

Number sensitive reflexive pronouns in Danish

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Abstract

The topic of this talk is the observation that the possessive reflexive *sin* in modern Danish only allows singular antecedents, as opposed to all the other Scandinavian languages where *sin* may take both singular and plural antecedents. This is not a new feature of Danish and it is attested in the earliest non-runic sources of Danish, going back to the 13th century. In the same period of time, Danish object reflexive *sig/sig selv* has changed from patterning with *sin* in mainly allowing singular antecedents to the present situation where it patterns with the other Scandinavian languages in allowing both singular and plural antecedents. This is a more recent development, however, finalized as recent as the 20th century. I hypothesize that *sin* may be going the same way as *sig* and changing (back) to allow both singular and plural antecedents. I present some results from a large corpus study of the use of plural antecedent *sin* in Danish. The results show that plural antecedent *sin* patterns differently from the standard forms, locally bound *deres* and *sin* with any kinds of antecedents, within particular morphological, syntactic, and semantic contexts.

In the West Germanic languages, e.g. German *sein*, *sein* is not a reflexive pronoun but a genitive personal pronoun corresponding to masculine and neuter. The corresponding genitive pronouns for feminine and plural are variations of *ihr* and none of the languages have preserved or innovated a reflexive possessive.

(5)	German	a.	Er/sie	isst	sein/ihr	Essen.
	Dutch	b.	Hij	eet	zijn	voedsel.
	Afrikaans	c.	Hy	eet	sy	kos.
	Yiddish	d.	Er	est	zeyn	esnvarg.
	Frisian	e.	Hy	yt	syn	iten.

he/she eats his/her food

There are remnants of a *sin* in a few Old English texts but the form “occurs mostly in poetry, rarely in prose, and it does not survive into ME” (Mustanoja 1960: 156), although Jane Roberts (2016: 54) speculates that *sin* will have been part of the vocabulary of the 10th century English scribe Aldred. The example below is as late as 1065, *ChronC* 194. 17 (Mitchell 1985: 119).

**7 se froda swa þeah befæste þ rice
heahþungenum menn Haroldde sylfum
æþelum eorle se in ealle tid
hyrde holdlice hærran sinum.**

(Literary translation: *But the prudent king had settled the realm on high-born men, on Harold himself, the noble earl, who in every season faithfully heard and obeyed his lord,*
<http://omacl.org/Anglo/part5.html>.)

A common denominator for the languages presented here that have preserved *sin* is that they all have (developed) suffixed definiteness markers, whereas the languages that have lost *sin* as a reflexive all have pronominal definiteness markers – incidentally, just like some of the Jutlandic dialects.

As to the other half of the Germanic reflexive spectrum, Gothic had a reflexive pronoun *sik* that surfaces as *sig* in modern Danish and *sich* in modern German. The Ingvaeonic (North Sea) Germanic languages – Old English, Old Frisian, Old Saxon – had all lost *sik* (notice that *sin* presumably was preserved longer than *sik*). *Sik* was preserved in Old Norse, Old Low Franconian and Old High German and survives into all the modern Scandinavian languages. Dutch and Low German borrowed *zich* from High German (Postma 2011 *et seq* for Dutch), while modern Frisian stands out among its neighbours in not having a *sich*. *Sich*, as opposed to *sein*, has not become limited to masculine and neuter and in all the languages that preserve or have adopted it later, *sich* may occur with third person antecedents of all genders and numbers. That is, except for earlier stages of Danish where *sig* only/mainly occurred with singular antecedents and the regular plural pronoun *dem* was used reflexively, just like *deres* is in modern Danish. This development is illustrated in (6). (6)a is a modern translation of (6)b, (6)b is from the Danish poet Grundtvig, (6)c is from Chr. Pedersen’s 1550 translation of the Bible and (6)d is from the area law *Jyske Lov*, the original text dated to 1241.

(6)	Danish (2017)	a.	Da	hvælver	rosentelte ₁	sig ₁	selv	ved	havets	bred
			then	arch	rose tents	REFL	self	by	ocean.DEF.POSS	shore
	Danish (1850)	b.	Da	hvælve	Rosen-Telte ₁	dem ₁	selv	ved	Havets	Bred
			then	arch.pl	rose tents	them	self	by	ocean.DEF.POSS	shore
	Danish (1550)	c.	Menniskane ₁	forundrede	dem ₁					
			humans.DEF	marvelled	them					
			<i>the people</i>	<i> marvelled</i>						
	Danish (13th c.)	d.	Tha	mughæ	skipær ₁	gøræ	thæm ₁	skip	sialf.	
			then	must/can?	shipmen	make	them	ship	self	
			<i>then the sailors</i>	<i>must/can?</i>	<i>make themselves</i>	<i>a ship</i>				

This talk will deal with the modern properties of the reflexives *sig* and *sin* in Danish. At the present stage of the language, *sig* takes third person antecedents of any gender and number and *sin* only singular antecedents of any gender. My summary of the diachronic and synchronic situations is illustrated in an abbreviated form in (7). The middle stage, Danish between 1200 and 1900, is investigated further in papers by Karen Margrethe Pedersen (Pedersen 2017) and yours truly (Ehlers 2020). The properties of *sin* and *sig* in the other Germanic languages were included to illustrate the various paths that the Germanic reflexives have developed along since their common-Germanic state.

