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Andrew C. Smith

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Abstract Deflected agreement is a grammatical phenomenon found in Semitic languages—it is ubiquitous in Arabic and found occasionally in Classical Hebrew. Deflected agreement is a plausible explanation for certain grammatical incongruities present, in translation, within the original and printer’s manuscripts and printed editions of the Book of Mormon in the grammatical areas of verbal, pronominal, and demonstrative agreement. This finding gives greater credence to the plausibility of the authenticity and historicity of the Book of Mormon. Additionally, the implications of this finding on Book of Mormon scholarship are discussed.



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BOOK OF MORMONT

NOT WRITTEN BY THE HANDS OF MEN
BY THE PLATES TAKEN FROM
THE PLATES OF NEPHI

...of the Record of the People of Nephi
...to the Lehiites, which are a remnant
of the People of Israel; written by way of
...and of Revelation. Written, and made
...but they might not be destroyed; in some
...the interpretation thereof; as they by the
...the Plates, to give forth in some size by the way
...by the gift of faith; an Abridgment to
...of the People of Israel, which were scattered
...the language of the people when they were
...where it is to show unto the remnant of the
...of the Law, that they are not cast off forever; and
...the Jews and Gentiles that Jesus is the Christ, the
...Humble unto all nations. And again if there be fault, it
...where they condemn not the things of God, that ye
...in the judgment seat of Christ.

BY JOSEPH SMITH, JUNIOR,
AUTHOR AND PROPRIETOR.

PALMYRA:
PRINTED BY E. B. GRANDIN, FOR THE AUTHOR.
1830.

DEFLECTED AGREEMENT IN THE BOOK OF MORMON

ANDREW C. SMITH

Much has been made of the English grammatical incongruities present throughout the original manuscript and the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon. Anti-Mormon literature has attempted to use these nonstandard grammatical elements as a denunciation of Joseph Smith's intellect and abilities, as well as proof that the book could not be the word of God. Others have treated these claims in much more detail and more precisely than I will do here.¹

The reaction among Mormon apologists, leadership, and lay membership has also been varied. Counterarguments have ranged from the fact that Joseph was indeed uneducated, which supports the veracity of the Book of Mormon (i.e., could someone with a very limited education have produced the book in as short a time as he did?), to complex discussions of ancient linguistic models and grammar affecting the translation of the text into English. These latter arguments posit that many of the grammatical incongruities seen in the original manuscript of the Book of Mormon exist because it is a translation of a text whose language has distinctive connections to ancient Semitic structures that come through in the translation. This proposition is completely in line with how the text describes itself (see Mormon 9:32-34).² Supporting this theory, other apologetic works

have detailed all manner of "Hebraisms" in the text of the Book of Mormon, such as the construct state, cognate accusatives, distinctive possessive pronoun use, idioms, and others.³ This paper will describe a previously unexplored linguistic aspect of the Book of Mormon text.

One of the common inconsistencies in the grammar of the original manuscript, the printer's manuscript, and the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon is the presence of number disagreement between subjects and verbs, as well as between antecedents and their pronouns. In the majority of cases in the Book of Mormon, these number disagreements occur with regard to nonhuman plural nouns. This curious grammatical disagreement is found in certain constructions in other languages⁴ but not in English. I will refer to this grammatical phenomenon as deflected agreement (DA), which is evident in early manuscripts and the first edition of the Book of Mormon. These findings support DA as evidence of the ancient origin of the text, inasmuch as they plausibly account for the data at hand and match the linguistic and cultural atmosphere from which the record purports to derive. Additionally, these findings provide an explanation for a large number of the grammatical incongruities present in the original manuscript, the printer's manuscript,

Photo montage by Bjorn Pendleton. Photography by Mark Philbrick.

FROM THE EDITOR:

Editors receive numerous unsolicited manuscripts that, after careful review, cannot be used in the pages of their journal. But on occasion they receive a manuscript that is well written and contains a never-before-proposed understanding. Andrew Smith's article here immediately caught my attention. He suggests that certain ungrammatical English constructions that occurred in the dictation of the Book of Mormon may have been precipitated by language on the plates rather than by any non-standard English of Joseph Smith's day. Without question, the Hebrew forms discussed here, when translated literally into English, are not grammatical in the standard English of our day. However, Smith's case rests on painstaking research and careful numerical analysis.

the 1830 edition, and to some extent in subsequent editions of the Book of Mormon.

Additional Background Information

A basic element of the previously mentioned linguistic and apologetic studies is their general acceptance of the thesis that the Book of Mormon is a translated text. These studies propose that the text preserves the distinctive grammatical structures and linguistic markers that one would expect from an essentially literal translation. “[The original text of the Book of Mormon] contains expressions that appear to be uncharacteristic of English in all of its dialects and historical stages. These structures support the notion that Joseph Smith’s translation is a literal one and not simply a reflection of either his own dialect or King James English.”⁵

Certainly Joseph Smith’s own dialect played a role in the translation. Royal Skousen identifies many errors that can be described as “nonstandard dialectal forms” creeping into the text from Joseph’s dialect.⁶ These nonstandard elements in the grammar of the English text have prompted revisions or editing of the text by Joseph Smith as well as by others to better reflect accepted standards of English.⁷

Similarly, Skousen also describes the reflection of King James English in Joseph Smith’s translation of the Book of Mormon.⁸ These instances prove to

k: 4. Plurals of names of animals or things, and of abstracts, whether they be masculine or feminine, are frequently construed with the feminine singular of the verbal predicate¹ (on the collective sense of the feminine form, cf. § 122 s); thus Jo 1²⁰ הַבְּהֵמָה שָׂרָה הָעֵרְבָנִים *the beasts of the field long*; Jer 12⁴ (where the predicate precedes), cf. also Jb 12⁷; names of things with the predicate preceding occur in 2 S 24¹², Is 34¹³, Jer 4¹⁴, 51²⁰, ψ 18³⁰, 37³¹, 73² *Kth*, 103³ (unless הַמְּחִיבִים is to be read for הַמְּחִיבִים), Jb 14¹⁹, 27²⁰; with the predicate following, Gn 49²³ (בְּנֵיהֶם = *branches*); Dt 21⁷, 1 S 4¹³ (הַמְּחִיבִים),² 2 S 10⁵, Is 59¹², Jer 2¹¹ *Kth*, 48⁴, 49²⁴, Pr 15²², 20¹⁵, Jb 41¹⁰.³

A description of deflected agreement in *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, ed. E. Kautzsch, rev. A. E. Cowley, 2nd English ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1910), 464. Photo by Mark Philbrick.

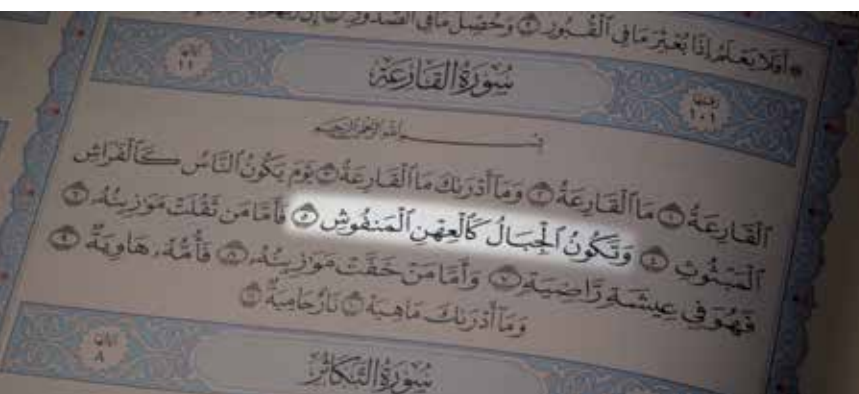
be controversial as well and are claimed as evidence of Joseph plagiarizing the Bible on one hand and as evidence of him framing the scripture he produced in what he considered scriptural language on the other. Either way, it is apparent that Joseph had knowledge of the King James English system and used it correctly in most cases (though occasionally incorrectly in others). This paper accepts as a given that some elements of the translation done by Joseph Smith were affected by and derived from his dialect. However, this paper will present evidence that the grammar of the translation could also have been influenced by the original text language on the plates.

