Chapter 19

On the softness of parameters: An experiment on Faroese

Höskuldur Thráinsson

University of Iceland

This chapter evaluates the proposal, originally made by Anders Holmberg and Christer Platzack (e.g. 1995), that several syntactic differences between Insular Scandinavian (ISc) on the one hand and Mainland Scandinavian (MSc) on the other can be accounted for by postulating a single parameter that has one setting in ISc and another in MSc. While Faroese was originally supposed to belong to the ISc group, together with Icelandic, it has turned out that there is more variation in Faroese than in Icelandic with respect to the relevant syntactic phenomena. In this paper it is argued that it is exactly this variation within Faroese that makes it an interesting testing ground for hypotheses about parametric variation. It is then shown that while there is extensive intra-speaker variation in Faroese, there is some correlation between speakers' evaluation of sentences containing oblique subjects, Stylistic Fronting, null expletives and the transitive expletive construction, all supposedly typical ISc-phenomena. Although this correlation is not as strong as predicted by the standard parametric approach, it is intriguing and calls for an explanation. It is then suggested that a grammar competition account along the lines of Kroch (1989) and Yang (2002) provides a way of accounting for the observed data.

1 Introduction

Comparative Scandinavian syntax took a giant leap forwards in the late 1980s and early 1990s with the work of Christer Platzack and Anders Holmberg, joint and disjoint. The importance of their work on the nature and limits of syntactic variation in the Scandinavian languages in the late 1980s and early 1990s (see Holmberg & Platzack 1995 with references) can hardly be overestimated. The parameters they proposed guided research on Scandinavian syntax for a long time

and also had a more general effect on research into syntactic variation. Several researchers set out to test the predictions made by the proposed parameters and the general ideas behind them, or tried to refine them in different ways. As a result, various kinds of syntactic facts were discovered and syntacticians learned a lot about the nature of variation in general and in Scandinavian syntax in particular.

Gradually, however, the whole parametric approach came under criticism, leading to a lively debate (see e.g. Newmeyer 2004; 2005; 2006, Haspelmath 2008, Boeckx 2011 vs. Holmberg 2010, Holmberg & Roberts 2009, Roberts & Holmberg 2005; see also Berwick & Chomsky 2011 and H. Á. Sigurðsson 2011). This particular debate mainly centered around the place and role (if any) of parameters in linguistic theory. The arguments were partly empirical (e.g. "Is there any evidence for the clustering of properties predicted by parameter A?") and partly conceptual (e.g. "Is the concept of parameters compatible with the minimalist approach to language?"). Parallel to this debate, a different kind of discussion of the nature of parameters also emerged. In that discussion, one of the main issues is whether parameter values are acquired instantly (the TRIGGERING APPROACH, cf. e.g. Gibson & Wexler 1994, Lightfoot 1999) or gradually (the VARIATIONIST APPROACH, cf. e.g. Yang 2002; 2004; 2010). Under the variationist approach to parametric setting, the child acquiring language will try out various possible grammars that are defined by the innate Universal Grammar (UG) and these grammars will "compete" in the sense of Kroch (1989, 2001). In the ideal situation, the target grammar will eliminate other possible grammars because these will only be compatible with some of the input but not all of it. This competition may take some time, depending on the amount and uniformity of relevant input, or as described by Yang:

> [...] the rise of the target grammar is gradual, which offers a close fit with language development [...] non-target grammars stick around for a while before they are eliminated [...] the speed with which a parameter value rises to dominance is correlated with how incompatible its competitor is with the input (Yang 2004: 454)

Although most of Yang's work on parameters has revolved around the question of parameter settings by children during the acquisition period, his approach also has implications for the study of language variation, as he has pointed out:

> In addition, the variational model allows the grammar and parameter probabilities to be values other than 0 and 1 should the input evidence be inconsistent; in other words, two opposite values of a parameter must coexist in a

mature speaker. This straightforwardly renders Chomsky's UG compatible with the Labovian studies of continuous variations at both individual and population levels [...] (Yang 2004: 455)

It is tempting to relate this idea to Chomsky's famous statement about the "ideal speaker-listener":

Linguistic theory is concerned primarily with an ideal speaker-listener, in a completely homogenous speech-community, who knows its language perfectly ... (Chomsky 1965: 3)

Under the standard assumption that linguistic parameters are binary,[1] we can then say that ideal speakers will have set all their parameter values to either + or − (1 or 0 if you will), but some speakers may not have fixed the setting for certain parameters. Instead they may be leaning towards either + or −, with different probabilities. In that sense their parameters can be said to be "soft".[2]

It seems, however, that this approach to variation has been largely absent from studies of syntactic variation in Scandinavian (but see Thráinsson 2013b, Nowenstein 2014). Yet it would seem that comparative Scandinavian syntax does in fact provide an ideal testing ground for ideas of this kind. One reason to believe so is the fact that inter- and intra-speaker variation seems much more prevalent in Scandinavian syntax than previously assumed. This may be especially true of Faroese, as will be discussed in the following sections.

The present paper reports on the results of a study of syntactic variation in Faroese, referred to below as FarDiaSyn (for Faroese Dialect Syntax). Because this study was much more extensive than any other research on Faroese, both in terms of the number of speakers consulted and the number of constructions involved, it makes it possible to experiment with certain statistical methods to test parametric predictions. The study included the following phenomena among others: oblique subjects, Stylistic Fronting (SF), null expletives and the Transitive Expletive Construction (TEC). All of these phenomena have been said to be related by Holmberg and Platzack's Agr parameter, as discussed below. As will be

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[1] Although this is the standard (and strongest) assumption, other values have also been proposed. But as Roberts & Holmberg (2005: 541) state: "The only really substantive claim behind a binary formulation of parameters is that the values are discrete: there are no clines, squishes or continua." This issue will be discussed in §5.

[2] The formalization of this idea is a non-trivial issue. Saying that the relevant parameters are unspecified or have not yet been set is not a satisfactory description of the situation because the observed variation is not random, as we shall see. We will return to this issue in Sections 4 and 5 below.

demonstrated, the results of FarDiaSyn are typically incompatible with the standard concept of strictly binary parameters because of the extensive intra-speaker variation observed. It will be argued that the variational approach suggested by Yang offers a more adequate account, to the extent that the results can be said to support any kind of parametric approach.

The paper is organized as follows: In §2, Holmberg and Platzack's Agr-parameter is reviewed, together with a selected set of facts that it is supposed to account for. In §3 I present data from Faroese illustrating extensive inter- and intra-speaker variation with respect to evaluation of sentences involving oblique subjects, SF, null expletives and TEC. §4 then shows that despite the extensive variation, speaker judgments of these constructions correlate to some extent, although the correlations are not as general nor as strong as Holmberg & Platzack (1995) would have led us to expect. §5 is the conclusion.

2 Holmberg and Platzack's Agr-parameter revisited

As is well known, the Principles and Parameters (P&P) approach to language variation goes back to Chomsky's *Lectures on Government and Binding* (1981). The basic prediction of the P&P approach is that "[i]nsofar as linguistic variation is due to variation with regard to parameters […] we should find clusters of surface effects of these deep-lying parameters in the languages of the world" (Holmberg 2010: 4). If such a cluster consists of, say, four properties, every language should in principle either have all four of them or none of them, "all else being equal" (Holmberg 2010: 5).

