up in the gen.pl. form (presumably also masculine, although there is no gender distinction in the gen.pl. of adjectives). No such modification is possible with *manns* – one might have expected a gen.sg. form, but that does not work nor does the gen.pl. form (nor any other form of the adjective). So it seems that *manns* is some sort of a frozen form that does not really function as a regular noun anymore.

4.3 Brief comparison with Faroese

Interestingly, the cognate *mans* (gen.sg. of the masculine noun *maður* 'man') is found in a Faroese expression that looks very similar to the Icelandic one. The restrictions seem rather different, though. Thus *mans* seems hardly to be used at all with nouns meaning '(large) number', as its Icelandic counterpart. In his discussion of the difference between *menn* (nom.pl.) and *mans*, Jacobsen (2010) does not give any such examples, and I have only been able to find one (as before, I am not translating *mans* in the word-for-word translation):

(29) og aldri sást múgva megnari mans
and never was-seen crowd more-strong mans
'and never did one see a crowd of stronger men'
(Joensen et al. 1983, 17)

This example (from an early 20th century poem) is different from the Icelandic ones that we have been discussing since *mans* takes an attributive adjective here, and the comparative form *megnari* (case and number of the comparative *megnari* cannot be determined here since the indefinite form of the comparative is indeclinable, cf. Þráinsson et al. 2012, 109). This seems completely impossible in Icelandic (cf. also the discussion around (27)–(28) above):

- (30) *aldrei sást mógur öflugri manns
never was-seen crowd more-strong mans

It seems, however, that modification of the kind illustrated in (29) is in fact exceptional in Faroese. Thus Jacobsen (2010, 39) gives contrasting examples like the following (the examples and judgments are his but the presentation of the data a little different):

- (31) a. 10 (fremmandir) menn sessaðust um borðið.
10 (unknown(nom.pl.)) men(nom.pl.) sat down at the-table
b. 10 (*fremmandir/*fremmands) mans sessaðust um borðið.

As (31b) shows, *mans* cannot be modified by an adjective like *fremmandir* (nom.pl.) in this context, and it does not help to change it into a gen.sg. form like *fremmands* (which is not surprising since adjectives are typically not used in the genitive in Faroese, cf. Höskuldur Práinsson et al. 2012, 63, 99).

A short note on *mans* from *Málnevndin*, the Faroese language committee, agrees with this and it is worth quoting in its entirety (*Orðufjar* 44, November 1996):⁷

MANS

Í huganum á mongum er hetta fleirtalssnið av orðinum *maður* og tí frítt at nýta í blandi við fleirtalssniðið *menn*. Men so er ikki. Hetta er av sonnum hvørsfalssnið í eintali og kann bert verða nýtt í sambandi við talorð og onnur mongdarorð, sum eitt nú *fimm mans* og *nógvir mans*. Men kemur t.d. lýsingarorð framman fyri, er einki annað val enn at hava orðið í fleirtali. Tí var tað óbeint, tá ið maðurin segði: "Tveir gamlir mans(!)." Tað sigst ikki øðrvísi enn: "Tveir gamlir menn."

[Roughly: In the mind of many this [i.e. *mans*] is a plural form of the noun *maður* and can thus be freely exchanged with the plural form *menn*. But this is not the case. This is genitive singular and can only be used in connection with numerals and other words of quantity, as for instance in 'five mans' and 'many mans'. But following an adjective, for instance, only

7 See the list of references below for a more detailed information about this source. Staksberg (n.d.) contains an almost identical description of the use of and restrictions on *mann* in Faroese.

the plural form can be used. Hence it was wrong when somebody said "Two old *mans*!" Here one can only say "Two old men."

The fact that the language committee finds it necessary to comment on the use of *mans* suggests that there is some variation, in particular when it states that 'it was wrong when somebody said' *tveir gamlir mans* 'two old mans'.

But although *mans* in Faroese is similar to its Icelandic counterpart *manns* in that it cannot (at least not normally) be modified by an adjective, it can follow inflected 'words of quantity' (Fa. *mongdarorð*, basically indefinite pronouns, it seems) like *nógvir* 'many' whereas Icelandic *manns* normally cannot. Thus the Faroese examples in (32) are apparently fine (cf. the description given by the Faroese language committee cited above):

- (32) a. Hvussu nógvir mans vóru tit við tann túrin?
how many(nom.pl.) mans were you together that the-tour
'How many of you were there on that tour?'
(cf. Jacobsen 2010, 39)

- b. síðan gingu nakrir mans til Vágs at heinta hjálp
then walked some mans to Vágur to get help
'then some people walked over to Vágur to get help'
(“Lopranseidi View to Beinisevord,” Wikimedia, last modified 29 April 2010, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lopranseidi_View_to_Beinisevord.JPG)

- c. [vit sungu] í Grønlandingshúsinum ... nakrir fáir mans og Gunhild
we sang in the Greenland house some few mans and Gunhild
'we sang in the Greenland house, a few people and Gunhild.'