Deflected Agreement

Deflected agreement is a technical term borrowed from the Arabic linguistics community that is also descriptive of a particular phenomenon in classical Hebrew.⁹ This term describes a grammatical principle generally referred to by Arab linguists as “feminine singular agreement with nonhuman plurals.”¹⁰ The basis of grammatical agreement in Semitic languages is that words from different categories or parts of speech (nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc.), when grammatically juxtaposed to one another, must agree in a number of details: number, gender, and, to a certain degree, definiteness. A type of DA, wherein parts of speech are grammatically juxtaposed but do not agree in number or gender, is also seen in biblical Hebrew, albeit more rarely. According to *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, “Plurals of names of animals or things, and of abstracts, whether they be masculine or feminine, are frequently construed with the feminine singular of the verbal predicate.”¹¹ Similarly, the grammar also notes that “the suffix of the 3rd person singular feminine (as also the separate pronoun [hi?] . . .) sometimes refers in a general sense to the verbal idea contained in a preceding sentence (corresponding to our *it*). . . . Elsewhere the suffix of the 3rd singular feminine refers to the plurals of things



Arabic text where deflected agreement exists (Sura 97:4, above, and Sura 101:5, below). Photos by Mark Philbrick.



. . . and to the plurals of names of animals.”¹² These grammatical principles will be illustrated by the following from the Hebrew Bible:

Joel 1:20

Transliteration (Hebrew):

bahāmôt sādēh ta’ārōg

Parsing of individual words:

bahāmôt (fem pl noun construct state) *sādēh* (masc sing noun) *ta’ārōg* (3rd fem sing imperfect verb)

Translation:

the beasts of the field desire

Psalms 37:31

Transliteration (Hebrew):

lō’ tim’ad ’āšūrāyw

Parsing:

lō’ (negative particle) *tim’ad* (3rd fem sing imperfect verb) *’āšūrāyw* (masc pl noun + 3rd person masc sing possessive)

Translation:

his steps do not slide

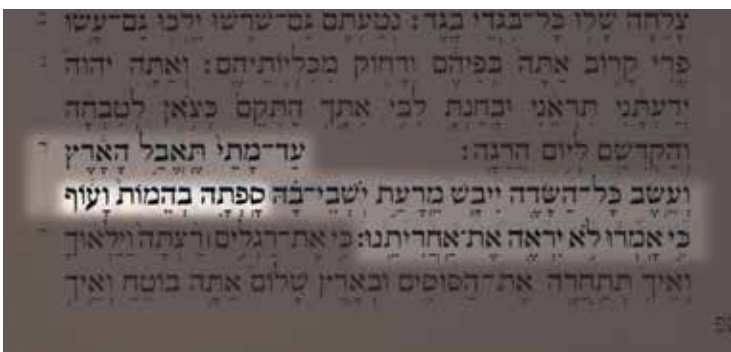
Jeremiah 12:4

Transliteration (Hebrew):

sāptâ bēhēmôt wā’ōp

Parsing:

sāptâ (3rd fem sing perfect verb) *bēhēmôt* (fem pl noun) *wā* (conjunctive particle) *-’ōp* (masc sing collective noun)



Hebrew Bible text where deflected agreement exists (Jeremiah 12:4). Photo by Mark Philbrick.

Translation:

the beasts and birds are consumed

Jeremiah 36:23

Transliteration (Hebrew):

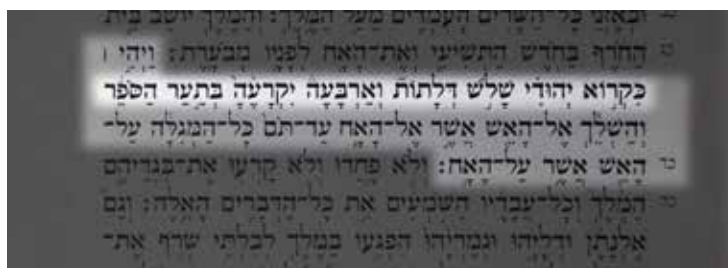
kiqrō’ yēhūdî šālōš dēlātôt wē’abā’ā yiqrā’ehā bēta’ar hassōpēr

Parsing:

kiqrō’ (qal infinitive verb, construct) *yēhūdî šālōš dēlātôt* (fem pl noun) *wē’abā’ā yiqrā’ehā* (3rd masc sing imperfect verb + 3rd fem sing suffix) *bēta’ar hassōpēr*

Translation:

when Yehudi had read three or four leaves, he cut it (the leaves) with the penknife



Hebrew Bible text where deflected agreement exists (Jeremiah 36:23). Photo by Mark Philbrick.

These examples illustrate how the Hebrew Bible employs DA in various instances: a nonhuman plural subject is given feminine singular agreement as seen by the feminine singular markers of verbal predicates (regardless of position preceding or following the subject), or a plural noun can be referred to by use of the feminine third person singular pronoun or pronominal suffix.

Interestingly, a number of instances of DA occur in the book of Jeremiah.¹³ Because Jeremiah was a contemporary of Lehi, these instances confirm that this linguistic phenomenon was a known and acceptable variation in the Hebrew of Lehi’s period. This would lend credence to the presence of DA in the words of Nephi and its subsequent transfer to later writers in the Book of Mormon.

Deflected Agreement in the Book of Mormon

Before delving fully into the findings, I wish to discuss somewhat the nature of the Book of

Mormon, English grammar, and in particular, the use of certain aspects of King James English in Joseph Smith's translation.

The process of translating the text of the Book of Mormon into English brings up a number of interesting conundrums as far as linguistic studies are concerned. "Readers are severely limited in their knowledge about the original language of the Book of Mormon because the translation was made directly into English from gold plates which are no longer available for examination."¹⁴ Because we do not have the original text from which Joseph was working, we cannot know exactly where any non-standard elements crept in during the translation process or how aspects of the translation mirror or represent the original language. Similarly, we do not have a full knowledge of the language used on the plates. As Mormon notes, "Behold, we have written this record according to our knowledge, in the characters which are called among us the reformed Egyptian, being handed down and altered by us, according to our manner of speech. And if our plates had been sufficiently large we should have written in Hebrew; but the Hebrew hath been altered by us also" (Mormon 9:32-33). While we have knowledge of one of the origins of their language (namely, Hebrew), Mormon points out that even the Hebrew had been changed by them, and interestingly, he notes that this change occurred "according to our manner of speech," indicating an influence from their colloquial speech on their writing.¹⁵

Because the original text was translated into English, some grammatical features present in the original language of the text have been lost. As anyone familiar with translation can attest, in many instances additional words or structures must be used to convey the precise meaning (literally or grammatically) of the original text. In terms of DA, this would no doubt result in a loss of observable instances—meaning, speculatively, that fewer examples of the concept will be apparent in the English translation than might have existed in the original text on the plates.

In explanation, consider the differences between English and Semitic structure and grammar. Whereas Semitic languages explicitly mark words to show agreement between parts of speech, English does not mark or require agreement to such an extent. Excluding second person familiar (*thou*),

English verbs only distinguish present tense third person singular. For example, the present tense of the verb *to read* is conjugated in the first person as *I/we read*; in the second person, *you read*; and in the third person, *she/he reads* and *they read*. There is a differentiation in verbal conjugation in that the third person singular stands apart from third person plural as well as all other persons, whose conjugations remain the same regardless of number or gender.¹⁶ The verbal system shows no differentiation for gender. This differentiation based on number only holds within the present and past tenses (*she/he was*, *they were*, etc.); within the future tense, verb endings do not differ when words such as *will* or *shall* are employed (e.g., *I/we/you/she/he/they will help*). Thus, any instances of DA in the future tense would be unrecognizable in English; while they might have existed in the original language of the Book of Mormon, they would literally be lost in translation.

English presents other problems for finding evidence of DA. It would be impossible for an adjectival agreement to be preserved in the translation because modern English adjectives do not decline (or change form) for gender or number (the word *big* remains the same whether it is modifying a book, a boy, houses, horses, or humans, whereas in a Semitic language it will decline depending on number and gender). Thus, the verbal system of English provides a small window through which DA could be seen, particularly in constructions with helping verbs.¹⁷ This window is further enlarged by some aspects of King James English. The common (now archaic) verbal ending *-eth*, seen in words such as *speakeeth* as well as in *doth* and *hath*, denotes third person singular agreement. Joseph Smith's correct usage of these words in most cases throughout the translation of the Book of Mormon (and other revelations and publications of the time) indicates that he understood these terms, at least on an intuitive level, and their sometimes incorrect placement draws attention.¹⁸ Their usage with nonhuman plural subjects may indicate DA in many cases.

This discussion demonstrates how we would expect elements of DA to be evidenced in a literal, word-for-word translation. To be certain, a less literal translation would see even fewer evidences preserved. Similarly, the discussion demonstrates that while some manifestations of DA could be preserved in a literal translation, it would be impossible for the

phenomenon to be fully expressed in English. Thus, it can be surmised that the phenomenon would be more prevalent in the original language than is shown in an English translation. However, this paper deals only with what has survived the translation process and not with what is now unrecoverable.