Holmberg's paper just cited was partially a reaction to the claim advanced by several researchers, including Newmeyer (2004; 2005), Haspelmath (2008) and Boeckx (2011), that proposed parametrically conditioned clusters of surface effects "invariably fail to hold up when a wider range of languages are taken into account" (Holmberg 2010: 12). In an attempt to refute this claim, Holmberg sets out to reconsider the effects of the so-called Agr-parameter proposed in various works by himself and Christer Platzack in the late 1980s and early 1990s. This parameter was supposed to account for a number of syntactic differences between Insular Scandinavian (ISc) on the one hand and Mainland Scandinavian (MSc) on the other. In earlier work by Holmberg and Platzack (henceforth H&P) the parameter was believed to account for up to ten differences between ISc and MSc but Holmberg (2010: 13–14) reduces it to the following seven:

(1)   Holmberg's reduced list of Agr-related differences: ISc   MSc

		ISc	MSc
1.	Rich subject-verb agreement	+	−
2.	Oblique subjects	+	−
3.	Stylistic Fronting	+	−
4.	Null expletives	+	−
5.	Null generic subject pronoun	+	−
6.	Transitive expletives	+	−
7.	Heavy subject postposing	+	−

Although H&P included Old Norse and Faroese in the ISc group together with Icelandic, Holmberg only contrasts Icelandic with MSc in this later paper (2010) "to simplify the presentation". It would obviously complicate the comparison to include a dead language like Old Norse, although we now have more sophisticated tools to study that language than before (see e.g. Rögnvaldsson & Helgadóttir 2011; Rögnvaldsson et al. 2011; Thráinsson 2013a). About the exclusion of Faroese from the ISc vs. MSc comparison in the paper, Holmberg makes the following remark:

> Faroese is an interesting case in this connection, since it is undergoing changes that seem to crucially involve the parameter discussed in the text below. (Holmberg 2010:13n)

If true, this indeed makes Faroese especially interesting for the following reasons among others:

(2)   1. If Faroese is "undergoing changes that seem to crucially involve the parameter" in question, this means that speakers acquiring Faroese, growing up and living in the modern Faroese society will be exposed to variable linguistic input.

2. Under Yang's variationist approach to parametric setting (2004), this predicts that we should not only find extensive inter-speaker variation in Faroese with respect to the relevant syntactic constructions but also considerable intra-speaker variation since the variationist model "allows the grammar and parameter probabilities to be values other than 0 and 1 should the input evidence be inconsistent" (cf. Yang 2004: 455).

3. Under the triggering approach to parametric setting described above (see e.g. Gibson & Wexler 1994, Lightfoot 1999 and later work), the observed variation in the Faroese linguistic community should be the

result of different parametric settings by speakers acquiring the language. Because the input is inconsistent, it will trigger the parametric value 1 for some speakers but 0 for others. Extensive intra-speaker variation in the relevant constructions is not predicted by the triggering approach.

4. If the constructions under discussion are related by a single parameter, there should be a very strong correlation between judgments of all the relevant constructions under the triggering approach to parametric setting. Under the variationist approach we would also expect some correlation between the judgments, although not necessarily particularly strong because various grammar-external factors may influence the judgments when there is optionality.[3] If the constructions under discussion are unrelated and governed by language-particular rules (e.g. in the sense of Newmeyer 2004; 2005), it is less clear what kind of correlations to expect, if any (more on this in Sections 4 and 5 below).

In the next section I will present some results from FarDiaSyn that can be used to test these predictions. This particular part of FarDiaSyn only included a subset of the constructions on Holmberg's reduced list of Agr-related differences in (1) above, namely the following:

(3) Agr-related differences tested in FarDiaSyn: ISc MSc
1. Oblique subjects   +   −
2. Stylistic Fronting   +   −
3. Null expletives   +   −
4. Transitive expletives   +   −

H&P have illustrated the Icelandic vs. MSc differences as follows (these examples are mainly taken from Holmberg 2010 but (4a,b) and (6c,d) are taken from H&P's book 1995:11):

(4) Oblique subjects

a. ***Hana*** *vantar peninga.*   (Ice)
    her.ACC lacks money.
    'She needs money.'

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[3] Such "grammar-external factors" would include stylistic differences and issues having to do with pragmatics and discourse phenomena, which some speakers may be more sensitive to than others.

    b. * ***Henne*** *saknar pengar.*   (Sw)
         her   lacks money

    c. ***Mér***   *voru gefnir peningar.*   (Ice)
         me.DAT were given money

         'I was given money.'

    d. * ***Mej*** *blev givet/givna pengar.*   (Sw)
         me was given.SG/PL money.PL

(5) Stylistic Fronting (SF)

    a. *[Þeir sem **í Osló** hafa búið] segja að það sé fínn bær.*   (Ice)
         those that in Oslo have lived say   that it   is nice town

         'Those that have lived in Oslo say that it's a nice town.'

    b. * *[De som **i Oslo** har bott] säger att det är en fin stad.*   (Sw)
         those that in Oslo have lived say   that it   is a nice town

(6) Null expletives

    a. *Nú   rignir (****það***).*   (Ice)
         now rains it

         'Now it's raining.'

    b. *Nu   regnar *(**det**).*   (Sw)
         now rains   it

    c. *Í gær   var (****það***) dansað á   skipinu*   (Ice)
         yesterday was there   danced on the-ship

    d. *Igår   dansades   *(**det**) på skeppet.*   (Sw)
         yesterday was-danced there on the-ship

(7) Transitive Expletive Construction (TEC)

    a. ***Það*** *hefur einhver köttur étið mýsnar.*   (Ice)
         there has   some   cat   eaten the-mice

    b. * ***Det*** *har ein katt eti   mysene.*   (No)
         there has a   cat eaten the-mice

   As can be seen, the MSc data come from Swedish and Norwegian, but Danish data could just as well have been used.

3 The Faroese experiment

3.1 The elicitation methods of FarDiaSyn

As mentioned above, recent studies of Faroese indicate that there is considerable variation in Faroese syntax. This means that in order to get reliable and statistically significant results about possible covariation of particular constructions, the study has to be quite extensive (see also the discussion in Thráinsson 2017). Under Yang's variationist approach, one would assume that probability of a given parameter setting for the relevant parameter for each speaker should predict how the speaker would judge sentences that are related by that particular parameter, "all else being equal". But because other things are not always equal (e.g. because of lexical differences, different sensitivity to stylistic or pragmatic phenomena, etc.), these predictions are most reliably tested in studies that involve a reasonably large sample of the relevant sentences and a large number of speakers of from different age groups and with a varying background.

In the study reported on here, 334 speakers of Faroese were asked to evaluate selected sentences. The speakers came from different parts of the Faroes, they ranged in age from approximately 15–70 and there was an even split between male and female speakers (for a more detailed description of the population see Thráinsson 2017). The evaluation method was typically one where the speakers were asked to check one of three possibilities on a written questionnaire as illustrated in Figure 1 (the instructions were given in Faroese, of course, but here they have been translated into English).

Put an X in the appropriate column:
yes = A natural sentence. I could very well have said this.
? = A doubtful sentence. I could hardly say this.
no = An unnatural or impossible sentence. I could not say this.

	yes	?	no	Comments
Teir sjey dvørgarnir vóru í øðini. The seven dwarfs were upset.				
Tað hevði onkur etið súreplið. there had somebody eaten the-apple				

Figure 1: Questionnaire

In addition, the subjects were also asked to choose between two (or sometimes three) alternatives in a setup like in Figure 2 (again, the instructions have been translated from Faroese).

In the following examples you are asked to compare two possible alternatives in each sentence. Check the most natural one. Check both if you find them equally natural.

> *Tað regnar ongantíð í   Sahara.*
> it   rains   never   in Sahara

> *Í   Havn*   ☐*regnar*   *ofta.*
> in Tórshavn   rains   often
>   ☐*regnar tað*
>   rains it

Figure 2: Multiple choice test

Although the speakers were given the possibility to select both alternatives in this kind of task, they very rarely did so.

We now present the results for each of the constructions under consideration.

3.2 Oblique subjects

Modern Icelandic is famous for its oblique subjects, which can occur in the Accusative, Dative and Genitive. Nominative is obviously the default or structural subject case in Icelandic, Genitive subjects are very rare, Acc subjects arguably irregular (quirky) in many instances but Dat subjects sometimes thematically related: Experiencer subjects often show up in the Dat in Icelandic and some verbs previously taking Acc subjects now take Dat subjects in the language of many speakers (the (in)famous Dative Substitution or Dative Sickness, see e.g. Zaenen, Maling & Þráinsson 1985, Þráinsson 2007: 224). Gen subjects have completely disappeared in Faroese and Acc subjects have also virtually died out (see e.g. Þráinsson et al. 2012: 252–251, Jónsson & Eythórsson 2005, Eythórsson 2015). A few verbs still take Dat subjects but in many instances there is variation between Dat and Nom.[4] Hence both variants were tested in FarDiaSyn as shown

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[4] Barnes claims (1992: 28) that Nom is replacing Dat as a subject case in spoken Faroese, especially among younger people. In our study younger speakers were somewhat less likely to

in the following examples:

(8)   a1. *Bilurin hjá Óla hevur verið til sýn.*

'Óli's car has been inspected.'