(Tórshavnar manskór, <http://www.manskor.fo/>)

Corresponding examples in Icelandic are clearly ungrammatical:⁸

8 I found the example *En ég veit ekki hvar þetta voru margir manns sem voru þarna* 'But I don't know how many mans were there' on the Internet, however, but it sounds ungram-

- (33) a. *Hversu margir manns voru með í ferðinni?
how many (nom.pl.) *manns* were with in the-tour
- b. *Síðan gengu nokkrir manns til Akureyrar
then walked some *manns* to Akureyri
- c. *Við sungum þar, fáeinir manns og Diddú.
we sang there a-few *manns* and Diddú

Examples involving the comparative *fleiri* 'more' can be found, however:

- (34) a. *fleiri manns* standa að baki henni
more *manns* stand behind it
'A number of people stand behind it'
(*Þjóðviljinn*, December 18, 1984)
- b. *Fleiri manns* hafa kært hann ...
more *manns* have sued him
'A number of people have sued him'
(*Morgunblaðið*, September 30, 1988)
- c. sú framkvæmd kostaði *fleiri manns* lífið
that project cost more *manns* the-life
'that project cost a number of people their lives'
(*Morgunblaðið*, August 7, 1983)

These examples sound much better to me than the ones in (33). Interestingly, they all involve the indeclinable comparative (as does the Faroese example in (29)) and *fleiri manns* seems like a fixed expression meaning 'a number of people' rather than literally 'more people'.

Finally, let us look at the interaction between Faroese numerals and *mans*. As shown above, Icelandic does not normally allow the inflected numerals 1–4 (nor any number ending in these) with *manns*. In Faroese only the numerals 1–3 inflect (see e.g. Lockwood 1977, 64–75; Þráinsson et al. 2012, 113–14). Thus the prediction would be that the Faroese *mans* could only be used with numerals higher than three if the

restrictions were similar to those found in Icelandic. But there do not seem to be any restrictions of this kind on the use of *mans* in Faroese. Thus Faroese examples with both inflectable and uninflectable numerals are easy to find. A representative sample is given in (35):

- (35) a. Tað verða í miðal settir næstan tveir manns í geglið um samdøgrið
there are on average put(m.pl.) almost two(m.pl.) *manns* in the-jail over 24hrs
'Almost two people on the average are put in jail every 24 hours.'
(*Tíðindablaðið*, April 19, 1974)
- b. Tríggir manns deyðir í ferðsluvánlukku
three(m.pl.) *manns* dead(m.pl.) in traffic accident
'Three people dead in a traffic accident'
(*Kringvarp Føroya*, July 21, 2013)
- c. Vit vóru fyra manns við
we were four *manns* there
'There were four of us'
(*Fjarðbúgvín*, June 15, 1972)
- d. Koyggjupláss verða til 40 manns
bed-space will-be for 40 *manns*
'There will be beds for 40 people'
(*Fjarðbúgvín*, December 6, 1974)

But since the Faroese *mans* can occur with inflected 'quantity words' like *nógvir* 'many', *nakrir* 'some, a few' and *fáir* 'few', as shown above, this is perhaps not so surprising.

5. Concluding remarks

The main goal of this article has been to shed some light on the properties of the curious expression *X manns* in Icelandic and to compare it briefly to its Faroese counterpart *X mans*. Since we started out by citing a dictionary of the Icelandic expression (from *Íslensk orðabók* 2002), it is convenient to summarize the main results by revising this

definition. It was cited in section 2 above and it is repeated here for convenience, followed by a revision:

Original definition:

manns EF ET • notað við talningu manna fleiri en fjögurra, gefur til kynna áætlaða tölu, yfirlætt aðeins með tugatölu, hundruðum o.s.frv. Þegar komið er yfir 20 (tekur et. eða ft. af sögn) Δ þetta verða sennilega 7–8 *manns* / það var svona 30 *manns*

[Roughly: '*manns* gen.sg. • used when counting more than four people, gives an approximate number, usually only with even tens, hundreds etc. when the number is higher than 20 (takes sg. or pl. of the verb) Δ *this will*[pl.] *probably be* 7–8 *manns* / *there was*[sg.] *approximately* 30 *manns*.']