Findings in the Book of Mormon

I have detailed 329 instances of deflected agreement in the Book of Mormon using the 1830 edition,¹⁹ the earliest text as prepared by Royal Skousen,²⁰ and the original²¹ and printer's²² manuscripts.²³ Most of these instances do not appear in the more modern editions because they have been corrected in the name of clear, standard English grammar.²⁴ In fact, DA represents a significant percentage of grammar-related alterations to the Book of Mormon: "the most common changes have not been in spelling, but in grammar. For example, there have been 891 changes of *which* to *who*, 177 changes of *exceeding* to *exceedingly*. Many changes involve a change in number or tense of verbs. *Was* was changed to *were* 162 times, *is* to *are* 74 times, and *done* to *did* 10 times."²⁵

Of the grammatical changes mentioned, those corresponding to DA-type patterns, generally those involving the words *was* and *is*, number roughly 20 percent. The changes involving these words do not all correspond exactly to a DA grammatical structure. Additionally, some types of DA do not involve these words. This approximate percentage is meant only to give a rough estimate or impression of how significant DA could be in accounting for the overall percentage of grammatical incongruities present in the 1830 text and their subsequent change to better reflect modern English grammar. Based on the prevalence of DA and the issues with seeing DA in translation, we can surmise that this feature alone could account for more than one in five of the changes to the nonstandard grammatical elements in the Book of Mormon text.

The examples of DA found in the Book of Mormon can be divided into three categories: verbal, pronominal, and demonstrative.²⁶ The verbal category is by far the largest with 264 instances (80 percent of the DA occurrences), followed by the pronominal with 60 instances, and the demonstrative containing the fewest examples with 5 instances. I will provide and discuss examples from each of these categories separately.

Verbal

The verbal category consists of instances of nonhuman plural subjects with singular agreement expressed by the associated verbs. This is the largest of the three categories, with the greatest number of instances occurring throughout the Book of Mormon. Because this category contains so many examples, I have further divided the verbal examples into two subcategories: full verbal and helping verb (full verbs have their own concrete meaning, while helping verbs only convey grammatical information, such as tense/aspect or mood).²⁷ The two delineations refer solely to the English in the Book of Mormon.

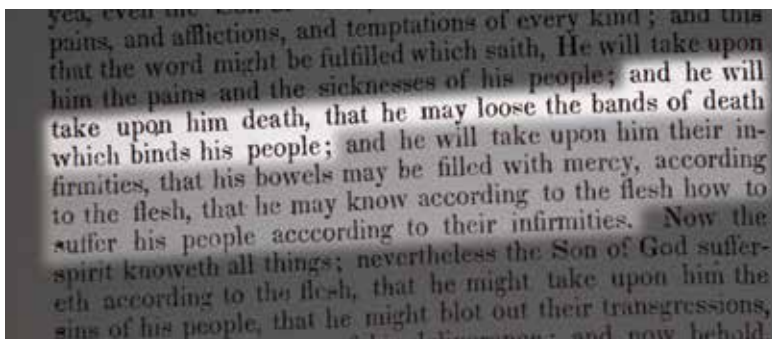
Semitic languages, however, do not make this distinction because helping verbs are not used.²⁸ Each verb is a single word, usually based on a trilateral root, and is inflected in a specific form to denote a different type of meaning or tense (past, present, or future in all their aspects, but also passive, reflexive, or active). Thus, a translator must often use English helping verbs to indicate the mood, aspect, or tense of the original one-word Semitic verb. I have chosen the examples shown here to illustrate the wide variety of these instances of DA throughout the Book of Mormon.

The first examples of DA are from the full verbal subcategory, which consists of one-word singular verbs with plural subjects.

For he truly spake many **great things** unto them, which **was** hard to be understood, save a man should inquire of the Lord. (1 Nephi 15:3)²⁹

And the **seats** . . . which **was** above all the other seats. (Mosiah 11:11)³⁰

And he will take upon him death, that he may loose the **bands of death** which **binds** his people. (Alma 7:12)³¹



Verbal deflected agreement in the 1830 Book of Mormon (Alma 7:12). Photo of a facsimile by Mark Philbrick.

Do ye suppose that ye can convince the Lamanites of the incorrectness of the traditions of their fathers, as stiffnecked a people as they are; whose **hearts delighteth** in the shedding of blood. (Alma 26:24)³²

Yea, I say unto you, my son, that there could be nothing so exquisite and so bitter, as **was** my **pains**. (Alma 36:21)³³

If ye had all the **scriptures** which **gives** an account of all the marvellous works of Christ, ye would, according to the words of Christ, know that these things must surely come. (3 Nephi 28:33)³⁴

And all **these gifts comes** by the spirit of Christ; and they come unto every man severally, according as he will. (Moroni 10:17)³⁵

All these examples consist of a nonhuman plural subject paired with a singular verb. In some cases, such as Moroni 10:17, this pairing occurs in the same clause while in other cases the verb is part of a relative clause (usually involving the word *which*), as in 3 Nephi 28:33. A large number of these instances of DA involve the use of a conjugated form of the verb *to be* (Alma 36:21 is a prime example). And sometimes this number discrepancy is evidenced by the archaic verbal ending *-eth* (see Alma 26:24), which denotes a third person singular form in King James English.³⁶

The second subcategory within the verbal type of DA encompasses those instances in which the discrepancy between plural subject and singular verb is seen through the use of English helping verbs.

And Alma and Amulek went forth preaching repentance unto the people in their **tempels** [*sic*], and in their **sanctuaries**, and also in their **synagogues**, which **was** built after the manner of the Jews. (Alma 16:13)³⁹

And Akish did administer unto them the **oaths** which **was** given by them of old, who also sought power, which had been handed down even from Cain, who was a murderer from the beginning. (Ether 8:15)⁴⁰

And the **sufferings** of our women and our children upon all the face of this, **doth** exceed every thing. (Moroni 9:19)⁴¹

These helping verbs act as indications of both the translation process as well as the presence of DA. The fact that the translator rendered them in the singular form while the subjects were plural possibly indicates that the original text had some similar indication or differentiation in these cases.⁴²

Pronominal

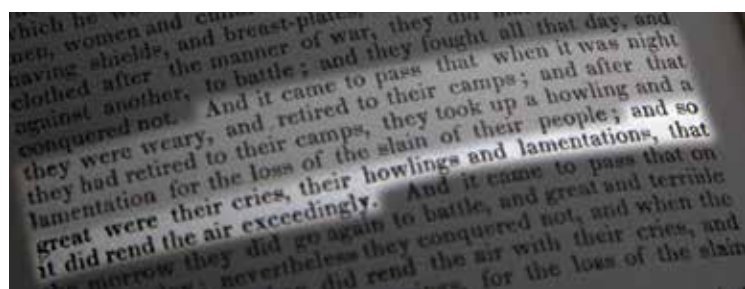
The pronominal category includes instances of DA in which a plural antecedent is referenced using the singular pronoun *it* instead of the normative English pronouns *they* or *them* (demonstrative pronouns will not be included in this category but will be counted in their own category). With 60 instances in the Book of Mormon, this category accounts for 18 percent of the examples of DA found in the record.

Behold, the time cometh that he curseth your **riches**, that **it** becometh slippery, that ye cannot hold them. (Helaman 13:31)⁴³

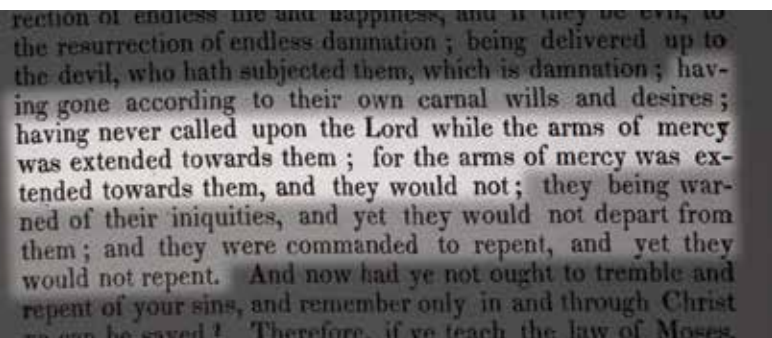
Whatsoever **things** ye shall ask the Father, in my name, **it** shall be given unto you. (3 Nephi 27:28)⁴⁴

But see that ye do all **things** in worthiness, and do **it** in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God. (Mormon 9:29)⁴⁵

And so great were their **cries**, their **howlings** and **lamentations**, that **it** did rend the air exceedingly. (Ether 15:16)⁴⁶



Pronominal deflected agreement in the 1830 Book of Mormon (Ether 15:16). Photo of a facsimile by Mark Philbrick.



Deflected agreement with helping verbs in the 1830 Book of Mormon (Mosiah 16:12). Photo of a facsimile by Mark Philbrick.