Honum tørvar *ikki at hugsa meira um   tað.*

him.DAT needs   not to think more about that

'He doesn't have to think more about that.'

a2. *Hans veit ikki nógv um fiskiskap.*

'Hans doesn't know much about fishing.'

Hann   tørvar *ikki at hava svar   til alt.*

he.NOM needs   not to have answer to everything

'He doesn't have to have answers to everything.'

b1. *Turið hevur sæð nógvar filmar.*

'Turið has seen many films.'

Henni dámar *at hyggja í   sjónvarp.*

her.DAT likes   to look   at TV

'She likes to watch TV.'

b2. *Sára fer á konsertina í kvøld.*

'Sára going to the concert tonight.'

Hon   dámar *at lurta eftir tónleiki.*

she.NOM likes   to listen after music

'She likes to listen to music.'

c1. *Kári hevur nógv at gera.*

'Kári has a lot to do.'

Honum manglar *at gera húsini   liðug.*

him.DAT needs   to make the-houses ready

'He needs to finish the house.'

c2. *Anton reypar av at vera góður kokkur.*

'Anton brags about beeing a good cook.'

Hann   manglar *at prógva tað í   verki.*

he.NOM needs   to prove it   in work

'He needs to prove it in action.'

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accept Dat subjects in the examples we tested. Although the correlation between judgments and age was rather weak, it was statistically significant for three of the four verbs listed in (8) (it was not significant in the case of the loan verb *mangla* 'need, lack').

   d1. *Stjórin hjá Súsannu ar altíð ov seinur til arbeiðis.*

      'Súsanna's boss always comes too late to work.'

      Henni nýtist *ikki at hugsa um   klokkuna.*

      her.DAT needs not to think about the-clock

      'She doesn't have to think about the clock.'

   d2. *Elin kennir øll tey ríku og kendu.*

      'Elin knows all the rich and famous.'

      Hon   nýtist *ikki at standa í   bíðirøð.*

      she.NOM need   not to stand in line

      'She doesn't have to stand in line.'

The evaluation of these examples is shown in Table 1 (percentages for the more positively evaluated variant highlighted by boldface):

Table 1: Evaluation of Dat and Nom subjects with selected verbs in FarDiaSyn.

#	Example	Yes		?		No	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
(8a1)	**Honum tørvar** ikki at hugsa meira um tað.	238	**73.0**	36	11.0	52	16.0
(8a2)	**Hann tørvar** ikki at hava svar til alt.	89	27.6	89	27.6	145	44.9
(8b1)	**Henni dámar** at hyggja í sjónvarp.	287	**86.7**	24	7.3	20	6.0
(8b2)	**Hon dámar** at lurta eftir tónleiki.	208	62.8	55	16.6	68	20.5
(8c1)	**Honum manglar** at gera húsini liðug.	196	60.1	62	19.0	68	20.9
(8c2)	**Hann manglar** at prógva tað í verki.	241	**73.7**	31	9.5	55	16.8
(8d1)	**Henni nýtist** ikki at hugsa um klokkuna.	246	**75.0**	36	11.0	46	14.0
(8d2)	**Hon nýtist** ikki at standa í bíðirøð.	210	64.4	49	15.0	67	20.6

Interesting descriptive facts revealed by this table include the following:

1. For three out of the four verbs, Dat is more generally accepted than Nom.

2. There is clearly some intra-speaker variation in subject case assignment for at least three of these verbs (*dáma*, *mangla* and *nýtast*) since the proportion of speakers accepting a Dat subject plus the proportion of speakers accepting a Nom subject is way over 100% for these verbs. In other words, some speakers, but not all, accept both a Dat and a Nom subject for these verbs.

3. The only verb where Nom is more generally accepted than Dat is the Danish loanword *mangla* 'need, lack' in (8c). Since this verb is a (possibly rather recent) loan from Danish,[5] this is perhaps not so surprising. It is in fact more interesting that 60% of the speakers accept it with a Dat subject since this shows that assignment of Dat to subjects is still alive in Faroese (or was at the time when this verb was adopted into the language) and not just an old relic.

This last point is consistent with the general belief that assignment of Dat case to subjects in Faroese is not (or has not been) irregular or quirky.

While the facts summarized in Table 1 indicate considerable variation in the evaluation of Dat and Nom subjects, this method of presenting the data does not really show very clearly to what extent this is inter-speaker variation and to what extent the judgments of the same speaker may vary (intra-speaker variation). But Figure 3 shows that considerable intra-speaker variation is involved in the evaluation of Dat subjects. Here the answers to the questionnaire have been coded as follows (cf. the illustration in Figure 1 above): *yes* = 3, ? = 2 and *no* = 1. This means that if a speaker accepted all four Dat subject examples, (s)he would get the average score (or "grade)" of 3, if (s)he rejected all of them the score would be 1, etc.

As shown here, 145 out of 334 speakers accepted all the Dat subject sentences and only four rejected all of them. But more than half accepted some and rejected others, or found the examples doubtful. If acceptance of Dat subjects were governed by a strictly binary setting of a parameter, we would expect a more clear cut result than this.

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[5] The Faroese-Faroese dictionary *Føroysk orðabók* (1998) states that it is "colloquial" or belongs to the spoken language (Fa. *talað mál*).
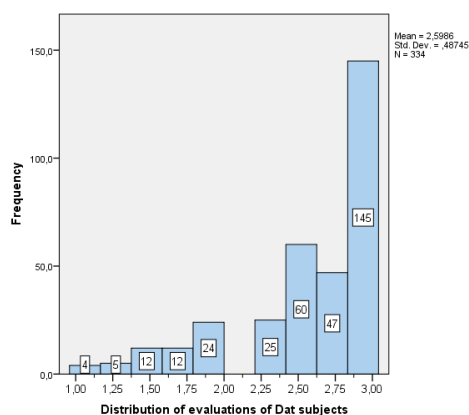
Figure 3: Judgments of Dat subject sentences.

3.3 Stylistic Fronting

As originally described by Maling (1980), Stylistic Fronting (henceforth SF) fronts a constituent in a clause with a "subject gap". There has been some controversy as to whether all fronting of constituents in such clauses should be considered SF or whether SF only fronts heads and fronting of a maximal projection (e.g. a PP) is a case of Topicalization, also when a subject gap is involved (for a review of the issues see Thráinsson 2007: 368–374). As pointed out by H&P and discussed by several linguists (e.g. Barnes 1992, Vikner 1995, Thráinsson et al. 2012, Angantýsson 2011), SF also occurs in Faroese, as it should if it is related to a positive setting of H&P's Agr-parameter and Faroese is a true ISc language. In FarDiaSyn the following examples were used to test the speakers' acceptance of SF (fronted elements in boldface):

(9) a. *Studentarnir fingu summarfrí í gjár.*
     'The students got summer vacation yesterday.'
     *Skúlastjórin   helt talu   fyri teimum, sum **liðug** vóru við*
     the-principal held speech for those   that done were with
     skúlan.
     the-school
     'The principal gave a speech for those who were graduating.'

  b. *Olga hevur ikki vaskað sær í fleiri dagar.*
     'Olga hasn't washed for several days.'