(7)	Singular antecedent	Plural antecedent
Danish, before 1000 AD antecedent 3rd person, all genders	sig sin	sig sin
Danish, 1200(?) - 1900(?) AD antecedent 3rd person, all genders	sig sin	dem deres
(Standard) Danish, 2023 antecedent 3rd person, all genders	sig sin	sig deres

2. The Danish reflexive system, broad strokes and micro variation

Danish has a fairly complicated system of reflexives that yet can be described across two binary-valued distinctions, one for elements with *selv* (En. *self*) and one for elements with *sig*. Note that these distinctions at present are only intended as *descriptive tools* and that I make no claim as to whether or not they are also *features* in the formal sense. The \pm *selv* binary corresponds more or less to the English distinction between *him* and *himself* (Chomsky's Principles A and B).

- (8) En. a. He₁ loves himself₁
 b. * He₁ loves him₁

For Danish, this same distinction can derive the difference between the first and second person object pronouns, *mig* and *dig* (En. *me* and singular *you*), and the first and second person reflexive pronouns, *mig selv* and *dig selv* (En. *myself* and *yourself*). I use first person for illustration but second person can be substituted in without any other changes.

- (9) Da. a. Jeg₁ elsker mig selv₁
 I love myself
 b. * Jeg elsker mig
 I love me

As is the case for English, \pm *selv* is a fairly *local* requirement, illustrated by the fact that the grammaticality is reversed when the relation is non-local. *Local* meaning *minimal IP* is a reasonably good definition for present purposes¹.

- (10) Da. a. * Jeg₁ bad [IP ham hjælpe mig selv₁]
 I asked him help myself
I asked him to help myself
 b. Jeg bad [IP ham hjælpe mig]
 I asked him help me
I asked him to help myself

The \pm *sig* distinction does not exist in English where the cognate of *sig* presumably was lost at a time prior to Old English. We see *sig* preserved in most of the other Germanic languages, either with a direct path from the earlier Germanic dialects or through later borrowings from neighbouring dialects (as has been shown to be the case for Dutch).

- (11) Ge. *sich*
 Du. *zich*
 Da. *sig*

\pm *sig* derives the distributional difference between the third person singular pronominal possessors and the third person reflexive possessor *sin* (glossed as REFL's). I use *hendes* (En. *her*) as a poster child for the pronominal possessors. In the case of local binding, *sin* and *hendes* are in complementary distribution. (Notice, of course, that the English literal gloss for (12)b is fully grammatical: local binding of possessors in English is unproblematic.)

¹ For a discussion of why *minimal IP* cannot be a satisfactory definition of the local binding domain, see Ehlers (2017: 78ff).

- (12) Da. a. Hun₁ elsker sin₁ kat
 she loves REFL's cat
she loves her cat
- b. * Hun₁ elsker hendes₁ kat
 she loves her cat
she loves her cat

The complementarity between reflexive *sin* and pronominal *hendes* disappears when the pronouns are non-locally bound. This means that both (13)a and (13)b are grammatical, the only difference being that (13)a in principle is ambiguous between a reading where *he* feeds *her* cat (non-local binding) and a reading where *he* feeds *his own* cat (local binding). This gives the second binary distinction, \pm sig, where *sin* is +sig and *hendes* is -sig.

- (13) Da. a. Hun₁ bad [IP ham fodre sin₁ kat]
 she asked him feed REFL's cat
she asked him to feed her cat
- b. Hun₁ bad [IP ham fodre hendes₁ kat]
 she asked him feed her cat
she asked him to feed her cat

The combination of the two binaries, \pm selv and \pm sig, yields a four-way system that derives the distinction between *sig* and *sig selv*. (This system is grammaticalized in Danish but not e.g. in Dutch or German where it is probably more reasonable to call the cognates of *self* emphatic.) I will mainly discuss the elements in the yellow boxes in (14). (14) summarizes the full range of options, given the two binary distinctions \pm selv and \pm sig.

(14)	<u>+selv</u>	<u>-selv</u>
<u>+sig</u>	<i>sig selv</i>	<i>sig</i>
<u>-sig</u>	<i>ham selv, hende selv, den selv, det selv, dem selv</i>	<i>ham, hende, den, det, dem</i>

With binding by a local subject, only *sig selv* is available. Both *sig* and *ham* are ungrammatical when non-locally bound, and *ham selv* seems to not allow binding by subject in general.

- (15) Da. a. Han₁ elsker sig selv₁
 he loves REFL self
he loves himself
- b. * Han₁ elsker sig₁
 he loves REFL
 Intended: *he loves himself*
- c. * Han₁ elsker ham selv₁
 he loves him self
 Intended: *he loves himself*
- d. * Han₁ elsker ham₁
 he loves him
 Intended: *he loves himself*

With binding by a non-local subject, *sig selv* is ungrammatical. We do, however, find the same kind of optionality between reflexive and pronominal that we saw with non-local binding of *sin* and *hans*, which is why both (16)b and (16)d are possible.

- (16) Da. a. * Hun₁ bad [IP ham hjælpe sig selv₁]
 she asked him help REFL self
she asked him to help her
- b. Hun₁ bad [IP ham hjælpe sig₁]
 she asked him help REFL
she asked him to help her
- c. * Hun₁ bad [IP ham hjælpe hende selv₁]
 she asked him help her self
she asked him to help her
- d. Hun₁ bad [IP ham hjælpe hende₁]
 she asked him help her self
she asked him to help her

Binding of *ham selv* by a subject is still ungrammatical, but it must be bound by an object, (17)a,b. Note, however, that (17)c parses as perfectly grammatical, despite the subject *Trump*, seemingly not c-commanding *ham selv*. (More on these *override reflexives* in Sørensen, Vikner and Ehlers 2019.)