Yea, and I also know that as many **things** as have been prophesied concerning us down to this day, **has** been fulfilled. (Words of Mormon 1:4)³⁷

Having never called upon the Lord while the **arms of mercy was** extended towards them; for the **arms of mercy was** extended towards them, and they would not. (Mosiah 16:12)³⁸

And when ye shall receive **these things**, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if **these things** are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of **it** unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost. (Moroni 10:4)⁴⁷

Demonstrative

The demonstrative category consists of only 5 instances, or 2 percent of all occurrences of DA. Demonstratives are words used to distinguish certain entities from one another either spatially or in abstract senses within discourse. In English, the demonstratives are *this*, *that*, *these*, and *those*, as well as a few more archaic examples such as *yonder* and *yon*. These words also exhibit number: *this* and *that* are singular, while *these* and *those* are plural.⁴⁸ These instances of DA may or may not be affected by additional issues of translation beyond those already described. For instance, it is possible that the original language of the plates used a singular word or idiom for something that in English must or may be described with a plural.⁴⁹ Demonstrative DA is found in the Book of Mormon in the following instances:

And is not **this**, our **afflictions**, great? (Mosiah 7:23)⁵⁰

And now when the people had heard these words, they clapped their hands for joy, and exclaimed, **This** is the **desires** of our hearts. (Mosiah 18:11)⁵¹

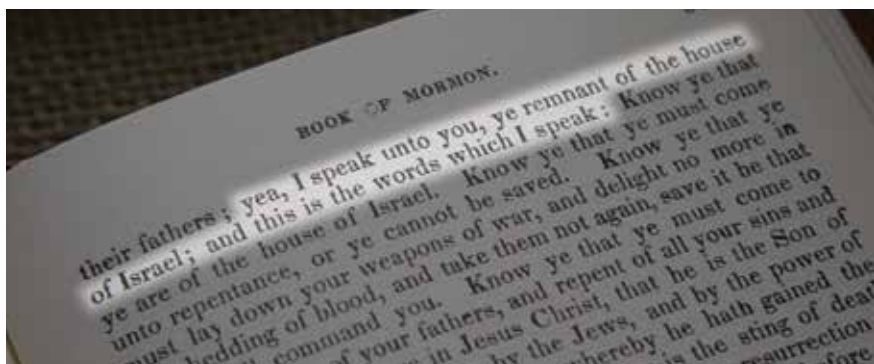
Now these were their journeyings, having taken leave of their father Mosiah, in the first year of the reign of the Judges; having refused the kingdom which their father was desirous to confer upon them; and also **this** was the **minds** of the people. (Alma 17:6)⁵²

Yea, I speak unto you, ye remnant of the house of Israel; and **this** is the **words** which I speak. (Mormon 7:1)⁵³

And **this** is my **thoughts** upon the land which I shall give you for your inheritance; for it shall be a land choice above all other lands. (Ether 2:15)⁵⁴

Data Overview and Analysis

As mentioned, I have located 329 instances of deflected agreement in the Book of Mormon. In this section, these findings will be analyzed and discussed. We will consider the percentage of DA use in the Book of Mormon, in the Hebrew Bible, in Joseph Smith's other works, and in other contemporary English sources. This discussion will attempt to



Deflected agreement with a demonstrative in the 1830 Book of Mormon (Mormon 7:1). Photo of a facsimile by Mark Philbrick.

determine to what extent a grammatical incongruity similar to DA can be found in Joseph's geographic and historical setting and what potential influence this setting could have had upon the translation. It will be shown that while an incongruity similar to DA existed to a limited extent in the colloquial speech and writing of the time, its characteristics and usage do not completely match with, and thus do not completely account for, that found in the Book of Mormon. A linguistic model that can account for DA and its usage in the Book of Mormon will also be discussed. Finally, this section will consider how DA relates to current theories regarding the translation of the Book of Mormon.

Instances of DA are observed in the English translation of nearly every book of the Book of Mormon (Jarom is the only book in which DA is not observed). However, the distribution of instances varies (see table 1). Generally, the number of instances per book increases throughout the narrative, peaking in Alma (81 instances) and then decreasing. With respect to DA as a percentage of all nonhuman plural nouns requiring number agreement, the book of Moroni has the highest percentage of DA use at 31 percent, and the book of 4 Nephi has the lowest at 3 percent (excluding the book of Jarom with zero instances of DA). The percentage of DA across the entire record is 16 percent (329 instances of DA out of 2,080 total instances of nonhuman plural nouns requiring number agreement). This range of percentages could perhaps be seen as an indication of differing authorship within the Book of Mormon.⁵⁵

These percentages match to some degree the range of DA use seen in the Hebrew Bible. A quick analysis of two books, Jeremiah and 2 Samuel, yields

Table 1. Instances and percentages of deflected agreement (DA) per nonhuman plurals requiring number

Book	Number of DA instances per book	All instances of nonhuman plurals with number agreement (strict as well as DA)	Percentage of DA
1 Nephi	24	162	15%
2 Nephi	34	239	14%
Jacob	15	132	11%
Enos	1	8	13%
Jarom	0	7	0%
Omni	3	13	23%
Words of Mormon	2	27	7%
Mosiah	41	273	15%
Alma	81	505	16%
Helaman	40	170	24%
3 Nephi	36	247	15%
4 Nephi	1	36	3%
Mormon	11	81	14%
Ether	21	119	18%
Moroni	19	61	31%
Average percentage per book			15%
Total	329	2080	16%

respectively 8 percent (12 instances of DA out of 160 possible instances) and 15 percent (3 instances of DA out of 20 possible instances). Comparing the Bible with the Book of Mormon, only 2 instances of apparent DA appear in the Book of Mormon that correspond to verses in the Hebrew Bible: 2 Nephi 7:2 (Isaiah 50:2) and 2 Nephi 23:17 (Isaiah 13:17).⁵⁶ Both of these verses in 2 Nephi exhibit what seems to be DA in English; however, DA is not found in the corresponding Hebrew (both verses also differ slightly from the Hebrew text).⁵⁷ In answer to the question of whether Joseph Smith could have learned DA from the Bible, the phenomenon is not observed consistently enough in the English of the KJV to have had any influence on Joseph's language.⁵⁸

One may also ask whether DA occurs in Joseph Smith's other writings. In other words, is DA simply a peculiarity of Joseph's dialect? An examination of a selection of Joseph's writings and revelations dating from the same general time period as the Book of Mormon translation shows that these types of grammar mistakes did occur in the recorded texts of Joseph's revelations. However, in none of his writings

does this specific error occur with anywhere near the frequency that it does in the Book of Mormon. Specifically, in the Book of Commandments, printed in 1833, I have located 10 instances that could correspond to DA.⁵⁹ Of these, 9 are verbal (1 is a repeated formulaic phrase from the Book of Mormon, and 5 involve incorrect usage of the ending *-eth*); only 1 is pronominal. Similarly, a search of the original manuscripts of Joseph's revelations from July 1828 to January 1831 reveals 10 instances that correspond to DA-type number disagreement. Two of these are repetitions of formulaic phrases or quotes from the Book of Mormon and can be removed from consideration.⁶⁰ This leaves 8 instances of DA out of 114, or 7 percent, in which DA is possible in those revelations.⁶¹ In the Book of Moses, an extract from Joseph Smith's translation of the Bible recorded between June 1830 and February 1831, only 8 instances of DA-type number disagreement can be documented out of 118 possible—again, 7 percent.⁶²

None of these examples can prove that DA was simply a strange syntactic device in Joseph Smith's personal vernacular because there is no record of

his personal writings prior to 1828 with which to compare. Because all these possible occurrences of DA in Joseph's other writings come at the same time as or relatively soon after Joseph's translation of the Book of Mormon record, it is also possible that his locution and syntax, particularly with formulaic

phrases, could have been affected by his work on the Book of Mormon, while something more systematic was occurring during the translation of the Book of Mormon. In any case, the strikingly similar percentages of DA use in Joseph's dictation of the Book of Moses during his translation of the Bible and in his

Jeremiah Lamenting the Destruction of Jerusalem, by Rembrandt van Rijn (1606–1669). Courtesy De Agostini Picture Library/Getty Images. A number of instances of deflected agreement occur in the book of the prophet Jeremiah, who was a contemporary of Lehi.



dictation of other revelations does stand as proof that he did exhibit number disagreement occasionally in his speech and writing. This fact might initially cause us to question the validity of some of the DA instances in the Book of Mormon, especially those that rely on the ending *-eth* (i.e., if Joseph dictated the ending incorrectly in other contexts, he could also have done so in the Book of Mormon). However, instances involving *-eth* inflectional suffixes constitute a very small portion of the instances of DA shown to exist. Specifically, only 35 instances (11 percent) of DA observed in the Book of Mormon rely fully upon a verbal *-eth* ending.⁶³

If this phenomenon was solely an artifact of Joseph Smith's dialect, we would expect DA in the Book of Mormon to more closely match the . . . usage in his other works and to be more evenly distributed throughout the record.