> *Hon fer   ikki í   baðikarið,   um **har**   hava verið mýs.*
> she goes not in the-bathtub if   in-that-place have been mice
> 'She doesn't go into the bathtub if there have been mice there.'

c. *Fjórða barnið er á veg hjá Róa og Poulu.*

'Rói and Paula are expecting their fourth child.'
*Tey   vilja   keypa ein bil, sum **vælegnaður** er til   eina*
they want buy   a   car that well-suited   is for a
barnafamilju.
family-with-children
'They want to buy a car that is suitable for a family with children.'

d. *Kokkurin hevði ikki gjørt nóg mikið av mati.*

'The cook hadn't prepared enough food.'
*Øll, sum **einki**   høvdu etið,   vóru svong.*
all   that nothing had   eaten were hungry
'Everybody who hadn't eaten anything was hungry.'

e. *Kommunuval var í Føroyum í gjár.*

'Municipal elections were held in the Faroes yesterday.'
*Tillukku   til øll, sum **vald**   vórðu.*
congratulations to all that elected were
'Congratulations to all who were elected.'

f. *Samráðingar verða í annaðkvøld.*

'There will be negotiations tomorrow night.'
*Lønarhækking er tað, sum   **ovast**   er á   breddanum.*
salary-raise   is that which topmost is on the-page
'Salary raise is at the top of the agenda.'

g. *Eg fari til Prag í Kekkia í næstu viku.*

'I'm going to Prague in the Czech Republic next week.'
*Kennir tú   onkran,   sum **verið** hevur í Kekkia?*
know   you anybody that been has   in Czech-Republic
'Do you know anybody that has been to the Czech Republic?'

As can be seen from this list, the sentences contain fronted elements of different kinds, mostly in relative clauses, but for the reasons described above we avoided examples with fronted constituents that would unambiguously be analyzed as maximal projections (these could arguably involve Topicalization rather

than SF). The evaluation of these examples is illustrated in Table 2 (the highest percentages for each sentence in boldface):

Table 2: Evaluation of Stylistic Fronting in FarDiaSyn.

#	Example	Yes		?		No	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
(9a)	Skúlastjórin helt talu fyri teimum, sum **liðug** vóru við skúlan.	182	**55.3**	73	22.2	74	22.5
(9b)	Hon fer ikki í baðikarið, um **har** hava verið mýs.	155	**47.3**	65	19.8	108	32.9
(9c)	Tey vilja keypa ein bil, sum **vælegnaður** er til eina barnafamilju.	102	31.1	77	23.5	149	**45.4**
(9d)	Øll, sum **einki** høvdu etið, vóru svong	231	**70.4**	48	14.6	49	14.9
(9e)	Tillukku til øll, sum **vald** vórðu.	170	**52.1**	72	22.1	84	25.8
(9f)	Lønarhækking er tað, sum **ovast** er á breddanum.	170	**52.5**	67	20.7	87	26.9
(9g)	Kennir tú onkran, sum **verið** hevur í Kekkia?	128	39.0	52	15.9	148	**45.1**

Again, we find considerable variation, but more speakers accept than reject most of the examples (examples 9c and 9g are an exception). The reason for this extensive variation could be that SF is probably stylistically marked, i.e. it may not belong to the colloquial style that the subjects were asked to have in mind when evaluating the examples.

As before, we can check how the judgments spread, e.g. whether any of the speakers accept all of the SF-examples or reject all of them. This is shown on Figure 4.

As shown here, very few subjects accept all of the SF-examples (only 15) and very few reject all of them (only 8). Most speakers accept some — typically more than half of them. This is somewhat unexpected if the acceptance of SF is governed by a binary parameter. But note that SF is an optional operation: In relative clauses the subject gap can be left "empty" as it were and subject gaps can also be "filled" with an expletive, e.g. in examples like (9b).[6] The choice between

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[6] Holmberg has in fact argued (2000) that the element fronted in SF serves the same function
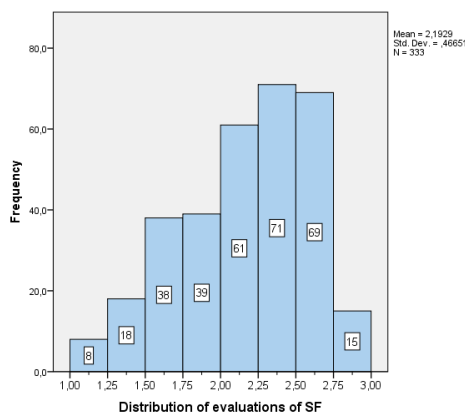
Mean = 2,1929
Std. Dev. = ,46651
N = 333

Figure 4: Judgments of Stylistic Fronting.

the alternatives is probably "stylistic" in nature to some extent (hence the name Stylistic Fronting). Thus it is not given a priori that somebody will find a particular example of SF appropriate even if SF is in principle possible in his or her grammar.

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as an expletive. One problem with his analysis is the fact that SF-elements and the expletive *það* 'there' do not have the same distribution in Icelandic: SF-elements can fill certain "subject gaps" that the expletive *það* cannot (see e.g. Thráinsson 2007: 351):

(i) a. *Þetta er mál   sem __ hefur verið rætt.*
       this is matter that   has   been discussed

    b. *Þetta er mál sem **rætt** hefur verið __*

    c. * *Þetta er mál   sem **það**   hefur verið rætt.*
       this is matter that there has   been discussed

Similar subject gaps can either be filled with an SF-element or an expletive in Faroese so in that sense Holmberg's suggestion arguably works better for Faroese than Icelandic (see e.g. Angantýsson 2011: 170):

(ii) a. *Hetta eru mál   sum __ hevur verið tosað um.*
       these are matters that   has   been talked about

    b. *Hetta eru mál sum **tosað** hevur verið __ um.*

    c. *Hetta eru mál sum **tað** hevur verið tosað um.*

3.4 Null expletives

As discussed by many researchers, Icelandic is famous for its null expletives (see e.g. Thráinsson 1979: 477–484, Thráinsson 2007: 309–313, H. Á. Sigurðsson 1989: Chapter 6.3) and H&P originally assumed that Faroese works essentially the same way, as an ISc language should. Since linguists do not always mean the same thing when they talk about null expletives, the discussion here is limited to null expletives of the kind illustrated by H&P with examples like those in (6), namely ones where some non-subject (or the finite verb) is fronted in a main clause and an overt expletive would be obligatory in MSc but impossible in Icelandic. Because it had been pointed out previously that there is some optionality in constructions of this sort in Faroese (i.e. that the expletive can either be overt or non-overt, cf. e.g. Vikner 1995:227, Thráinsson et al. 2012: 285–288), we tested both options, sometimes in pairs of sentences that differed only minimally. The relevant examples are shown in (10–12). The first set contains Impersonal Passives with and without an overt expletive:

(10) a. *Fyrr í tíðini vóru ongar teldur og einki sjónvarp.*
          'In the old days there were no computers and no TV.'
          Tá   varð nógv dansað heima við hús.
          then was much danced home with house
          'Then there was a lot of dancing at home.'

      b. *Fyrr sótu fólk í roykstovuni og arbeiddu.*
          'Previously people would sit in the living room and work.'
          *Tá   varð **tað** tosað saman um   kvøldarnar.*
          then was there talked together during the-evenings
          'Then people would talk during the evening.'

      c. *Stórt brúdleyp var í Nólsoy.*
          'There was a big wedding in Nólsoy.'
          *Í fleiri dagar varð **tað** etið   og drukkið.*
          in many days   was there eaten and drunk
          'People were eating and drinking for several days.'

The second type is a weather expression which is a direct yes/no-question with a fronted verb and without an overt weather expletive:

(11) *Abbin var blivin eitt sindur dølskur og spurdi:*
      'Grandpa had become a bit slow and asked:'

Regnaði í gjár?
rained   yesterday
'Did it rain yesterday?'

Then there were two examples where the subjects were asked to choose between a variant without the overt expletive and one with it. One of them was a weather expression and the other an Expletive Passive:

(12)   a.   *Tað regnar ongantíð í Sahara.*

        'It never rains in Sahara.'

        *Í   Havn   regnar / regnar **tað** ofta.*

        in Tórshavn rains   rains   it   often

        'In Tórshavn it often rains.'

   b.   *Tað hendir nógv í Íslandi.*

        'Many things happen in Iceland.'

        *Fríggjadagin bleiv / bleiv **tað**   skotin ein hvítabjørn har.*

        the-Friday   was   was there shot a   polar bear there

        'Last Friday a polar bear was shot there.'

The results of the evaluation of the variants in (10–11) are shown in Table 3 (highest percentages for each example in boldface).