- (17) Da. a. Hun spurgte ham₁ om ham selv₁
 she asked him about him self
she asked him about himself
- b. * Vi spurgte om ham selv
 we asked about him self
 Intended: *we asked about him*
- c. Trumps mor har endnu flottere hår end ham selv
 Trump's mom has even nicer hair than him self
Trump's mother has even more beautiful hair than he does

The table in (18) summarizes a full proposal for the binding properties of Danish pronouns (discounting inherently reflexive verbs which show a different pattern).

(18)	<u>+selv</u> bound in the minimal IP	<u>-selv</u> not bound in the minimal IP	<u>No ±selv distinction</u> (possessives)
<u>+sig</u> bound by a subject in the minimal finite IP	<i>sig selv</i>	<i>sig</i>	<i>sin</i>
<u>-sig</u> not bound by a subject in the minimal IP	<i>ham selv, hende selv, den selv, det selv, dem selv</i>	<i>ham, hende, den, det, dem</i>	<i>hans, hendes, dens, dets</i>
<u>No ±sig distinction</u> (1. & 2. person & <i>deres</i>)	<i>mig selv, dig selv, os selv, jer selv</i>	<i>mig, dig, os, jer</i>	<i>min, din, vores, jeres, deres</i>

I have highlighted *deres* in (18). The number requirement of *sin* makes the system somewhat inconsistent in that *deres* is the only 3rd person item with no restrictions on it at all. I illustrate this inconsistency more explicitly in the table at the top of page 8.

<u>Danish antecedent 3rd person, all genders</u>	<u>Singular antecedent</u>	<u>Plural antecedent</u>
<u>Local</u>	sig selv sin	sig selv deres
<u>Non-local</u>	sig sin	sig deres

The observation that my PhD research revolves about is that this may be changing, or at least that *sin* seems to be used fairly frequently with plural antecedents in Danish. Some relatively recently heard and read examples are reproduced in (19) and in the screenshot from a fireworks campaign from the official Danish governing body *Sikkerhedsstyrelsen* below.

- (19) Da. a. **Rigtig mange**₁ har ikke mulighed for at passe **sine**₁ børn hjemme. (facebook, 11/4-19)
Many people don't have the option of not sending their kids to daycare.
- b. **De der rådne Oxford-akademikere**₁ der kun kan se **sin**₁ egen næsetip. (KRC, 12/3-19)
Those rotten Oxford academics who are only able to see the tip of their own nose.
- c. Jer der har **børn**₁ der har fået **sin**₁ 12mdr vaccine blev de syge? (facebook, 3/4-19)
Those of you who have kids who have received their 12 month vaccination, did they fall sick?
- d. **Nedskæringerne**₁ viser fortsat **sit**₁ grimme ansigt (facebook, Danske Studerendes Fællesråd, 2/4-19)
The budget cuts continue showing their ugly face.

 **Sikkerhedsstyrelsen** @sik_dk

RED EN IDIOT, DU HOLDER AF, DETTE NYTÅR 🧨

Alle har en idiot i sit liv. En, der er nem at holde af, men svær at passe på. Særligt nytårsaften. Men i år er året, hvor vi redder idioterne fra fyrværkeriskader!

Se, hvordan du bliver idiotredder på red-en-idiot.dk



De findes i alle størrelser.
Små som store. Nemme at holde af, svære at passe på.

9.52 AM · 16. dec. 2022 · 39,6 t Visninger

3. Danish *sin* with plural antecedents in corpus data

KorpusDK consists of two subcorpora, Korpus90 with data from 1983 to 1992 and Korpus2000 with data from 1998 to 2002. I investigated the occurrence of *sin* with plural antecedent in both subcorpora and estimate the numbers to be as in (20). The difference between Korpus90 and Korpus2000 is statistically significant, but it is probably still a very small effect, given the large sample size and relatively small difference. LANCHART is a Danish spoken-language corpus where the relative occurrence with *sin* can be seen to be somewhat higher than in the written-language corpora, but still not radically different. *Sin* with plural antecedent in the corpora is generally fairly sparsely attested. For the data that I do have, however, there is a distributional difference between *sin* and *deres* with (local) plural antecedents, as well as between *sin* with plural antecedents and *sin* with any kind of antecedent. I walk through the data below (as much as we have time for).

(20)	Korpus90	Korpus2000	LANCHART (Jensen 2009:7)
# of <i>sin/sit/sine</i> (all instances)	92877	81818	1247
# of <i>sin/sit/sine</i> with plural antecedent	~500	~700	45
% <i>sin/sit/sine</i> with plural antecedent	0,54 %	0,86 %	3,61 % (paper: 7%)

Factor 1: Full noun or pronoun subject

- (193) a. ... og **de**₁ har derfor fået **sin**₁ egen side.
and they have therefore got REFL's own page
'... and they got their own page accordingly.'
- b. ... og **begge**₁ så **sin**₁ egen frygt genspejlet i den andens øjne.
and both saw REFL's own fear mirrored in the other's eyes
'... and both saw their own fear mirrored in the other's eyes.'
- c. For han er blandt **dem**₁ der i dag holder **sin**₁ mund.
for he is among them who in day hold REFL's mouth
'For he is one of those who hold their tongue today.'
- d. **Pigerne**₁ har vundet **sine**₁ to hidtidige udekampe i
girls.DEF have won REFL's two previous away-games in
turneringen.
tournament.DEF
'The girls have won their two previous away games in the tournament.'
- e. **Kortenes motiver**₁ udtrykker med **sine**₁ kønne og varme farver...
cards.DEF' motifs express with REFL's pretty and warm colours...
'The motifs of the card express with their pretty and warm colours...'