These issues notwithstanding, the difference between the number of DA instances in the Book of Mormon and in Joseph Smith's other revelations is still striking: while Joseph exhibits only occasional and random errors of this type in other revelations and translations (from the sample detailed above, 16 DA occurrences out of 232 possible instances, or 7 percent), these instances occur less than half as often as in the Book of Mormon (329 DA occurrences out of 2,080 possible instances, or 16 percent).⁶⁴ This figure does not even take into account the major differences seen book by book throughout the record. The percentage from Joseph's other dictations (7 percent) hardly compares with that found in the book of Helaman (24 percent), let alone the book of Moroni (31 percent). If this phenomenon was solely an artifact of Joseph's dialect, we would expect DA in the Book of Mormon to more closely match the roughly 7 percent usage in his other works and to be more evenly distributed throughout the record.

Additionally, it is important to see that while verbal DA is observed throughout the Book of Mormon, pronominal and demonstrative examples are largely confined to the second half of the chronological record. Only 17 of the 60 instances (28 percent) of pronominal DA occur in the first half of the

book's chronology (dividing where the book of Alma begins, roughly five hundred years into the book's approximately thousand-year history), while the other 44 occur in the second half. Similarly, of the 5 examples of demonstrative DA, the earliest occurs in Mosiah 7:23, nearly halfway through the record's chronology, and the others occur later at Mosiah 18:11, Alma 17:6, Mormon 7:1, and Ether 2:15 (see table 2).⁶⁵ Again, if we were to consider this phenomenon solely dependent upon Joseph Smith, we would not expect a pattern of potential increasing usage consistent with the chronological history of the record. Instead, we would expect consistent usage throughout the record; or if there were a pattern of increasing frequency, DA use would increase throughout the translation's chronology, and we would see more instances in the latter portion of the translation (the small plates of Nephi, 1 Nephi-Omni, were translated last). This is not consistent with the findings at hand, especially regarding the pronominal and demonstrative instances of DA.

Did DA exist in contemporaneous English sources and, if it did, to what extent? Of a sample of a variety of published sources, the majority shows no evidence of DA at all.⁶⁶ It should be noted though that most of those sources, while similar to Joseph's work in content, were written by authors with more education than Joseph had. Thus, not finding any evidence of DA is unsurprising. Checking against the writings of authors closer to Joseph's background is also important. The majority of Sidney Rigdon's writings that I examined, for instance, show no evidence of DA.⁶⁷ However, in the published transcript of an oration he gave in 1838, a number of instances of a DA-type relationship (always verbal) appear.⁶⁸ But the difference between the sources is obvious: most are written while one is extemporaneous speech that may or may not have been carefully recorded. This difference may account for the presence of grammatical incongruities in the source that was originally spoken.

For an even closer comparison of contemporary writings, two journals and one composite journal/autobiography from the time period and area were analyzed. In two of the three I found no evidence of number disagreement.⁶⁹ The last source presented the only examples of consistent number disagreement. In his journal covering a time period from 1831 to 1833, Jared Carter exhibits number disagreement

Table 2. Instances of verbal, pronominal, and demonstrative deflected agreement (DA) by book

Book	Verbal	Pronominal	Demonstrative
1 Nephi	22 (1:14, 20; 2:5; 10:16; 12:17 [3x]; 13:32, 34; 14:28; 15:3, 21; 16:10, 30; 17:26, 30, 39; 18:15 [2x], 25; 19:20, 24)	2 (17:39; 22:18)	0
2 Nephi	24 (2:10, 14, 27; 3:19; 4:18, 25; 7:2; 9:13, 16 [2x], 25; 11:1; 25:5, 6; 26:21; 27:11; 30:17 [2x]; 31:2; 33:4 [4x], 5)	10 (6:9; 9:12, 13; 10:9; 23:17; 30:17; 33:4 [3x], 5)	0
Jacob	13 (2:34, 35; 3:5, 7; 5:18 [2x], 19, 35, 46, 48 [2x], 77; 7:23)	2 (4:14; 7:24)	0
Enos	1 (1:8)	0	0
Jarom	0	0	0
Omni	3 (1:11, 22, 25)	0	0
Words of Mormon	2 (1:4, 7)	0	0
Mosiah	36 (1:2; 2:34, 38 [2x]; 3:6; 4:8; 7:26; 8:11, 17 [3x], 19; 11:11 [2x]; 12:12, 20, 36; 13:10, 12 [3x]; 16:12 [2x]; 23:9; 24:14, 15; 25:23; 27:1; 28:11, 13, 14 [2x], 17; 29:25 [2x], 36)	3 (2:41; 12:12; 28:17)	2 (7:23; 18:11)
Alma	64 (3:25; 4:1, 2, 3, 9, 15, 19; 5:9, 11, 15, 21, 33, 44, 54; 7:8, 12; heading to Alma 9; 9:16 [2x], 30; 10:12; 11:20, 22, 39; 12:2, 17; 13:8; 15:16; 16:13; 17:17, 38; 18:28, 29, 31, 35; 22:14, 27, 32; 25:9; 26:1, 24, 37; 28:13, 44 [2x]; 29:5; 31:17 [2x]; 32:21, 23; 34:15 [2x], 30; 36:21; 37:6; 42:26, 30; 44:9; 46:40 [2x]; 54:2; 56:27; 61:2; 62:18)	16 (4:3; 5:21; 11:43 [2x], 44 [2x]; 13:16 [2x]; 18:31; 29:4 [2x]; 31:38; 40:23; 41:4; 42:30; 61:2)	1 (17:6)
Helaman	30 (3:19; 4:11; 5:38; 6:25; 8:13 [2x]; 9:23, 34; 12:9, 12, 26; 13:5, 14, 15, 16 [2x], 31, 38; 14:2, 10, 11, 21 [3x], 23; 15:7 [2x], 12; 16:16, 23)	10 (4:11; 5:12, 31; 6:25, 32; 13:5, 18, 31; 14:10, 21)	0
3 Nephi	33 (1:5, 6 [2x], 15; 4:1 [2x], 2; 5:16, 19; 7:5, 6, 21; 8:7; 9:9, 15; 10:14, 17; 11:8, 28 [2x], 40; 13:19; 15:7 [2x]; 16:17; 17:6, 7; 18:13, 34; 23:3; 26:5; 27:5; 28:33)	3 (10:1; 18:28; 27:28)	0
4 Nephi	1 (1:2)	0	0
Mormon	9 (2:8, 10; 3:8; 5:21; 9:7, 11, 17, 18, 19)	1 (9:29)	1 (7:1)
Ether	13 (1:2; 2:17; 4:4, 7, 11; 5:1; 7:20, 23, 27; 8:15; 12:1, 6, 28)	7 (3:21, 26; 4:11, 14; 8:17 [2x]; 15:16)	1 (2:15)
Moroni	13 (7:12, 24, 27, 29; 8:5, 28, 29; 9:9, 19; 10:1, 17, 23, 27)	6 (2:3 [2x]; 4:1 [2x]; 10:3, 4)	0
Total	264	60	5
Total Percentages	80%	18%	2%

Just as its presence demands the reality of an original text, deflected agreement could also be used as evidence of multiple authorship for the record.

nearly 20 percent of the time (considerably higher than Joseph's 7 percent).⁷⁰ Carter's educational background is much closer to Joseph's. However, while Carter does exhibit DA, there are a number of differences between his writings and Joseph's. Though all the instances of number disagreement in Carter's journal fall in the verbal category, his writings reveal no incongruity in the pronominal or demonstrative categories. What accounts for the large difference in DA usage percentages between Joseph Smith and Jared Carter? There is no clear answer. Carter's writings only prove that Carter used DA in his writing and, probably, in his speech.

Thus, while these cases (Rigdon's speech and Carter's journal) show that number disagreement could be considered an observable but somewhat rare characteristic in the colloquial speech and writings of the time period (dependent on education level), there are still major differences between these examples and the Book of Mormon. Joseph's number disagreements in the translation of the Book of Mormon are significantly different from and unaccounted for in the common vernacular of the time and in his own contemporaneous writings. Particularly, the distribution of instances and the existence of number disagreement beyond the verbal category are evidence for the existence of DA in the original language of the plates and the likely influence of DA on the translation process.

Just as its presence demands the reality of an original text, DA could also be used as evidence of multiple authorship for the record. Specifically, the fact that the percentage of DA use varies greatly from book to book within the record argues against a single author for the entire text. For example, 1 Nephi and 2 Nephi together with Mosiah and Alma lie between 14 and 16 percent, while Helaman stands at 24 percent, and Moroni is as high as 31 percent (see table 1). It is highly improbable (if not impossible) that a single author would include such a peculiar grammatical element in such varying frequencies between different books in a single work.