Table 3: Evaluation of examples with and without an overt expletive.

		Yes		?		No	
#	Example	N	%	N	%	N	%
(10a)	Tá varð nógv dansað heima við hús.	293	**89.3**	21	6.4	14	4.6
(10b)	Tá varð **tað** tosað saman um kvøldarnar.	229	**69.4**	47	14.2	54	16.4
(10c)	Í fleiri dagar varð **tað** etið og drukkið.	220	**67.7**	58	17.8	47	14.5
(11)	Regnaði í gjár?	188	**56.8**	61	18.4	82	24.8

In the first set of examples (the Impersonal Passives in 10) the variant without the overt expletive (the *a*-example) gets a more positive evaluation than the ones with the overt expletive (examples *b* and *c*). The weather expression in (11)

does not have an overt expletive and it does not get as positive evaluation as (10a), which also has a null expletive, albeit of a different kind. This suggests that there might be a difference between "true" expletives (*there*-expletives) and weather expletives (*it*-expletives) in this respect. This would not be surprising since it has been argued that the weather expletive is more argument-like than the true expletive (Vikner even claims (1995: 228–229) that weather expletives are true arguments). But the test sentences where the subjects were asked to choose between overt and non-overt expletives in a weather expression on the one hand and in an Expletive Passive on the other did not show a clear diffence between the two types, although a third of the speakers found that both variants are possible in the case of the weather expression but very few in the case of the Expletive Passive. This is shown in Table 4 (the most popular choice in boldface).

Table 4: Selection between alternatives in expletive constructions.

#	Example	without *tað*		both variants		with *tað*	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
(12a)	Í Havn regnar / regnar **tað** ofta.	83	25.4	108	33.0	136	**41.6**
(12b)	Fríggjadagin bleiv / bleiv **tað** skotin …	111	34.9	28	8.8	179	**56.3**

Here we can also investigate how the the judgments spread, e.g. whether any of the speakers accept both instances of empty expletives or reject both of them (i.e. 10a and 11 — we leave out the examples in 12 because here the elicitation method was different). This is shown in Figure 5, where the value 3 on the X-axis indicates that the relevant speakers found both of the examples with null expletives natural and the value 1 means that they rejected both of them.

Here almost half of the speakers found both examples natural, very few (only 8) rejected both of them but a considerable number found them doubtful or liked one and not the other.

3.5 Transitive expletives

Let us finally look at the so-called Transitive Expletive Construction (TEC). Here the Icelandic and MSc facts seem relatively clear cut: Speakers of Icelandic find TECs fine whereas speakers of MSc typically reject them. But whereas Vikner (1995: 189) maintained that TECs are not accepted in Faroese, Þráinsson et al.
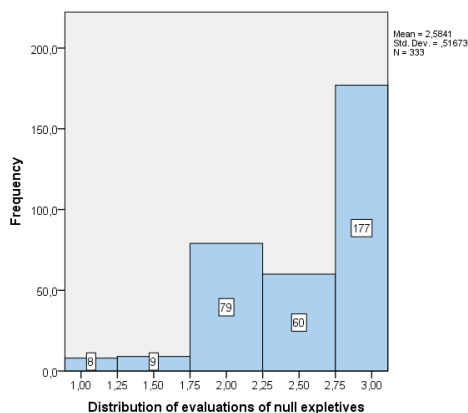
Figure 5: Judgments of empty expletives.

(2012: 282) argued that they are accepted "by some speakers" and Angantýsson (2011: 173) found that the majority of his subjects found TEC-examples to be natural. In several discussions of comparative Scandinavian, TECs have played a major role (see e.g. Bobaljik & Þráinsson 1998, Þráinsson 2007: 333–340, Þráinsson 2017). The TEC-examples evaluated by participants in FarDiaSyn are shown in (13):

(13)   a. *Teir sjey dvørgarnir vóru í øðini.*
      'The seven dwarfs were upset.'
      Tað   hevði onkur   etið   súreplið.
      there had   somebody eaten the-apple
      'Somebody had eaten the apple.'

   b. *Fleiri hús á Signabø vóru til sølu.*
      'Several houses in Signabo were for sale.'
      Tað   keypti onkur   húsini   hjá Róa.
      there bought somebody the-houses of Rói
      'Somebody bought Rói's house.'

   c. *Eg mátti ganga til hús.*
      'I had to walk home.'
      Tað   hevði onkur   tikið   súkkluna hjá mær.
      there had   somebody taken the-cycle of   me
      'Somebody had taken my bike.'

   d. *Hendan bókin er ógvuliga drúgv.*

'This book is extremely long.'

Tað   hevur helst   eingin   lisið hana til enda.

there has   probably nobody read her   to end

'Probably no-one has read it to the end.'

An overview of the evaluations can be seen in Table 5 (highest percentages for each example in boldface as before).

Table 5: Evaluation of transitive expletives in FarDiaSyn.

#	Example	Yes		?		No	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
(13a)	Tað hevði onkur etið súreplið.	80	24.4	58	17.7	190	**57.9**
(13b)	Tað keypti onkur húsini hjá Róa.	51	15.5	71	21.6	207	**62.9**
(13c)	Tað hevði onkur tikið súkkluna hjá mær.	82	25.2	65	19.9	179	**54.9**
(13d)	Tað hevur helst eingin lisið hana til enda.	148	**45.4**	62	19.0	116	35.6

More speakers reject than accept the first three examples but more speakers accept than reject the last one. Three of the examples contain an auxiliary verb and the one where the finite verb is a main verb (the *b*-example) was less positively evaluated.[7]

Given what we have already seen, we would expect that the picture showing the spread of the judgments to look rather different from the pictures previously presented. This prediction is borne out, as shown on Figure 6.

As Figure 6 shows, very few speakers accept all the TEC-examples (only 14) and a considerable number of subjects reject all of them. As explained in the preceding footnote, the relatively low acceptance of TECs in this study compared to that of Angantýsson (2011), for instance, is probably due to an unfortunate choice

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[7] Angantýsson (2011: 173) presents the evaluation results for two TEC-examples in Faroese, one with an auxiliary and one without. His subjects also found the one with the auxiliary more acceptable. — It is also interesting to note that the acceptance rate of the TECs is considerably lower in the FarDiaSyn study reported on here than in Angantýsson's study. A likely reason for this difference is the fact that the logical subject in examples (13a–c) is the simple indefinite pronoun *onkur* 'somebody' whereas corresponding examples in Angantýsson's study contained the more complex subject *onkur útlendingur* 'some foreigner', which might sound more natural in an expletive construction.
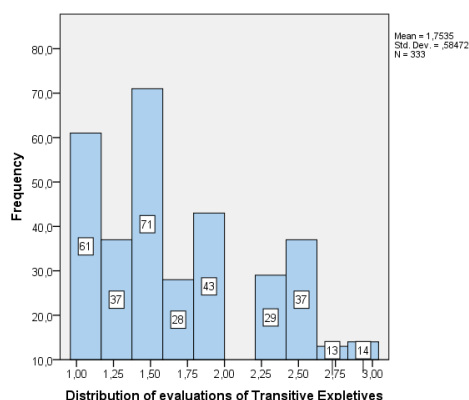
Figure 6: Judgments of Transitive Expletives.

of logical subject. But in any case, the judgments here indicate considerable intra-speaker variation similar to what we have seen before: Speakers typically accept some of the examples and not all of them.

4 Comparison of the constructions

4.1 Some correlations

Having gone through the data concerning the individual constructions under discussion, we can now investigate whether there is any correlation between the judgments of the four different constructions. In the ideal world (or for ideal speakers) there should be a very strong correlation between these if the constructions are all related by a single parameter, such as H&P's Agr-parameter, "all else being equal". But because of the extensive intra-speaker variation in the judgments observed in the preceding sections, it is not entirely clear a priori what to expect here. So let us look at Table 6 (the two strongest correlations highlighted by boldface).