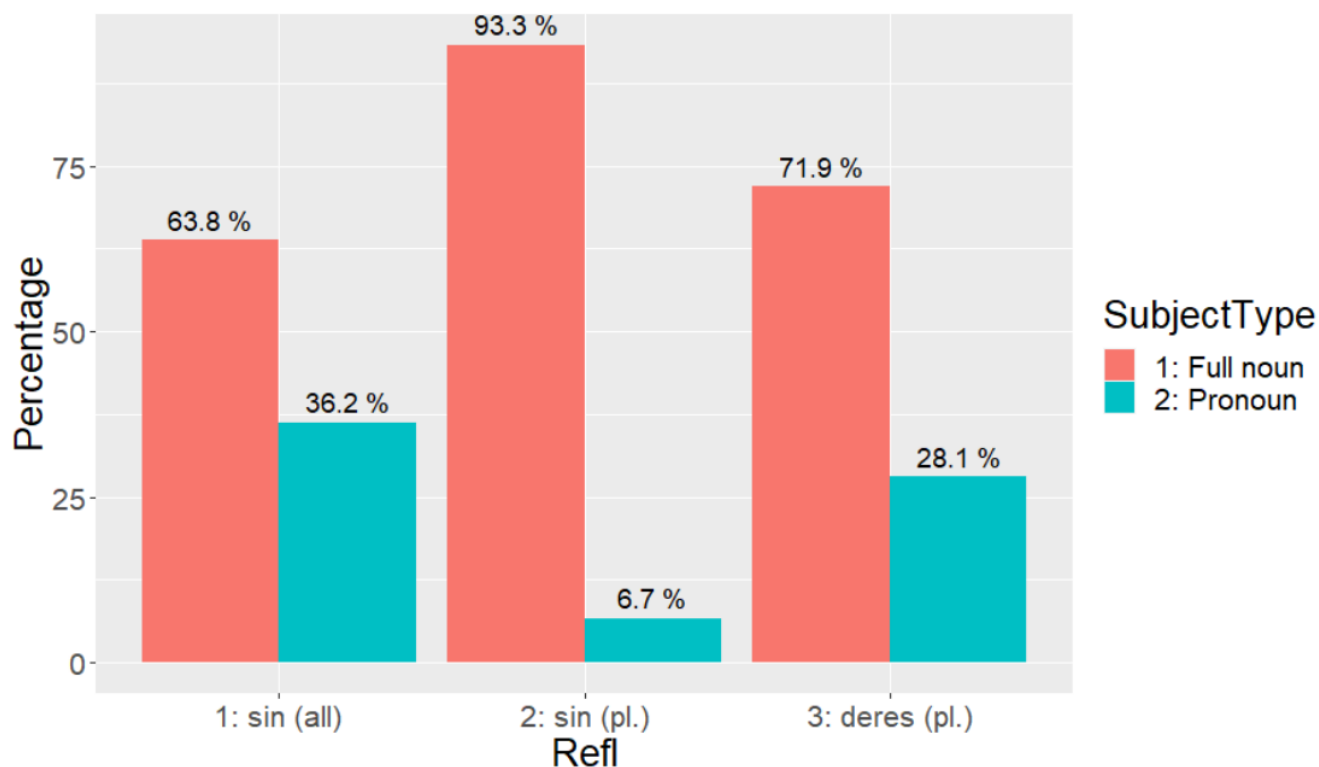


Figure 4.2: Subject: Full noun or pronoun

Factor 2: *sin* in plural or singular DP

- (194) a. **Alt for mange**₁ undlader at pleje **sin**₁ krop...
 all too many fail to tend REFL's body
 'Far too many fail to care for their body.'
- b. ... så **hundeejere**₁ kan tage **sin**₁ hund med...
 so do-owners can take REFL's dog with
 '... so dog owners can bring their dog...'
- c. ... så vi tror at **nordjyderne**₁ med opbakning fra **sit**₁
 so we think that north-Jutlanders.DEF with support from REFL's
 store publikum klarer opgaven
 large audience manage task.DEF
 '... so we think that the north Jutlanders will manage the task with support
 from their large audience.'
- d. **Bombardementerne**₁ går ind i **sit**₁ sjette døgn
 bombardments.DEF go in in REFL's sixth day
 'The bombardments enter their sixth day.'
- (195) a. ... er **skuespillerne**₁ tvunget til at indtage **sine**₁ måltider på offentlige
 are actors.DEF forced to to eat REFL's meals on public
 restauranter...
 restaurants
 '... are the actors forced to eat their meals in public restaurants.'
- c. **Alle krige**₁ har **sine**₁ årsager og konsekvenser.
 all wars have REFL's causes and consequences
 'All wars have their causes and consequences.'
- d. **Anders Westers forældre**₁ har netop udlejet **sine**₁ herlige
 Anders Westers parents have just rented REFL's delightful
 træningsfaciliteter...
 exercise-facilities
 'Anders Wester's parents have just rented out their delightful exercise facil-
 ities.'