Revised definition:

manns EF ET • notað um fólksfjölda og stendur annaðhvort með nafnorði (í eintölu) sem merkir 'fjöldi, hópur' eða með einhverju tölurði sem er hærra en fjórir (yfirlætt ekki með beygjanlegu tölurðunum 1–4 eða samböndum sem enda á þeim); ef orðasambandið er frumlag sýnir sögnin yfirlætt tölusamræmi við nafnorðið eða tölurðið sem *manns* stendur með (þó ekki alltaf ef nafnorðið táknar eitthvað óhlustætt og sýnir því ekki tölubeygingu). Það getur ekki tekið með sér lýsingarorð sem ákvæðisorð. Δ *mígur manns safnaðist saman fyrir utan þinghúsið, það voru fimm manns í bílnum, fjöldi manns kom (?komu) í veisluna, stofan tekur um 30 manns* [Roughly: '*manns* gen.sg. • accompanies nouns (in the singular) meaning 'number, crowd' or numerals higher than four (normally not the inflecting numerals 1–4 or any numbers ending in these) and used when giving or estimating the number of people; if the expression is the subject the verb normally agrees in number with the noun or numeral that *manns* accompanies (not always, however, if the noun is abstract and hence does not inflect for number). It cannot be modified by an adjective. Δ *a large crowd* [sg.] *manns gathered* [sg.] *outside the parliament, there were* [pl.] *five manns in the car, a (large) number manns came* [sg./?pl.] *to the party*]

This revised definition covers most of the facts about *X manns* discussed in this article, although it does not explicitly show that adjectival modification is ungrammatical. Dictionary definitions normally do not give ungrammatical examples.

But why the restrictions on the Faroese expression *X manns* should be as different from those of its Icelandic counterpart as shown above I leave as a "puzzle for Peter." It can serve as an excuse for him to visit the Faroes once again.

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⁹ This URL is no longer active. See Staksberg (n.d.) for virtually identical information on Faroese *mans*.

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Kristján Árnason

Phonological Abstractness and Morpho-Phonemics

Abstract

The analysis of Modern Icelandic u-umlaut has been a matter of debate among linguists for decades, and the question of its character is still apparently unsettled. The issue is part of an old problem in generative phonology, the so-called abstractness problem, which in fact has never been solved. In this article, I consider an approach which seems to avoid the abstractness problem altogether. This is the so-called exemplar theory, according to which there are no derivations or underlying forms, only phonetically fully formed exemplars. Exemplars of morphosyntactically equivalent forms (such as inflectional forms) are grouped together on the basis of their function (meaning). The exemplars are related by schemata. Schemata governing phonological patterns that reference morphology and the lexicon are fundamentally different from those governing purely phonetically conditioned processes and relations.

Keywords: morphophonemics, exemplar theory, u-umlaut, length, the duplication problem

1. Introduction

When Peter and I were young, there was a big and highly debated problem in phonology called the abstractness problem. This was the problem of how much of historical sound change you could turn into phonological rules in accounting for morphophonemic alternation.

An Intimacy of Words Innileiki orðanna

Essays in Honour of Pétur Knútsson
Rit til heiðurs Pétri Knútssyni

Editors/Ritstjórar

Matthew Whelpton, Guðrún Björk Guðsteinsdóttir,
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Hjördís Elma Jóhannsdóttir

Hólmfríður Garðarsdóttir

Hrefna Gunnhildur Torfadóttir

Birna Arnbjörnsdóttir	196
The Spread of English in Iceland	
Auður Hauksdóttir	218
Enska í framhaldsnámi Íslendinga í Danmörku	
Höskuldur Þráinsson	242
A Number of People: A Puzzle for Peter	
Kristján Árnason	269
Phonological Abstractness and Morpho-Phonemics	
Margrét Jónsdóttir	283
Breytingar og breytileiki í hegðun sagnarinnar <i>kviða</i>	
Magnús Snædal	307
Smámunir tengdir <i>Codex argenteus</i> : Ensku tengslin	
Þórhallur Eythórsson	328
The Insular Nordic Experimental Kitchen: Changes in Case Marking in Icelandic and Faroese	
Höfundar	353

Introduction

When Pétur Knútsson retired from his position as Senior Lecturer in English in the autumn of 2012 after 34 years at the University of Iceland, as both sessional teacher and member of faculty, there was a collective refusal to believe that he had really gone. Indeed, the English Department continues to call on his services to this day and he remains a popular figure on campus. It was not just that in his time at the University, Pétur had established himself as one of the most popular teachers in the English Department, nor that he had developed a wide range of research interests which had made him an invaluable member of a number of communities at the University, including English studies, Icelandic studies, linguistics, translation studies and Germanic philology. It was also the fact that he always was, and continues to be, a lively and engaging figure in the community, pursuing his teaching and research interests with enthusiasm and showing himself always open to new ideas and new approaches, with a generosity of spirit that could put young colleagues to shame!

Born in Sussex in England in 1942, Pétur came to Iceland on 19th July 1963 and began his career at the University of Iceland in 1978. He has taught a wide range of topics including English phonetics and phonology, dialectology, sociolinguistics, intonation, prosody, historical linguistics, Old and Middle English and the oral tradition. Always an enthusiast for technology in practice (though a sceptic of its deeper implications in principle), Pétur embraced distance teaching early on and from the beginning was a keen supporter of open access, so that when others were carefully guarding access to their materials, Pétur had his superb teaching resources in English phonetics and phonology open on the internet, attracting a far-flung international audience.