As shown here, the correlations are typically only of medium strength.[8] The only one that could possibly be called strong is the correlation between judg-

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[8] The correlation coefficient *r* can range from −1.0 to +1.0, where −1.0 is a perfect negative correlation, +1.0 a perfect positive correlation and 0.0 indicates no correlation at all. It is often said that if the correlation coefficient *r* is around ±0.10, the correlation is weak, if it is around ±0.30 the correlation is of medium strength and it is strong if it reaches ±0.50 in studies of this kind.

Table 6: Correlation between the evaluations of the four
constructions under investigation.

	Stylistic Fronting	Null expletives	Transitive Expletives
Oblique subjects	**r = 0.470**	r = 0.330	r = 0.297
	p < 0.001	p <0.001	p <0.001
	N = 333	N = 333	N = 333
Stylistic Fronting		r = 0.354	**r = 0.371**
	xxxx	p <0.001	**p < 0.001**
		N = 333	N = 333
Null expletives			r = 0.168
	xxxx	xxxx	p =0.002
			N = 333

ments of examples involving oblique subjects and Stylistic Fronting (*r* = 0.470). Yet the correlations are all highly significant so it might seem tempting to say something like the following: "Look, there is a highly significant correlation between the evaluations of all the constructions – *p* is nowhere higher than 0.002, which in statistical terms should mean that there should be at most 2‰ chance that these correlations are an accident. So H&P were right – these constructions are all related by a single parameter."

Unfortunately, things are not as simple as this for several reasons, including the following:

1. First of all, correlations can never be interpreted as a proof of a causal relationship.

2. Second, if all the constructions considered here were accepted by the majority of the speakers consulted, there should be some correlation between the speakers' evaluation of them: If a speaker is likely to accept construction A (s)he will also be likely to accept construction B because most speakers do, "all else being equal". This need not mean that they are parametrically related.

3. Since all the constructions investigated here were supposedly also found in Old Norse, and thus in older stages of Faroese, it is possible that the correlations observed are basically a reflection of some sort of conservatism

in the language: If you are a conservative speaker of Faroese you are likely to accept all these constructions even if they are not related by a single parameter.

So let us look more closely at the data with these possibilities in mind.

As shown in Tables 1, 2, 3 and 4, the acceptance of the example sentences varied considerably but we could "rank" their acceptability as shown in Table 7.

Table 7: Acceptability ranking of the constructions under investigation.

Construction	Speakers finding the examples "natural" (%)	Mean "grade"
Oblique subjects	73.7	2.60
Null expletives	73.1	2.20
Stylistic Fronting (SF)	49.7	2.19
Transitive Expletives (TEC)	27.6	1.75

As shown in the middle column, an average of over 73% of the speakers found the examples involving oblique subjects and null expletives natural whereas about half of the speakers found the SF examples natural and only a little more than 27% found the TEC examples natural. But since the speakers were using a three point scale (natural, doubtful, unnatural/ungrammatical) we can also assign a "mean grade" to each class of examples, where 3 would mean "all subjects found all the examples natural" and 1 would mean "all subjects found all the examples unacceptable". These grades are shown in the rightmost column. Here we see that the "acceptability ranking" of the constructions remains the same regardless of the ranking method (although there is virtually no difference between null expletives and Stylistic Fronting).

Keeping this ranking (or popularity) of the constructions in mind, we might have expected the strongest correlations to hold between oblique subjects and null expletives since these were the two most "popular" constructions. But this is not what we find. Instead the strongest correlation (r = 0.470) is between the evaluations of examples containing an oblique subject and examples containing SF. The next-highest correlation is between the judgments of the TEC and SF.

In order to determine whether the observed correlations are simply a reflection of some general conservatism, we can look for a clear innovation and see if or how it relates to the other constructions. FarDiaSyn included a study of the so-

called New (Impersonal) Passive (or New Impersonal Construction), first made famous by Joan Maling and Sigríður Sigurjónsdóttir (cf. Sigurjónsdóttir & Maling 2001, Maling & Sigurjónsdóttir 2002 and much later work). The New Impersonal Passive (henceforth NIP) arguably comes in a couple of different guises as partly illustrated by the Icelandic examples in (14c) and (15c):

(14) a. *Einhver   lamdi mig.*
         somebody hit   me.ACC

     b. *Ég   var laminn.*   (Canonical Passive)
        I.NOM was hit.M.SG

     c. *Það   var **lamið   mig**.*   (NIP)
        there was hit.N.SG me

(15) a. *Einhver   lofaði   henni   tölvu.*
         somebody promised her.DAT computer.ACC

     b. *Henni   var lofað   tölvu.*   (Canonical Passive)
        her.DAT was promised.N.SG computer.ACC

     c. *Það   var lofað   **henni** tölvu.* (NIP)
        there was promised.N.SG her.DAT computer.ACC

The NIP in (14c) differs from the canonical passive in (14b) in that the argument (the patient) shows up in the Acc instead of Nom and hence there is no agreement with the participle. Besides, the argument can occur in an expletive construction of sorts although it is definite (an apparent violation of the Definiteness Constraint).[9] The NIP in (15c) only differs from the canonical passive in (15b) in that the definite Dat argument *henni* occurs postverbally (i.e. in an object position). Definite subjects in the canonical passive cannot occur in that position.

It is generally assumed that this NIP is a recent innovation in Icelandic since it was first noticed by linguists towards the end of the last century (for a detailed discussion of the NIP, possible origin and review of the arguments see E.F. E. F. Sigurðsson 2012). It does not seem to occur in MSc. But while the subjects in Far-DiaSyn rejected the variant corresponding to (14c), a number of them accepted examples corresponding to (15c). These are listed in (16):

(16) a. *Gentan hevði hjálpt beiggjanum alla vikuna.*

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[9] It is generally assumed that this argument is not a subject in the NIP. If so, then it is not to be expected that the Definiteness Effect plays any role.

'The girl had helped her brother the whole week.'

Tað **bleiv lovað** **henni** *eina teldu.*

there was promised her.DAT a computer.ACC

b. *Hanus fekk onga læknaváttan.*

'Hanus didn't get any doctor's certificate.'

Tað *varð* **rátt** **honum** *frá* *at fara við* *skipinum.*

there was advised him.DAT against to go with the-ship

c. *Tvíburarnir fyltu 7 ár.*

'The twins turned 7 years old.'

Tað *bleiv* **givið gentuni** *eina dukku.*

there was given the-girl.DAT a doll.ACC

d. *Drotningin kom at vitja tey eldru fólkini á ellisheiminum.*

'The queen came to visit the people in the old people's home.'

Tað *bleiv* **vaskað teimum** *væl um* *hárið.*

there was washed them.DAT well about the-hair

e. *Rógvarin Katrin Olsen stóð seg væl í Olympisku Leikunum.*

'The rower KO did well at the Olympics.'

Tað *bleiv* **róst** **henni** *í* *bløðunum.*

there was praised her.DAT in the-newspapers

f. *Bókasavnið hevði framsýning.*

'The library had an exhibition.'

Tað *bleiv* **víst** **gestunum** *nógv tilfar* *um Heinesen.*

there was shown the-guests.DAT much material on Heinesen

The subjects' evaluation of these examples are shown in Table 8 (highest percentages for each example highlighted).

Here we see considerable variation: Some of the examples are found to be natural by a majority of the subjects, others are rejected by a majority of the subjects. On the average only about 43% of the subjects find the examples natural. Since this construction must be an innovation in Faroese, it is of some interest to see how the judgments of it correlate with judgments of the constructions under discussion. The *r*- and *p*-values are shown in Table 9 (the one non-significant correlation highlighted).

Interestingly, there is considerable correlation (almost "strong") between the evaluations of the innovative NIP-examples (with a Dat argument) and the "old" constructions under investigation, except for null expletives. This kind of correlation can hardly be due to some general conservatism.

Table 8: Evaluation of New Impersonal Passive examples (w. Datives) in FarDiaSyn.