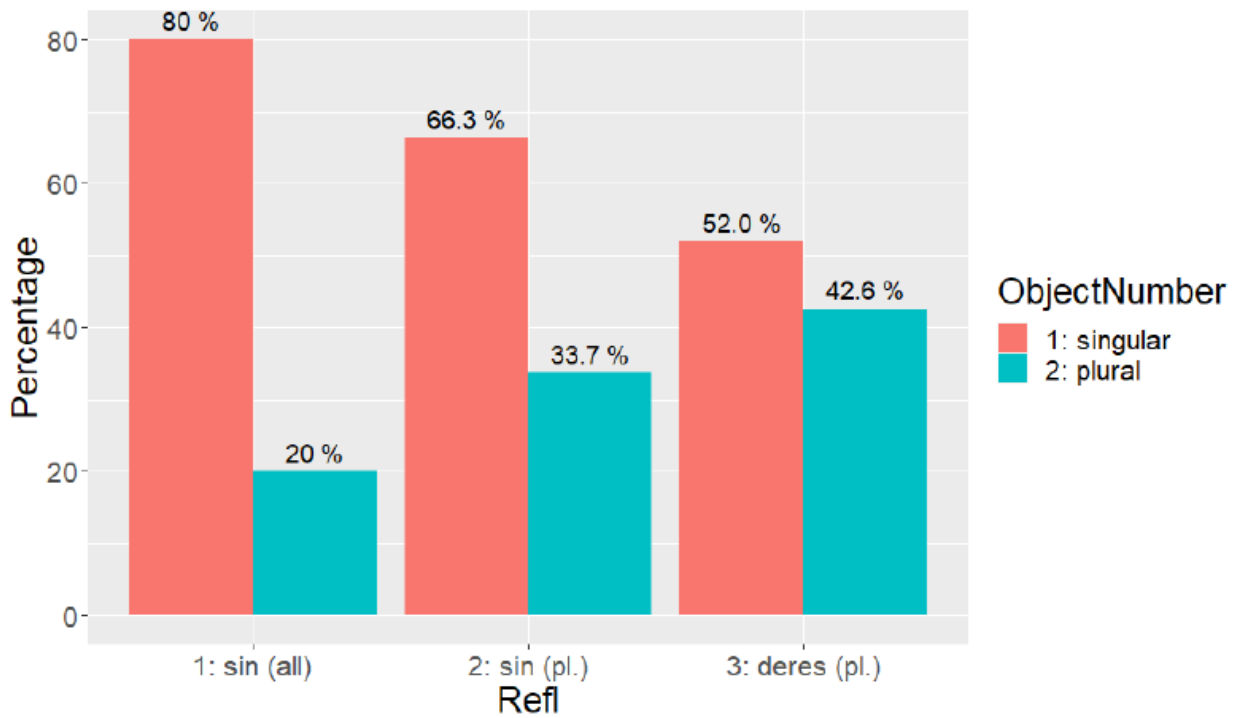
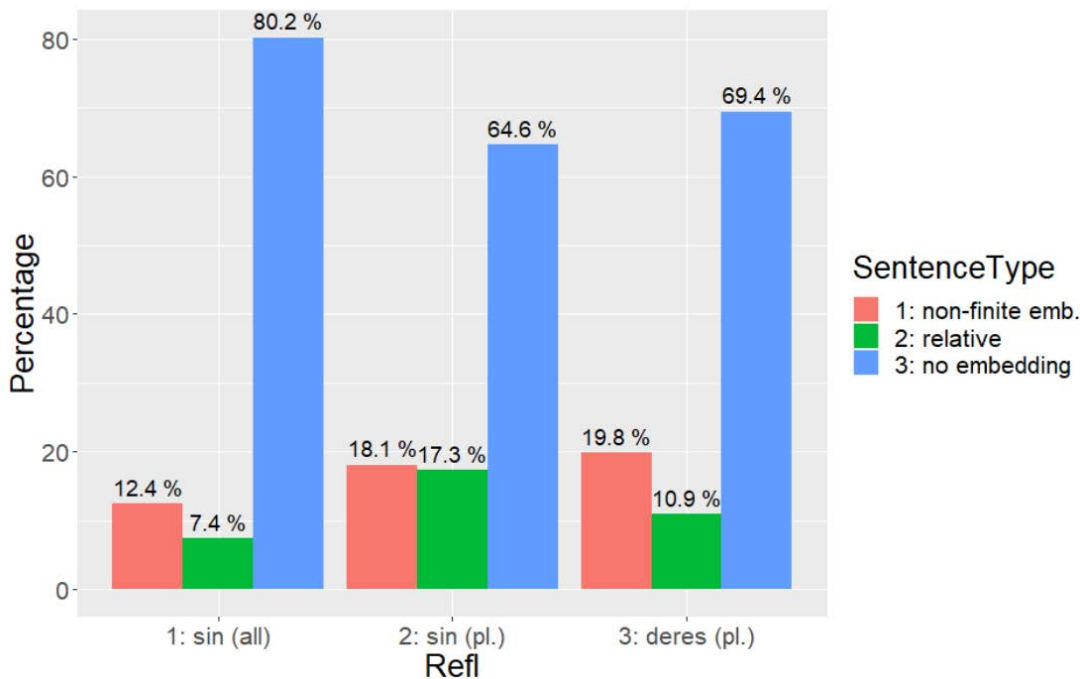


Figure 4.4: Relative occurrence of all *sin*, plural antecedent *sin* and plural antecedent *deres* by number of the DP