In addition, the text's internal claims of authorship are reinforced. For instance, of the 79 instances of DA in the book of Alma, only 6 occur within what are typically known as the war chapters (Alma 45–62; see table 2).⁷¹ This means that the great majority (73 out of 79 occurrences, or 92 percent) of the instances of DA occur in the first 70 percent of the book of Alma, and only 8 percent in the latter 30 percent of the book.⁷² Significantly, when the record changes from generally covering the religious discourses and teachings of Alma the Younger and the sons of Mosiah to solely recounting wars, conflicts, and secular history, the frequency of DA falls dramatically, suggesting a different author (something supported by the heading of the section, which was contained on the plates, indicating that the authorship of that section's source material changed to Helaman). Would any single author (much less a minimally educated farm boy dictating the record in a few short months) be aware enough of his or her style and writing to vary this grammatical characteristic in such a manner? It seems much more probable that the presence of DA is evidence for multiple authorship of the Book of Mormon record. More work needs to be done in this area of discerning any potential differences in usage based on author.

This distribution of instances and types of DA fits very well with the wave model of linguistic change, particularly describing the spread of linguistic characteristics from one environment to another. Originally the wave model was applied to the spread of linguistic features from one dialect to another, but later it was adapted to analyze historical linguistics and the effect different languages have on one another.⁷³ In essence, this model states (as described by Belnap and Shabaneh):

Historical change takes place as an innovation gains ground in one linguistic environment and spreads to other environments. The innovative form occurs in variation with the old form and gradually increases in frequency; such a change may or may not go to completion, that is, the new form may occur in stable variation with the old form or it may totally replace the old form.⁷⁴

In the case of DA in the Book of Mormon, it seems apparent, based on both the evidence of DA from classical Hebrew and the number of instances and their placement within the overall chronology of the record, that the innovation (DA) had its

beginnings in the verbal domain, with some usage in the pronominal domain, and then became more prevalent in the pronominal domain while also entering into the demonstrative. However, this remains an assumption based only on the limited information at hand. Without more information and a greater corpus in the original plate text language, it is impossible to tell with any certainty.

The wave model is also pertinent to this discussion because it accounts for the large amount of variability in DA usage seen throughout the Book of Mormon record. It is apparent that although the authors may use DA in some cases, they vary this usage extensively with other instances of normative or strict number agreement. This is also seen in the Hebrew Bible. For example, in both Deuteronomy 21:7 and Isaiah 59:12, the authors use both normative agreement and DA even within the same verse. If this kind of variation exists within the text of the Hebrew Bible, it should not surprise us to find it in the text of the Book of Mormon.

In addition to providing clues about the original language of the plates and their authorship, DA also helps us understand more about the translation process itself. These findings support the theory of a more “tight control” of the translation process by the Lord as opposed to “loose control.” It is not the intent of this paper to enter fully into the debate over translation theory, the details of which have been dealt with more specifically elsewhere.⁷⁵ However, a small discussion of how DA in the Book of Mormon would affect the debate is in order. The difference between tight and loose control is framed around how the text was received by Joseph: “Was the translation revealed to Joseph Smith in ideas that he wrote down in his own language (loose control over the translation process), or was it instead revealed to him word for word (tight control)? Or was it a combination of the two possibilities?”⁷⁶ Royal Skousen succinctly stated the crux of the differentiation:

This supposed problem of grammatical “errors” leads directly to the question of whether the Book of Mormon text represents the Lord’s actual language to Joseph Smith or simply Joseph Smith’s own translation using his own language. In other words, does the Book of Mormon represent a direct and exact revelation from the Lord, or did the ideas come into Joseph’s mind and then he put them into his own words?⁷⁷

Spelling out some of the evidences used on both sides of the argument, Skousen appeals to firsthand accounts of the process, the spelling and correction of names, and Semitic textual evidence found within the text to conclude that tight control is more likely. “Internal evidence from the original manuscript as well as statements from witnesses of the translation provide strong support that the Lord exercised ‘tight control’ over the translation process and that he indeed is the source for the original text of the Book of Mormon.”⁷⁸ Other evidences utilized by proponents of tighter control include certain intertextual quotations.⁷⁹

The evidence [for] loose control consists largely of grammatical incongruities in the text, certain modern vocabulary and idioms, modern cultural content, and arguments for the KJV Bible influencing the translation.

The evidence put forward by those who advocate loose control consists largely of grammatical incongruities in the text, certain modern vocabulary and idioms, modern cultural content, and arguments for the KJV Bible influencing the translation.⁸⁰ Referring to grammatical errors in the Book of Mormon (particularly some that are not related to DA, although his words are generally applicable to most of the grammatical errors in the Book of Mormon translation), Brant Gardner describes the point of view of loose control:

The nature of these grammatical issues suggests that they are part of the translation, not part of the underlying plate text. They result from conflation of terms or of times that are more easily explained for Joseph’s time period than that of the plate writers. Therefore, they necessitate some conceptual distance between the plate text and the translation. The translation allowed for human error in the process and could create a translation that erred in ways that would not have been present in the underlying plate text. The nature of these errors also suggests Joseph’s participation as a translator, particularly in the cases of verb tense. They can be explained only with Joseph’s active participation in the process, even when that participation inadvertently created an error.⁸¹

Considering the evidence . . . , it is reasonable to conclude that DA was a part of the plate text language and was perhaps more prevalent on the plates than is indicated by the English translation.

Concerning such grammatical issues then, the existence of DA in the Book of Mormon may refute in many cases a major part of the main argument of the loose-control theory—namely, that Joseph’s grammar was nonstandard and that this accounts for all grammatical incongruities. If it can be shown that a large number (albeit not all) of the supposed errors are errors only in the fact that they don’t match up with accepted and expected standards of modern English, and also that they correspond to an observed linguistic phenomenon consistent with the linguistic environment of the ancient origin of the document, then the loose-control theory is unsubstantiated regarding those incongruities, reducing their viability as evidence for loose control of the translation.

In sum, the presence of deflected agreement supports at some level the theory of tight control of the translation of the Book of Mormon in that it constitutes specific, detailed grammatical evidence, atypical of English, which cannot completely be labeled as error or bad grammar because of its frequency and distribution. This conclusion is only strengthened by comparison with Joseph’s other dictations and revelations.⁸² This is not to say that DA ends once and for all the debate—it merely acts as evidence that generally supports a tighter control over the translation throughout the record and not simply in certain instances (such as spelling and correction of proper names).

Conclusion

This paper does not stand as an argument that all the instances described herein as DA are proof positive of this phenomenon on the Book of Mormon plates or that none of them are occurrences of bad grammar or translator or scribal dialect. Without access to the original plate text, establishing that with any degree of certainty is impossible. However, considering the evidence and the realities of translation

(specifically the inability of English to preserve DA in all possible tenses and persons), it is reasonable to conclude that DA was a part of the plate text language and was perhaps more prevalent on the plates than is indicated by the English translation.

Comparing the surviving evidence of DA in the English translation of the Book of Mormon with Joseph Smith’s other writings and his contemporaries’ writings demonstrates that while a phenomenon similar to DA occurred in writings of Joseph’s time and locality, these patterns do not account for all the data in the Book of Mormon, suggesting that something else must be behind some of the number disagreements found therein. This paper has shown that DA, as a characteristic of the Hebrew linguistic milieu from which the authors of the record emerged, combined with the wave model of linguistic change, can account for the remaining data and for many of the observed grammatical incongruities in the Book of Mormon translation.

