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Variation in oblique subject constructions in Insular Scandinavian

Thórhallur Eythórsson and Höskuldur Thráinsson

University of Iceland / University of Iceland

This chapter reviews the division of morphological case into *structural case* and *lexical case* and the latter in turn into *regular* (thematic) and *idiosyncratic case* (Yip, Maling and Jackendoff 1987). The Case Directionality Hypothesis (Eythórsson 2002, 2015b) states that historical development of case is predictable if one assumes this division: structural case replaces lexical case and idiosyncratic lexical case will yield to regular (thematic) lexical case. This hypothesis is tested on data which were collected in projects on variation in subject case in Icelandic and Faroese. It is concluded that the development of subject case in Icelandic and Faroese is to a significant degree in accordance with the predictions of the CDH, but interesting exceptions are also described and discussed.

Keywords: case marking, structural case, lexical case, thematic case, idiosyncratic case, Case Directionality Hypothesis, productivity, Faroese, Icelandic

1. Introduction

In Icelandic the arguments of verbs (subjects and objects) can occur in any case: nominative, accusative, dative and genitive.¹ Faroese has been similar in this respect although the genitive has now virtually disappeared as an argument case in Modern Faroese (only a few examples of verbs taking genitive objects are found in older texts, mainly the ballads, cf. Henriksen 2000: 67, Jónsson and Eythórsson 2005, 2011, Eythórsson 2009, Thráinsson et al. 2012: 431). Nominative is by far the

1. This work was supported by grants from The Icelandic Research Fund to the projects commonly referred to as “Icelandic Dialect Syntax” (IceDiaSyn) and “Faroese Dialect Syntax” (FarDiaSyn). We would like to thank our collaborators in these projects, especially Ásta Svavarsdóttir and Jóhannes Gísli Jónsson, for many discussions and suggestions. Special thanks to the Icelandic and Faroese participants in the variation surveys. Comments from the editors/reviewers of this volume were also greatly appreciated.

most common subject case in both languages. A subject occurring in a case other than nominative is often termed an oblique subject and is restricted to verbs belonging to particular lexical classes. The verbs taking oblique subjects are termed oblique subject verbs (or alternatively, especially in earlier literature, “impersonal” verbs). The oblique NPs *mig/mér* ‘me.ACC/DAT’ and *meg/mær* ‘me.ACC/DAT’ in the examples in (1) and (2) are now standardly considered subjects:

- (1) *Mig/Mér vantar peninga.* (Ic)
 me.DAT/ACC lacks money.ACC
 ‘I lack money.’
- (2) *Meg/Mær lystir at dansa.* (Fa)
 me.ACC/DAT wants to dance
 ‘I want to dance.’

Andrews (1976) was the first to present arguments for the subject properties of oblique subject-like noun phrases in Icelandic, and those arguments have been widely accepted since. Barnes (1986) followed suit and demonstrated the subject properties of corresponding noun phrases in Faroese. In order to determine whether arguments are subjects or not, tests of various types have been used, which will not be repeated here. Instead the reader is referred to the relevant literature (e.g. Zaenen, Maling and Thráinsson 1985, Sigurðsson 1997, 2004, Thráinsson 2005: 268ff., 2007: 146ff., and many others).

As seen in (1)–(2), there is variation in the use of subject case with the verb *vanta* in Icelandic and *lysta* in Faroese. Although accusative seems original with these verbs, to judge from older text sources, many speakers of Icelandic use a dative subject with *vanta*, and this has been the case at least since the early twentieth century (Halldórsson 1982: 179; for a more detailed overview of subject case alternations with various verbs in older Icelandic see Viðarsson 2009). But whereas dative subjects seem fairly robust in Icelandic, there has been a tendency to replace dative subjects with nominative ones with certain verbs in Faroese (see e.g. Petersen 2002, Jónsson and Eythórsson 2005, Thráinsson et al. 2012: 257). In Icelandic, the spread of nominative has been most obvious with certain verbs originally taking accusative subjects. It is clearly of theoretical interest to try to find a common denominator for the observed changes in subject case marking in these languages and look for explanations of apparent differences.