Factor 3: Simple or complex sentence

- (198) a. ... og tvang **tre regioner**₁ til **PRO**₁ at tilpasse **sine**₁ love til
 and forced three regions to to adjust REFL's laws to
 forfatningen.
 constitution.DEF
 '... and forced three regions to adjust their laws to the constitution.'
- b. ... men **gæsterne**₁ formåede ikke **PRO**₁ at omsætte **sine**₁ mange
 but guests.DEF managed not to convert REFL's many
 dødbolde...
 set-pieces...
 '... but the guests did not manage to convert their many set pieces...'
- (197) a. ... det var som om **hans hænder**₁ levede **sit**₁ eget liv...
 it was as though his hands lived REFL's own life
 '... It was as though his hands lived their own life...'
- b. ... før **andre**₁ har sagt **sin**₁ mening.
 before others have said REFL's opinion
 '... before others have voiced their opinion.'
- c. ... hvordan **FN-styrkerne**₁ kan udføre **sin**₁ opgave mere rationelt.
 how UN-troops.DEF can perform REFL's task more rationally
 '... how UN troops can perform their task more rationally.'
- (199) a. **Værker**₁ **ec**₁ der **t**₁ inddrager **sin**₁ beskuer.
 works that draw-in REFL's viewer.
 'Works that draw in their viewer.'
- b. ... og **dem**₁ **ec**₁ der **t**₁ har **sin**₁ ansættelse hos privatbanerne.
 and them that have REFL's employment at private-railways.DEF
 '... and those who have their employment at the private railways.'



Factor 4: Animate or inanimate antecedent

- (203) a. ... det gælder også for **sølvmåger**₁ som tager **sin**₁ del af
 this counts also for herring-gulls who take REFL's part of
 ællingerne.
 ducklings.DEF
 '... this is also the case the herring gulls who take their part of the duck-
 lings.'
- b. Når **vore folkevalgte**₁ ikke lytter til **sine**₁ vælgere...
 when our electees not listen to REFL's voters
 'When our electees do not listen to their voters...'
- c. ... at **børn**₁ har en god kontakt med **sine**₁ forældre...
 that children have a good connection with REFL's parents
 '... that children have a good connection to their parents...'
- (204) a. ... og **gennemtænkte sjove film**₁, der henter **sin**₁ humor i
 and thought-out funny movies that fetch REFL's humour in
 nuet.
 now.DEF
 '... and thought-out funny movies that fetch their humour in the now.'
- b. ... hvorvidt **digtene**₁ kan have **sin**₁ oprindelse længere syd på...
 whether poems.DEF can have REFL's origin further south on
 '... whether the poems can have their origins further to the south...'
- c. Nu kan **industriens virksomheder**₁ teste **sine**₁ ufaglærte
 now can industry's.DEF companies test REFL's unskilled
 medarbejdere...
 workers