#	Example	Yes		?		No	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
(16a)	Tað bleiv lovað henni eina teldu.	167	**50.6**	70	21.2	93	28.2
(16b)	Tað varð rátt honum frá at fara við skipinum.	263	**79.7**	32	9.7	35	10.6
(16c)	Tað bleiv givið gentuni eina dukku.	65	19.9	65	19.9	197	**60.2**
(16d)	Tað bleiv vaskað teimum væl um hárið.	87	26.4	65	19.8	177	**53.8**
(16e)	Tað bleiv róst henni í bløðunum.	66	20.2	62	19.0	199	**60.9**
(16f)	Tað bleiv víst gestunum nógv tilfar um Heinesen.	203	**62.1**	55	16.8	69	21.1

Table 9: Correlations between judgments of New Impersonal Passive examples and other constructions in FarDiaSyn.

	Oblique subjects	Stylistic Fronting	Null expletives	Transitive Expletives
NIP (Dat)	r = 0.482	r = 0.464	**r = 0.069**	r = 0.426
	p < 0.001	p < 0.001	**p = 0.209**	p < 0.001
	N = 333	N = 333	**N = 333**	N = 333

4.2 Comparison of the variation

Finally, let us return to the distribution of the variation shown in Figures 3–6, repeated here for convenience.

   If the four constructions are related by a single parameter, we might have expected greater similarity between the evaluations than these figures reveal, even if we assume that the parameter settings can be "soft" (i.e., their probabilities ranging from 0 to 1). But maybe the figures are not as different as they seem. First, there is considerable similarity between the figures for Dat subjects and null expletives: Many speakers accept all the examples, very few speakers reject all of them and some speakers are in between. This would seem compatible with
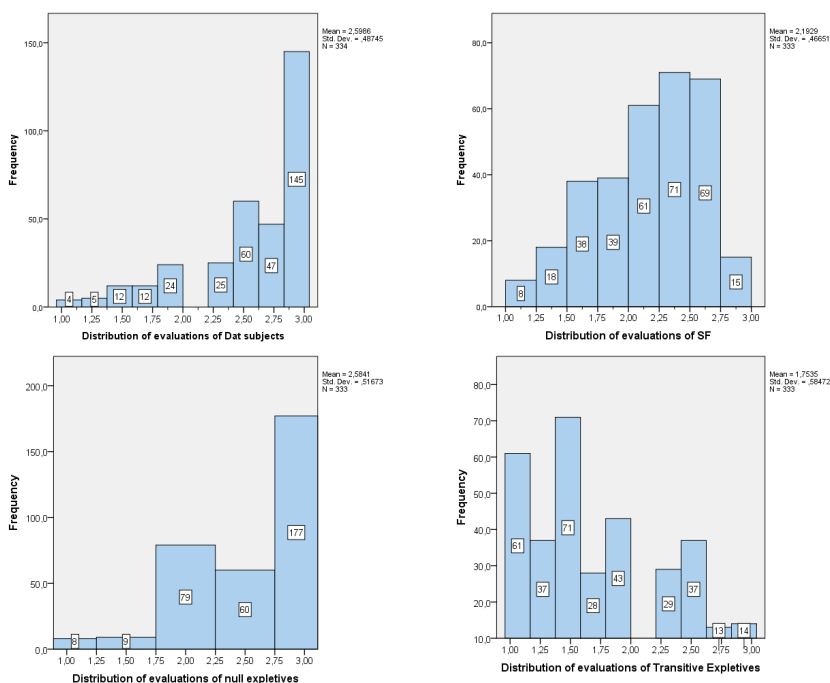
Figure 7: Judgments of examples of the four constructions investigated.

the concept of soft parameter settings. Second, we could argue that the figure for SF in fact reveals a similar situation: Very few speakers reject all the SF examples, most speakers find most of the examples natural and the reason why so few speakers find all the SF examples perfect might have to do with their stylistic value. But the figure for the TEC is clearly out of line since so many speakers find all the TEC examples unacceptable. This clearly calls for an explanation. A likely reason for this high rejection rate is the unfortunate choice of logical subjects in the TEC examples used (cf. fn. 7), which seems to have had the effect that many more speakers rejected the TEC examples in FarDiaSyn than the TEC examples used in Angantýsson's study. The relatively high correlation between the judgments of the TEC and judgments of some of the other constructions investigated (cf. Table 6) suggests that the TEC might in fact be related to the others in some fashion despite the different acceptability patterns revealed by the figures above.

5 Conclusion and discussion

5.1 Summary of the evidence

The main points of this paper can be summarized as follows:

- As Holmberg pointed out (2010: 13n), Faroese offers an extremely interesting test case for the parametric approach to syntactic variation in general and in Scandinavian in particular. The reason is the extensive inter- and intra-speaker variation found in Faroese syntax in areas where it has been maintained that parameters play a role.

- Because FarDiaSyn was such an extensive study that included a number of supposedly related constructions and involved a large number of speakers, it offers a unique opportunity to test parametric predictions in a new fashion by applying statistical methods.

- While this paper has shown that one has to be very careful in drawing conclusions about linguistic knowledge based on statistical data from syntactic performance (mostly evaluation of sentences in this case), the results from FarDiaSyn cannot be said to support the claim that the acquisition of oblique subjects, Stylistic Fronting, null expletives and the Transitive Expletive Construction is simply governed by a single binary parameter, as originally suggested by H&P.

One possible objection to the main conclusion above might be that the arguments in this paper are for the most part based on data elicited by having the subjects evaluate examples and pass acceptability judgments. The idea would then be that the extensive intra-speaker variation reported on here is a consequence of the methodology and not "real". But several recent studies have found evidence for similar intra-speaker variation using a variety of elicitation techniques and comparing the results to production data (see e.g. Thráinsson 2013b: 184–186, Nowenstein 2014 and references cited by these authors; cf. also Jónsson & Eythórsson 2005). Intra-speaker variation in syntax (and phonology) is much more pervasive than we have often assumed. It is difficult to reconcile this fact in principle with the concept of binary parameters fixed once and for all, ideally quite early in the acquisition period.

5.2 The remaining options

So what are we left with? The P&P approach is a bold and interesting attempt to solve the so-called "logical problem of language acquisition": How can most children come to know their native language very rapidly and in a fairly uniform fashion although the input (the "primary linguistic data", PLD) is supposedly both limited and at times inconsistent and misleading (the standard "poverty of the stimulus" argument)? This is understandable if there is very little to learn, as maintained by the P&P approach. The children ideally just have to set a few parameters and they only need very limited evidence to do so. This is presumably the main reason why so many linguists have embraced the P&P approach. The data reviewed here suggest, however, that language acquisition may not always proceed as simply and quickly as the standard P&P approach would predict if the relevant grammatical properties are parametrically related. So what are the options we are left with?

One alternative, of course, is that there are no parameters, just language-particular rules that speakers have to acquire. This is the account proposed by Newmeyer (2004; 2005; 2006). His main reason for doing so comes from typological evidence: He maintains that the clustering of properties predicted by the standard P&P approach never holds when a large enough sample of languages is considered. Assuming (with H&P) that ISc typically has oblique subjects, Stylistic Fronting, null expletives and the TEC whereas MSc does not, one could then say that ISc has one set of rules accounting for the relevant properties whereas MSc has another. In their reply to Newmeyer's original article (Newmeyer 2004), Roberts and Holmberg claim, however, that while such an account would be "observationally adequate", it "makes no predictions whatsoever regarding the correlation of the properties" (2005: 551). So if such a correlation holds for the properties under discussion, as they assume, the P&P account proposed by H&P is superior to Newmeyer's rule-based account, according to Roberts and Holmberg. To this Newmeyer replies in turn (2006: 7) that "It has been known since the earliest days of transformational grammar that rules are both abstract and often shared by more than one language (just as parameter 2 [= Holmberg & Platzack's Agr-parameter 1995 or its equivalent] is probably best interpreted as a rule shared by the ISC languages)". This statement suggests, however, that the difference between "rules" in Newmeyer's sense and typical P&P parameters is smaller than we might have thought.