Oblique subjects are thus a common syntactic characteristic of Icelandic and Faroese; their roots go back to the prehistory of these languages, to Proto-Germanic or even Proto-Indo-European (see Eythórsson and Barðdal 2005; Barðdal and Eythórsson 2012). The number of verbs taking oblique subjects, however, is uneven in the two Insular Scandinavian languages. In Icelandic oblique subject verbs number about four hundred (Jónsson 1997–98), and in fact a lot more if fixed verbal

expressions are also included in the count (see Barðdal 2001). In Faroese there are probably around fifty attested oblique subject verbs, but only a few of those are common in the modern language. Studies of older Faroese, including the traditional ballads, show that in earlier times verbs taking oblique subjects were more numerous in this language than they are today (Petersen 2002, Eythórsson and Jónsson 2003, Thráinsson et al. 2012: 252ff., see also Petersen this volume). Several verbs in both languages are reported in handbooks to take oblique subjects; however, many of these verbs are very rare in the spoken language, often being limited to fixed expressions with a literary or archaic flavor.

This chapter gives an account of the results of recent research into variation and change in subject case in Icelandic and Faroese. The organization of the chapter is as follows. Section 2 reviews the hypothesis that morphological case can profitably be divided into *structural case* and *lexical case* and that lexical case in turn can either be *regular* (thematic) or *idiosyncratic* (see Yip, Maling and Jackendoff 1987, Jónsson 1997–1998 and much later work). On the basis of this division the so-called Case Directionality Hypothesis (CDH) is introduced (see Eythórsson 2002, 2015b and elsewhere), stating that structural case should win out over lexical case and that idiosyncratic lexical case should yield to regular lexical case. Section 3 tests this hypothesis on data collected in various projects studying variation in subject case in Icelandic, and Section 4 discusses comparable data from Faroese. The general conclusion is that the development of subject case in these languages follows the prediction of the CDH to a large extent, although there are interesting differences. In particular, the development has in some respects gone further in Faroese than in Icelandic. Section 5 discusses two apparent case marking puzzles involving subjects in Faroese and Icelandic and Section 6 contains a discussion of the relative strength of thematic lexical case on the one hand and structural case on the other, relating the discussion to the concept of productivity. Section 7 concludes the chapter.

2. Theoretical background

2.1 Structural case and lexical case

Yip, Maling and Jackendoff (1987) proposed a hypothesis on the assignment of (surface) case to arguments, involving a fundamental distinction between structural case and lexical (inherent) case. Structural case is predictable from the grammatical function of the relevant argument, other things being equal. Nominative is thus the structural (or default) case of subjects and accusative the structural case of direct objects. Lexical case is lexically conditioned, on the other hand, and it is “fixed once and for all” in the derivation (although it can obviously undergo historical changes). This can be illustrated by comparing the behavior of the arguments of verbs like

kyssa ‘kiss’ (no lexical case assigned), *leiðast* ‘be bored’ (lexically assigned subject case) and *stela* ‘steal’ (lexically assigned object case).

Consider first the following examples with *kyssa* ‘kiss’:

- (3) a. *Stelpan kyssti strákin.*
 girl-the.NOM kissed boy-the.ACC
- b. *Ég taldi stelpuna hafa kysst strákin.*
 I believed girl-the.ACC have.INF kissed boy-the.ACC
 ‘I believed the girl to have kissed the boy.’
- c. *Strákurinn var kysstur.*
 boy-the.NOM was kissed

In (3a) the subject *stelpan* has the structurally assigned nominative case and *strákin* the structurally assigned accusative case. In (3b) we have a “raising to object” structure (or “exceptional case marking (ECM)” or “Accusative with Infinitive (AcI)”), which means that the first argument of *kyssa*, namely ‘the girl’, functions as the object of the matrix verb *telja* ‘believe.’² Hence it takes on the (structural) object case of the matrix verb, namely accusative, instead of the structural nominative it has in (3a).³ In (3c) we see that in the passive construction the second argument of *kyssa*, namely ‘the boy’, has been “promoted” to subject position and hence shows up in the structural subject case, i.e. nominative.

2. It can, for instance, undergo Object Shift around a matrix adverb like *aldrei* ‘never’, for instance, as originally demonstrated by Holmberg (1986): *Ég taldi stelpuna aldrei hafa kysst strákin* ‘I never believed the girl to have kissed the boy.’ In addition, arguments in this position can undergo passivization in the matrix clauses, as is well known: *Stelpan var talin hafa kysst strákin* ‘The girl was believed to have kissed the boy.’ Note that in such a structure the argument *stelpan* ‘the girl’ shows up in the nominative case, which is the appropriate structurally assigned case for the matrix subject.