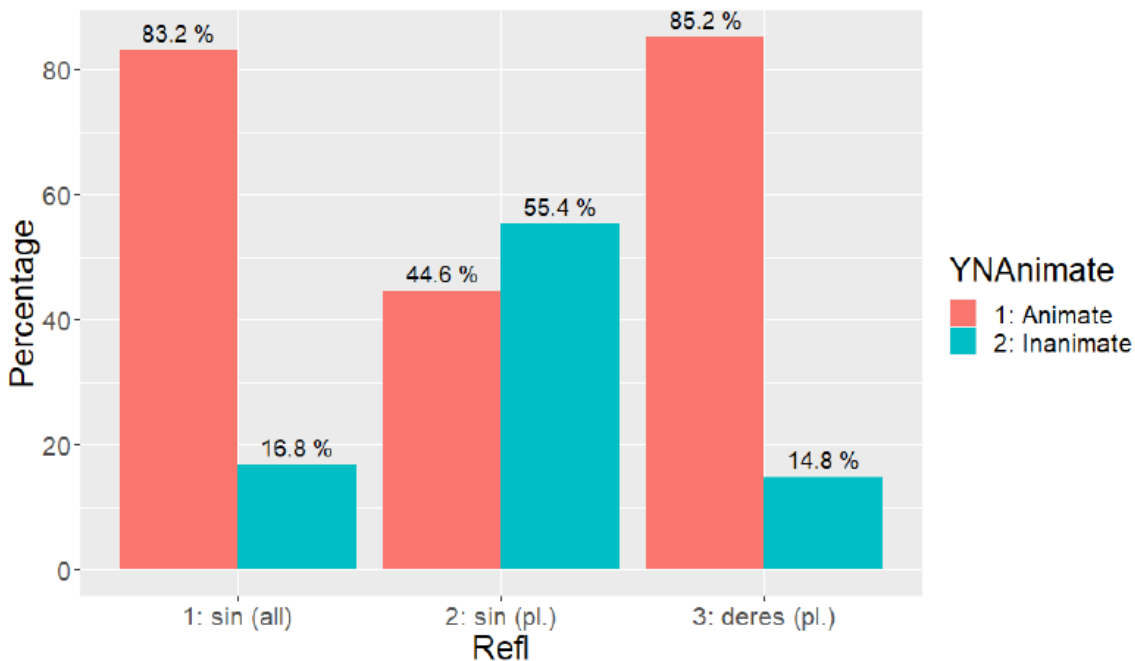


Figure 4.7: Animate or inanimate

Factor 5: Coordinated antecedent

- (205) a. ... så **bestanden og dens afkom**₁ sikres i **sin**₁ eksistens. (206) a. **Kampen og blodsudgydelserne**₁ sætter **sine**₁ tydelige spor i fight.DEF and bloodsheds.DEF set REFL's clear marks in Jonatan...
 so herd.DEF and its offspring secure.PASS in REFL's existence
 '... so the herd and its offspring are secured in their existence.'
- b. ... også **lønmodtageren og den lille landmand**₁ skal have **sin**₁ also wage-earner.DEF and the small farmer shall have REFL's retmæssige del...
 rightful share
 '... also the wage-earner and the small farmer must have their rightful share...'
- c. ... men **et land og en regering**₁ skal dømmes på **sine**₁ but a country and a government shall judge.PASS on REFL's handlinger...
 actions
 '... but a country and a government must be judged by their actions...'
- (207) a. **Flosklerne og klicheerne**₁ taler **sit**₁ eget sprog om... platitudes.DEF and clichés speak REFL's own language about 'The platitudes and the clichés speak their own language about...'
- b. ... men **tidligere rygskader og benskader**₁ har åbenbart but previous back-injuries and leg-injuries have apparently krævet **sit**₁.
 demanded REFL's
 '... but previous back injuries and leg injuries have apparently taken their toll.'
- b. ... og **både husholdningerne og industrien**₁ har øget **sin**₁ and both households.DEF and industry.DEF have increased REFL's andel.
 share
 '... and both the households and the industry have increased their share.'
- c. ... at **visionerne og selvrealisationen**₁ har **sine**₁ bedste that visions.DEF and self-realisation.DEF have REFL's best vækstvilkår...
 growth-conditions

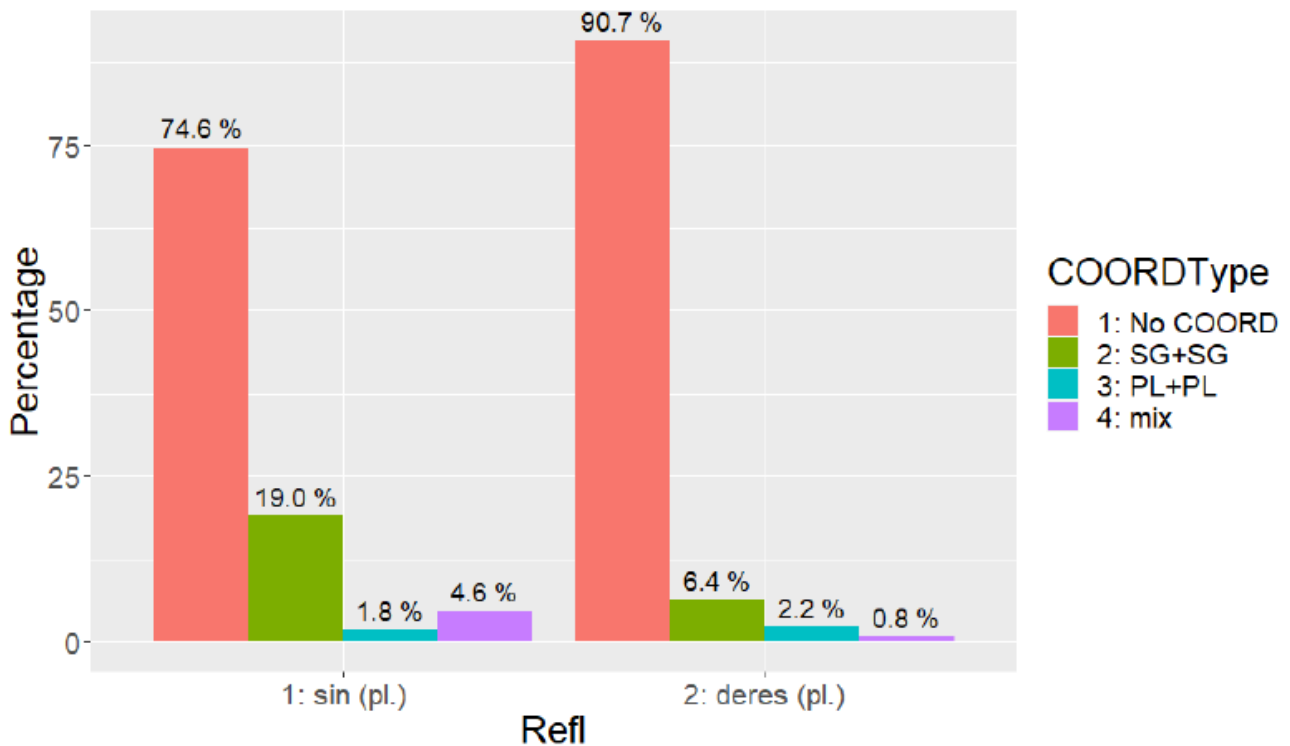


Figure 4.8: Coordinated antecedents (singular, plural, mix)

Factor 6: Distributivity

- b. ... der var jo **visse personer**₁ der altid skulle ha' **sin**₁ vilje
 there were yes certain people who always should have REFL's way
 '... there were after all certain people who always wanted to get their way.'
- c. ... at der er **mange fædre**₁ som gerne vil have **sine**₁ børn
 that there are many fathers who certainly will have REFL's children
 boende hos sig.
 living with REFL
 '... that there are many fathers who will certainly want to have their children living with them.'
- d. **Stadig flere firmaer**₁ vælger at sende **sine**₁ chauffører på køreteknisk
 still more companies choose to send REFL's drivers on driving
 kursus...
 course
 'Still more companies choose to send REFL's drivers on a driving course...'
- e. **Alle dele**₁ har **sin**₁ egen funktion...
 all parts have REFL's own function
 'All parts have their own function...'