The presence of deflected agreement in the original text of the Book of Mormon bears certain implications and ramifications for our approach to the record, both from a religious or theological standpoint as well as from an academic viewpoint. Deflected agreement within the text of the Book of Mormon refutes views of the record either as a strictly nineteenth-century production or as some sort of “inspired fiction.” The distribution, frequency, and variation of DA across grammatical categories within the text of the Book of Mormon support Joseph’s claims of the record’s historicity, authorship, and ancient Semitic origin. In addition, the presence of DA also constitutes evidence supporting tight control of the translation and generally weakens the case for some of the evidence relied upon by loose-control advocates. ■



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NOTES

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1. Some examples include Hugh W. Nibley, *Since Cumorah* (1967; repr., Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1988), 3–7; Robert J. Matthews, “Why have changes been made in the printed editions of the Book of Mormon?” *I Have a Question*, *Ensign*, March 1987, 47–49; George Horton, “Understanding Textual Changes in the Book of Mormon,” *Ensign*, December 1983, 24–28; Robert J. Matthews, “The New Publications of the Standard Works—1979, 1981,” *BYU Studies* 22/4 (1982): 387–424. It should be noted as well that the Mormon apologetic community has dealt with this issue many times over. Some good resources are available at “Book of Mormon Textual Changes,” FAIR Wiki Topical Guide, <http://www.fairlds.org/apol/ai282.html> (last modified 2 May 2011).
 2. For a few examples of such papers and work, see Royal Skousen, “The Original Language of the Book of Mormon: Upstate New York Dialect, King James English, or Hebrew?,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 3/1 (1994): 28–38; Sydney B. Sperry, “The Book of Mormon as Translation English,” *Improvement Era*, March 1935, reprinted in *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 4/1 (1995): 209–17; Brian D. Stubbs, “Looking Over vs. Overlooking Native American Languages: Let’s Void the Void,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 5/1 (1996): 1–49; “Was There Hebrew Language in Ancient America? An Interview with Brian Stubbs,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 9/2 (2000): 54–63; and Brian D. Stubbs, “Book of Mormon Language,” in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 1:179–81.
 3. See John A. Tvedtnes, “The Hebrew Background of the Book of Mormon,” in *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon*, ed. John L. Sorenson and Melvin J. Thorne (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1991), 77–91; John W. Welch, ed., *Reexploring the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1992); Kevin L. Barney, “Enallage in the Book of Mormon,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 3/1 (1994): 113–47; Brian D. Stubbs, “A Lengthier Treatment of Length,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 5/2 (1996): 82–97; Larry G. Childs, “Present Participle Adjuncts in the Book of Mormon,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 6/1 (1997): 26–38; Donald W. Parry, “Hebraisms and Other Ancient Peculiarities in the Book of Mormon,” in *Echoes and Evidences of the Book of Mormon*, ed. Donald W. Parry, Daniel C. Peterson, and John W. Welch (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2002), 155–89.
 4. This is mainly found in other Semitic languages; Arabic, preserving this grammatical phenomenon in most (if not all) of its dialects and forms, is the most prominent. It is also acknowledged that a similar, albeit slightly different phenomenon, exists in Greek, wherein neuter plurals are given singular predicates and attributives.
 5. Skousen, “Original Language,” 34.
 6. Skousen, “Original Language,” 30.
 7. See Skousen, “Original Language,” 29–30, as well as Royal Skousen, “Towards a Critical Edition of the Book of Mormon,” *BYU Studies* 30/1 (1990): 42–50.
 8. Skousen, “Original Language,” 29.
 9. Charles A. Ferguson, *Damascus Arabic* (Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics, 1961), 236–37. I will be using the term *deflected agreement* because there is no succinct terminology for the phenomenon in Hebrew studies.
 10. R. Kirk Belnap and Osama Shabaneh, “Variable Agreement and Nonhuman Plurals in Classical and Modern Standard Arabic,” in *Perspectives on Arabic Linguistics IV: Papers from the Fourth Annual Symposium on Arabic Linguistics*, ed. Ellen Broselow, Mushira Eid, and John McCarthy (Philadelphia: Benjamins, 1992), 247; see R. Kirk Belnap, “A New Perspective on the History of Arabic: Variation in Marking Agreement with Plural Heads,” *Folia Linguistica* 33/2 (1999): 169–85, in which the author revisits and re-analyzes some of the assertions and conclusions of the previous paper. For examples and more explanation for Arabic, see Karin C. Ryding, *A Reference Grammar of Modern Standard Arabic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 125; for more information, see also 242–43, 313, 315, and 323.
 11. *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*, 2nd English ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1910), 464. Generous thanks to Paul Hoskisson for pointing me to this resource.
 12. *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*, 440–41.
 13. For prominent examples, see Jeremiah 2:14; 4:14; 5:14; 12:4; 22:6; 36:23; 44:6; 48:41, 45; 51:29, 56. There are also others not listed here.
 14. Dallin D. Oaks, “Book of Mormon, Language of the Translated Text of,” in *Book of Mormon Reference Companion*, ed. Dennis L. Largey (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003), 116–19.
 15. It would only be logical that upon interaction with other languages and language families the colloquial language of the Book of Mormon writers could both influence and be influenced by the surrounding linguistic environment. Brian Stubbs has postulated a Semitic influence (either secondarily or dominantly) on certain Amerindian languages of Mesoamerica, creating a mixed linguistic atmosphere for Nephite/Lamanite culture. See “Hebrew and Uto-Aztec: Possible Linguistic Connections,” in Welch, *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, 279–81.
 16. Roger Lass, ed., *The Cambridge History of the English Language* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 3:140.
 17. The helping verbs *had* and *was*, particularly in concert with the verb *to be*, conjugate for number and can be seen clearly as either errors on Joseph’s part or instances of DA when their subjects are nonhuman plurals.
 18. Lass, *English Language*, 490, describes how these archaisms became restricted to religious/biblical texts by 1580–1610, around the time of the printing of the KJV Bible. This fossilization would have been duly imprinted on Joseph Smith through his study of the KJV Bible. Similarly, “documents from the general time and area of Joseph Smith’s boyhood attest to the presence in the local dialect(s) of some linguistic forms that would seem archaic to people today and that are similar to the language of the KJV Bible. Indeed, one could find some lingering use of the pronoun forms

- ‘thee,’ ‘thou,’ ‘thy,’ and ‘thine,’ as well as the archaic *-eth* and *-est* verb inflectional suffixes.” Oaks, “Book of Mormon, Language,” 118.
19. Unless indicated otherwise, all references in this section will be from the 1830 edition.
 20. Royal Skousen, ed., *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).
 21. Royal Skousen, ed., *The Original Manuscript of the Book of Mormon: Typographical Facsimile of the Extant Text* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2001). While there is relatively very little of the original manuscript still extant, I used what there is to verify what I could.
 22. Royal Skousen, ed., *The Printer’s Manuscript of the Book of Mormon: Typographical Facsimile of the Entire Text in Two Parts* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2001).
 23. A number of instances of ambiguous language have either been included or excluded from the total number. I have included cases for which logical argument for DA can be made and excluded instances in which the ambiguity seems to be more on the side of normative English structures or grammatical error. I have also deliberately excluded instances of nominal sentences in which no verb is present in the original Semitic language and any verb in translation would be supplied solely by the translator. See Ryding, *Reference Grammar*, 59–63, for a discussion of equational sentences within an Arabic context. For a similar discussion in Hebrew, see Bruce K. Waltke and Michael P. O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 72, 720. As such, these types of sentences would include an element in translation not found in the original plate text. Thirty of these excluded instances indicate a DA-type relationship with plural nouns and singular verbs (1 Nephi 8:34; 15:5; 17:2; 22:6; 2 Nephi 3:4; 10:9; 10:21; Jacob 2:28; Mosiah 7:23, 30; 8:9; 18:8, 11; 21:5; 23:24; 24:10; Alma 4:3; 11:22; 17:6; 18:30; 30:16; 44:8; Helaman 9:2; 3 Nephi 15:8; 23:1; Mormon 7:1; 9:36; Ether 2:15; and Moroni 7:44; 8:25).
 24. For the sake of brevity, I will not undertake to describe every instance of DA in the Book of Mormon here, but I will present a number of examples to illustrate its presence.
 25. Horton, “Understanding Textual Changes,” 28.
 26. As noted above, pure adjectival agreement would not survive the transition into English; thus there is no record of it in the volume.
 27. In many cases a conjugated form of the verb *to be* (*was*, *were*, etc.) acts as a helping verb to delineate tense or aspect. However, the verb *to be* can also act alone as a simple full verb. I show examples of both.
 28. An exception to this would be Modern Hebrew because of influence by modern European languages.
 29. 1830 edition, p. 35, emphasis added to show DA. Changed in 1837 edition.
 30. 1830 edition, p. 178, emphasis added. Changed in 1837 edition.
 31. 1830 edition, p. 240, emphasis added. Changed in 1837 edition.
 32. 1830 edition, p. 297, emphasis added. The archaic *-eth* ending denotes third person singular; see again Lass, *English Language*, 140. Changed in 1837 edition.
 33. 1830 edition, p. 325, emphasis added. Changed in 1920 edition.
 34. 1830 edition, p. 512, emphasis added. Changed in 1837 edition.
 35. 1830 edition, p. 586, emphasis added. Changed in 1840 edition.
 36. Lass, *English Language*, 140, 162–65. The section below dealing with analysis will treat this type in greater detail.
 37. 1830 edition, p. 152, emphasis added. Changed in 1837 edition.
 38. 1830 edition, p. 189, emphasis added. Changed in 1837 edition.
 39. 1830 edition, p. 268, emphasis added. The verb in this case may refer simply to *synagogues*, but it would still qualify as DA since *synagogues* is also a nonhuman plural noun. Changed in 1837 edition.
 40. 1830 edition, p. 553, emphasis added. Changed in 1837 edition.
 41. 1830 edition, p. 585, emphasis added. Unchanged in current edition.
 42. The issue of tight versus loose control of the translation will be discussed below.
 43. 1830 edition, p. 444, emphasis added. This is also an example of verbal DA, with *riches* by necessity being the subject of *becometh* as well. Also, the issue of variability can be noted here with *riches* being represented by both a singular pronoun (*it*) and a plural (*them*). Changed in 1920 edition.
 44. 1830 edition, p. 509, emphasis added. Changed in 1920 edition.
 45. 1830 edition, p. 537, emphasis added. Unchanged in current edition.
 46. 1830 edition, p. 572, emphasis added. Also, the *it* could refer only to *cries*, with *howling and lamentations* being a parenthetical description of the cries, but this would still constitute DA. Changed in 1920 edition.
 47. 1830 edition, p. 586, emphasis added. Unchanged in current edition. Note also the variability: *these things are* showing normative plural agreement.
 48. Lass, *English Language*, 140, 194–96.
 49. For instance, in Hebrew *nēbālā* (dead body/bodies).
 50. 1830 edition, p. 170, emphasis added. Note also that the verb corresponds to the singular demonstrative, while the antecedent *afflictions* is plural. Changed in 1837 edition.
 51. 1830 edition, p. 192, emphasis added. Note also that the verb corresponds to the singular demonstrative, while the antecedent *desires* is plural. Changed in 1837 edition.
 52. 1830 edition, p. 269, emphasis added. Unchanged in the current edition. Note also that the verb corresponds to the singular demonstrative, while the subject/antecedent *minds* is plural. Also note the correct demonstrative use at the beginning of the verse.
 53. 1830 edition, p. 531, emphasis added. Note also that the verb corresponds to the singular demonstrative, while the subject/antecedent *words* is plural. Changed in 1837 edition.
 54. 1830 edition, p. 542, emphasis added. Note also that the verb corresponds to the singular demonstrative, while the subject/antecedent *thoughts* is plural. Changed in 1837 edition.
 55. See below on the implications of the DA findings on Book of Mormon scholarship and studies.