But now recall that H&P were originally trying to account for cross-linguistic (or cross-dialectal) differences and similarities. In that sense they were concerned with INTER-SPEAKER VARIATION, i.e. differences between speakers (or groups of

speakers, rather). The same is true of the arguments presented in the debate between Newmeyer, Holmberg and Roberts. Thus Newmeyer states (2004: 183) that "language-particular differences are captured by differences in language-particular rules" (and in 2006 he also maintains that cross-linguistic similarities can be captured by assuming similar rules, as we have just seen), whereas Roberts & Holmberg (2005: 538) state that they intend to defend the "principles-and-parameters model of crosslinguistic variation". In the present paper we have argued, on the other hand, that INTRA-SPEAKER VARIATION is an important part of speakers' competence and that it is much more prevalent than typically assumed. This means that it has to be taken seriously and not just brushed aside as some sort of shallow and uninteresting performance phenomenon. But how can it be accounted for?

First, it is important to note that we do not seem to be dealing with variation that is syntactically free and simply conditioned by some non-linguistic factors like social situation. The data reported on here were elicited under the same social conditions and we also find variation in production by individual speakers, e.g. in the case marking of subjects, under the same circumstances and within seconds in spontaneous speech (see e.g. Jónsson & Eythórsson 2005: 236, Nowenstein 2014: 7). Even more importantly, though, the Faroese speakers reported on here typically show intra-speaker variation *to a different extent.* Thus some of them are more likely to show ISc-like judgments than others, as shown by Figures 3–6 above. This is something that needs to be accounted for.[10]

One proposal compatible with extensive intra-speaker variation is the grammar competition approach advocated by Kroch (1989; 2001). It is possible to think of grammar competition in two ways. On the one hand we could say that during a period of linguistic change two "grammars" compete within a given linguistic community: An innovative construction (generated by the new grammar) then eventually (or ideally) drives out a conservative construction (generated by the old grammar). Their relative frequencies within the community shift, typically following an S-shaped curve. We could call this an E-language description of grammar competition as it focuses on the relevant linguistic community as a whole. More interestingly for our purposes, we could also say that for a given individual exhibiting a intra-speaker variation there are two grammatical options within the same internal language. Grammar competition is then a part of the competence of individual speakers, a kind of bilingualism, and it is reflected in

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[10] As shown by Thráinsson (2013b: 182–184), this kind of intra-speaker variation also has its parallels in phonological production. So it is clearly not an artifact of the methodology of FarDiaSyn.

the speakers' production or performance. We could call this an I-language de-
scription (if by I-language we mean the internalized language of individual speak-
ers and not just the invariant universal language faculty, as in some usages of
the term (for relevant discussion see e.g. H. Á. Sigurðsson 2011)).

Yang's variational model (2002 and later) is designed to account for this kind
of situation and it can be thought of as an attempt to formalize Kroch's grammar
competition approach. Assuming that the task of the child acquiring language
is to select the grammar[11] that best accounts for the data encountered by the
child (the "primary linguistic data", PLD), it is clear that when there is extensive
variability of the relevant kind in the PLD, none of the grammars will account
for all the data. Yang suggests that the child will then reinforce (or reward) a
particular choice of grammar if the PLD (s)he encounters fit that grammar but
otherwise (s)he will penalize it (make it less probable). Since the PLD encoun-
tered by different children will vary to some extent, the probability assigned to
a given grammar by different children may vary. The variability in the PLD may
also have the effect that it could take children a long time to settle on a particular
"choice of grammar" and they may actually never rule one choice out although
another option is favored to some extent. This will result in stable variation and
give the appearance of "soft parameter settings".[12]

An approach to intra-speaker variation along these lines receives a general
support from various acquisition studies: The more unambiguous evidence there
is in the PLD, the easier it is for children to acquire the relevant grammatical
property. Thus it has been reported, for instance, that there is a direct correla-
tion between the length of the so-called root infinitive stage in Spanish, French
and English and the amount of unambiguous evidence that Spanish, French and
English children get for a "[+Tense] grammar" (see Legate & Yang 2007). The pro-
portion of unambiguous evidence of this sort is highest in child-directed speech
in Spanish and lowest in English and the root infinitive stage is shortest for chil-
dren acquiring Spanish and longest for those acquiring English. In general, there
is growing evidence for the claim that there is an interesting interaction between
universal principles of grammar and the statistical properties of the PLD in lan-

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[11] Following Yang and others, I will mostly use the term "grammar" in the following discussion
of competition and acquisition and return to the issue of parameters vs. rules at the end of the
paper.

[12] While one might want to propose that a possible way to express this "softness" would be to
say that parametric settings could take on values between 0 and 1, e.g. 0.4 and 0.7 to indicate
varying closeness to, say, typical MSc vs. ISc settings, this would not be allowed under the
standard assumption that "the values [of parameter settings] are discrete: there are no clines,
squishes or continua" (Roberts & Holmberg 2005: 541).

guage acquisition (for a balanced overview see Lidz & Gagliardi 2015).

Finally, three comments are in order. First, Yang wants his model to account for various kinds of acquisition, both the acquisition of various kinds of rules (e.g. in morphology) and of parametric settings where appropriate, as can be seen from the quotes in the Introduction above. Hence his general approach could both be adopted by those who believe in rules and have given up on parameters and by those who believe that parameters still have a chance. Second, recall that despite the intra-speaker variation reported on in this paper, we have shown that there is an interesting correlation between the judgments by the speakers of the four constructions under consideration. While this correlation is not as strong as predicted in the ideal world of binary parameters that are set early and easily, it is still intriguing and calls for an explanation. Roberts & Holmberg (2005) would obviously say that this correlation is incompatible with the language-particular rule approach advocated by Newmeyer (e.g. 2004), but this is not so clear if the relevant parameter can also be expressed as a rule, as maintained by Newmeyer (2006: 7). Newmeyer would point out in turn that the correlation is nowhere near as strong as the standard P&P approach would predict.

The third and final comment is somewhat more complex. Recall that under Yang's approach the selection of a given grammar (or rule or parameter setting) is penalized if the PLD do not fit. Now assume that for a child acquiring Faroese an ISc-type grammar and an MSc-type grammar are the options. The ISc-type grammar allows oblique subjects, null expletives, Stylistic Fronting and TEC but the MSc-type grammar does not. Now assume that the child encounters data of the following kind (cf. the discussion around examples 8–13 above):

(17) a. ***Hon   dámar** at lurta eftir tónleiki.*
          she.ɴᴏᴍ likes   to listen after music

          'She likes to listen to music.'

    b. *Í fleiri dagar varð **tað** etið   og drukkið.*
        in many days   was there eaten and drunk

        'People were eating and drinking for several days.'

    c. *Kennir tú onkran, sum **hevur verið** í Kekkia?*
        know   you anybody that has   been in Czech-Republic

        'Do you know anybody that has been to the Czech Republic?'

    d. ***Onkur   hevði** etið   súreplið.*
        somebody had   eaten the-apple

        'Somebody had eaten the apple.'

All of these examples are compatible with an MSc-type grammar: The verb *dáma* 'like' takes a Nom subject in (17a) and not an oblique one, the expletive is overt in (17b) and not null, there is no Stylistic Fronting in (17c) and there is no TEC in (17d). Interestingly, however, only (17a,b) are incompatible with an ISc-type grammar. For speakers of ISc-type languages, Stylistic Fronting is optional. Thus the non-occurrence of Stylistic Fronting in an environment where it *could* occur (or could be applied, cf. 9g above) is perfectly compatible with such a language or grammar. Hence the counterpart of (17c) is fine in Icelandic — and (17c) should be fine for all speakers of Faroese, even those who have internalized the most ISc-like grammar. Similarly, TEC is always optional and hence (17d) is perfectly compatible with an ISc-type grammar although TEC could also occur there (cf. 13a). Thus the counterpart of (17d) is fine in Icelandic.

So why is this last comment important? It is because it demonstrates that if we assume Yang's variational acquisition account, ISc-type grammars will never be penalized for the non-occurrence of Stylistic Fronting or TEC in contexts where they could occur. Yet some speakers of Faroese do not seem to like Stylistic Fronting or TEC. Under a parametric account where the availability vs. non-availability of Stylistic Fronting and TEC follows from something else in the grammar, such as a particular parametric setting (or the likelihood of such a setting (in Yang's terms), or its equivalent in the form of an abstract rule, as suggested by Newmeyer 2006) this is understandable. Otherwise it is a puzzle.

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