- (209) a. **Irakerne**₁ solgte **sin**₁ råolie til Storbritannien...
 Iraqis sold REFL's crude-oil to Great-Britain
 'The Iraqis sold their crude oil to Great Britain...'
- b. **Fremad Valbys håndbold damer**₁ måtte indkassere **sit**₁ femte
 Fremad Valby's handball-ladies must.PST rake-in REFL's fifth
 nederlag i træk...
 defeat in row
 'Fremad Valby's handball ladies had to rake in their fifth defeat in a row...'
- c. **Hitlers forbrydelser**₁ var på det tidspunkt kun i **sin**₁ vorden.
 Hitler's crimes were on that time only in REFL's infancy
 'Hitler's crimes were only in their infancy at the time.'
- d. ... som **museets forevisninger**₁ har oplevet i hele **sin**₁
 as museum's.DEF screenings have experienced in whole REFL's
 levetid.
 lifetime
 '... as the museum's screenings have experienced in their entire lifetime.'
- e. **Bombardementerne**₁ går ind i **sit**₁ sjette døgn.
 bombardments.DEF go in in REFL's sixth day
 'The bombardments enter their sixth day.'

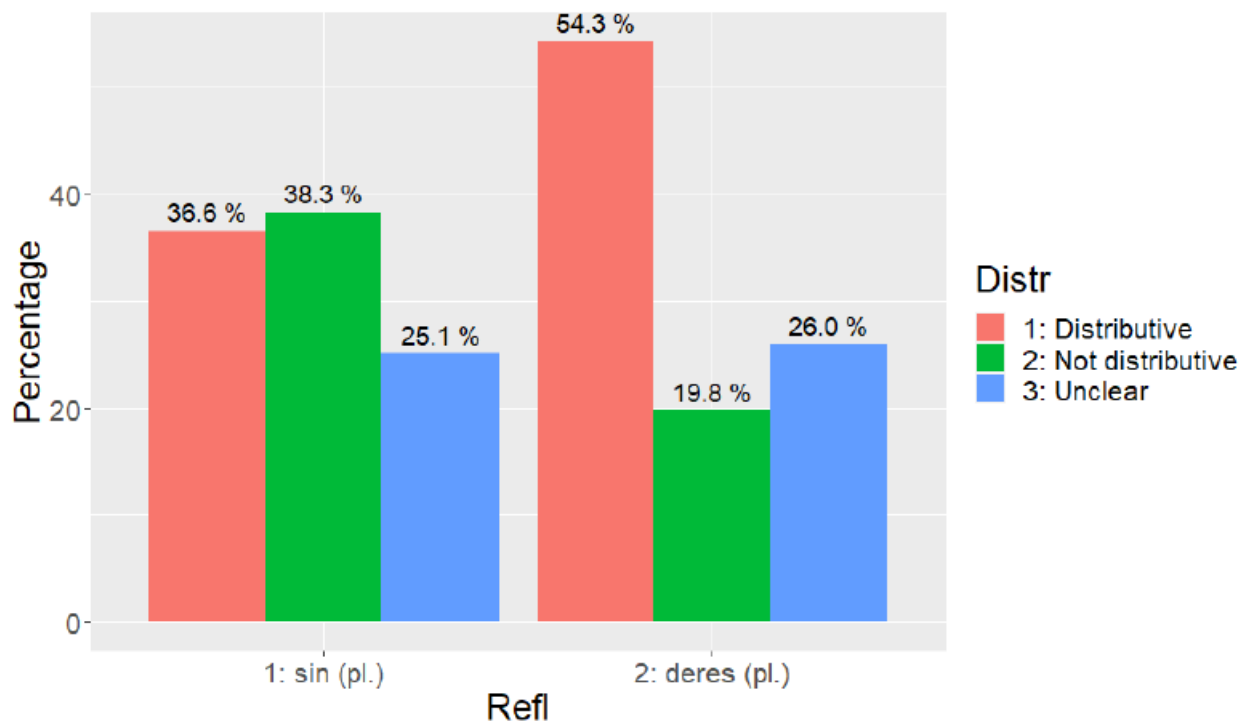


Figure 4.9: Distributivity in the KorpusDK data

4. Conclusion

In Danish, as opposed to the other Scandinavian languages, the third person reflexive possessive *sin* only accepts antecedents that are not plural. In modern Danish, however, this generalization is not completely set in stone. I wanted to investigate whether the variation that can be seen in this domain is just that – variation – or if the Danish reflexive system is in fact being restructured to allow *sin* with plural antecedents. I still cannot say anything conclusive.

In this handout, I have presented some results mainly from the written Danish corpus KorpusDK. The corpus data indicate that *sin* with plural antecedents patterns differently from the distribution of *deres* and *sin* with any kinds of antecedents. Plural antecedent *sin* occurs less often with pronoun antecedents than the standard forms. It occurs *more often* in plural DPs than *sin* does in general, but *less often* than locally bound *deres*. It occurs more often in complex sentences than the standard forms, particularly with relative clauses. The distribution of animate and inanimate antecedents is very different for plural antecedent *sin* than for the standard forms: Inanimate antecedents are greatly overrepresented with plural antecedent *sin* compared to the standard forms. Plural antecedent *sin* occurs rather more often with an antecedent that consists of coordinated singulars than locally bound *deres* does. Finally, an oft-repeated hypothesis in the literature is that plural antecedent *sin* occurs more frequently in distributive sentences. The sentences with locally bound *deres* occur in distributive sentences rather more frequently than plural antecedent *sin* does, so the data essentially argue against this hypothesis.

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