56. One other example of DA appears in a chapter that corresponds to Isaiah material—2 Nephi 27:11. However, this verse does not directly correspond to a verse in Isaiah of the Masoretic Text of the Hebrew Bible; thus it is not strictly verifiable.
57. The second half of 2 Nephi 7:2, from the earliest text, reads: “Behold, at my rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness and their fish to stink because the waters are dried up and they dieth because of thirst.” Skousen, *Earliest Text*, 94. The Hebrew Bible (Isaiah 50:2) reads, *hēn bēga‘ārātī ‘ahārīb yām ‘āšim nēhārôt midbār tib‘aš dēgātām mē‘en mayīm wētāmôt baššāmā’*; 2 Nephi 23:17 reads, “Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them, which shall not regard silver and gold, nor shall they delight in it.” The Hebrew (Isaiah 13:17) reads, *hinēni mē‘ir ‘ālēhem ‘et mādāy ‘āšer kesep lō’ yahšōbū wēzāhāb lō’ yahēppēšū bō*.
58. In rare instances, KJV editions from 1611 and 1843 keep a literal translation of the Hebrew. For example, Jeremiah 36:23 is the only instance of those listed above in Jeremiah where the DA structure from the Hebrew is apparent in the English. These and other instances of number disagreement are so rare within the text of the KJV Bible that it is extremely doubtful that they would have had any effect on Joseph Smith’s dialect.
59. Book of Commandments, Section X: 7 (D&C 11:14); XXII: 10–11 (D&C 21:9; this could be ambiguous); XXIV: 13 (D&C 20:17); XL: 33 (D&C 38:39); LIV: 11 (D&C 52:11); LIX: 5 (D&C 58:4); LX: 27 (D&C 59:17); LX: 28 (D&C 59:18 [2x]); LXV: 41 (D&C 64:32).
60. For instance, the DA phrase “and all things that in them is,” when referring to the earth, heavens, and creation, occurs four times in the Book of Mormon text (2 Nephi 2:14; 3 Nephi 9:15; Mormon 9:11; and Ether 4:7) and is then repeated in the other revelations verbatim.
61. Robin Scott Jensen, Robert J. Woodford, and Steven C. Harper, eds., *The Joseph Smith Papers: Revelations and Translations, Manuscript Revelation Books (Facsimile Edition)* (Salt Lake City: The Church Historian’s Press, 2009), 9–93.
62. As observed in the original manuscripts of the Joseph Smith Translation. From Scott H. Faulring, Kent P. Jackson, and Robert J. Matthews, eds., *Joseph Smith’s New Translation of the Bible: Original Manuscripts* (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2004), 83–112. These instances (and page numbers) are Moses 1:42 (p. 86); 2:16 (p. 87); 5:25 (p. 94); 5:33 (p. 94), 6:63 (2x, p. 102); 7:16 (pp. 104–5); and 7:24 (p. 105).
63. 1 Nephi 12:17 (3x); 15:21; 2 Nephi 7:2; 26:21; 31:2; Jacob 2:35; 4:14; 5:77; Mosiah 3:6; 12:20; Alma 9:16; 12:17; 22:14; 26:1, 24; Helaman 12:26; 13:31; 3 Nephi 11:40; and Moroni 7:12, 24; 8:28.
64. An interesting counterexample comes from 2 Nephi 27:4 where the 1920 edition changed, hopefully inadvertently, a plural verb, *do*, to a singular verb, *doeth*, while retaining the plural, human subject. This instance of DA is of course not included in my statistics. I thank Paul Hoskisson for pointing out to me this late change in the text.
65. The book of Ether presents specific difficulties: who is the author of the majority of it? Is it written largely in Moroni’s words or is it a verbatim transfer from the plates of Ether? In my opinion, it seems to be an abridgment done by Moroni, and thus, in most cases, the words would have been filtered through his vocabulary and style. Thus, we can potentially include it here as a chronologically late instance.
66. I checked the following sources and found no real evidence for number disagreement: Ian Ker and Thomas Gornall, eds., *The Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman, vol. 1 (Ealing, Trinity, Oriel, February 1801 to December 1826)* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978), 260–313. Joseph Lathrop, *Sermons by the Late Rev. Joseph Lathrop, D. D.* (Springfield, MA: Tannatt, 1821), 46–98; Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of President Edwards* (New York: Carvill, 1830), 2:15–65.
67. Primary source materials from the Sidney Rigdon Collection, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah (hereafter Perry Collections): Handwritten Sermon, circa 1840 (MSS SC 732); Letter (MSS 2266, printed in *Quebec Gazette*); “To the Public,” *Ohio Star*, Ravenna, Ohio (12 January 1832); see <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/BOMP/id/1378>; [Mr. O Barr], *LDS Messenger and Advocate*, Kirtland, Ohio (March 1836); see <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/BOMP/id/1209>; Letter to Editor, *Quincy Whig*, Quincy, Illinois (27 May 1839); see <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/BOMP/id/2060>.
68. Sidney Rigdon, “Oration delivered by Mr. S. Rigdon, on the 4th of July, 1838: at Far West, Caldwell County, Missouri” (Far West, MO: Printed at the Journal Office, 1838), Perry Collections.
69. Elijah Elmer, “Elijah Elmer Journal (1810–1878),” Perry Collections (MSS SC 1572). John Murdock, “John Murdock Journal and Autobiography, 1830–1867,” Perry Collections (MSS SC 997).
70. Jared Carter, “Jared Carter Journal 1831–1833,” Perry Collections (MSS SC 547).
71. Alma 46:40 (2x); 54:2; 56:27; 61:2; 62:18.
72. These percentages are derived based on page numbers from the current edition and are intended only as rough estimates.
73. Charles J. N. Bailey, *Variation and Linguistic Theory* (Arlington, VA: Center for Applied Linguistics, 1973).
74. Belnap and Shabanah, “Variable Agreement,” 256–57.
75. For a naturalistic explanation of the Book of Mormon based on modern translation theory, see Brant A. Gardner, *The Gift and Power: Translating the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Kofford Books, 2011).
76. Oaks, “Book of Mormon, Language,” 118.
77. Skousen, “Towards a Critical Edition,” 50.
78. Skousen, “Original Language,” 32.
79. Gardner, *Gift and Power*, 157–81. Gardner does not himself find these instances persuasive, but they are detailed in his work.
80. Gardner, *Gift and Power*, 183–95. It goes without saying that the evidence provided in this paper does not address any of the other evidences (outside a specific subset of grammatical issues) for a more loose control of translation.
81. Gardner, *Gift and Power*, 185.
82. See the earlier discussion comparing the two.