3. This predicts that if the matrix predicate in the raising to object/ECM-structure is one that does not take a structurally assigned accusative object, as *telja* ‘believe’ does, but, say, a nominative object, then ‘the girl’ should show up in the nominative and not the accusative and still behave like a matrix object. As shown by Thráinsson (2005:432), this is exactly what happens:

- (i) *Mér virtist stelpan aldrei hafa kysst strákin.*
 me.DAT seemed girl-the.NOM never have kissed boy-the.ACC
 ‘To me the girl never seemed to have kissed the boy.’

When *virðast* ‘seem’ takes a dative subject, as it does here, it takes a nominative object, as is typical for dative subject verbs (see Yip et al. 1987 and much later work, e.g. Thráinsson 2007:181ff.), and this object can undergo Object Shift around the matrix adverb *aldrei* ‘never’. Thus the nominative of *stelpan* ‘the girl’ is precisely what is expected under an account that assumes a structural case/lexical case dichotomy and not a counterexample to it, as claimed by Barðdal (2011a: 640–641).

Now compare the behavior of the argument of *leiðast* ‘be bored’ in (4):

- (4) a. *Stelpunni leiddist þessi mynd.*
 girl-the.DAT bored this film.NOM
 ‘The girl was bored by this film.’
- b. *Ég taldi stelpunni hafa leiðst þessi mynd.*
 I believed girl-the.DAT have bored this film.NOM
 ‘I believed the girl to have been bored by this film.’

The verb *leiðast* ‘be bored’ assigns lexical dative case to its subject *stelpunni* ‘the girl’, as shown in (4a), and this case is **preserved** in the ECM-structure (4b), whereas the structurally assigned nominative of *stelpun* in (3a) is not preserved in (3b).

Finally consider the examples in (5):

- (5) a. *Einhver stal smjörinu.*
 somebody.NOM stole butter-the.DAT
- b. *Smjörinu var stolið.*
 butter-the.DAT was stolen

Here we see that the lexically assigned dative object case *smjörinu* ‘the butter’ in (5a) is preserved in the passive construction (5b), whereas the structurally assigned accusative *strákinn* ‘the boy’ is not preserved in the passive version (3c).

2.2 Thematic (regular) lexical case and idiosyncratic lexical case

Yip et al. (1987) also proposed a further division of lexical case into thematic (or regular) case and idiosyncratic case, as illustrated schematically in Figure 1.

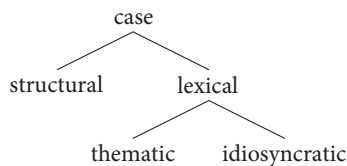


Figure 1. The three types of case proposed by Yip, Maling and Jackendoff 1987.

Thematic lexical case is (partially) predictable from the lexical semantics of the verb (“assigned by a lexical rule” in the terminology of Yip et al. 1987), whereas idiosyncratic (or “quirky”) case is completely unpredictable. The motivation for this distinction comes from the syntactic properties of the verbs in each verb class and the arguments they select for, and from the productivity of certain case patterns. As already noted by Yip et al. (1987, see also Barðdal 1999, 2001, 2011a, 2011b, Jónsson

1997–1998, 2003, 2005, 2009, 2013, Maling 2002 among others), there is a very clear variation in the productivity of the lexical case marking patterns in Icelandic. Thus the dative case marking of the direct object of certain verb classes (e.g. verbs of helping, like *hjálpa* ‘help’ in Icelandic) and of the indirect object (the recipient) of verbs of giving and sending is very regular and robust – and this also holds for Faroese and German, for instance. These datives would then be clear examples of thematically regular lexical case.⁴ Genitive case marking of verbal arguments, on the other hand, always seems to be idiosyncratic case, both with subjects (e.g. Icel. *missa við* ‘be absent’) and objects (e.g. with Icel. *sakna* ‘miss’). Genitive subjects are few in number (perhaps eight in Modern Icelandic) and non-existent in Modern Faroese. Genitive objects are unproductive in both languages and are often replaced by prepositional phrases. Thus the modern languages typically have *bíða* ‘wait’ with the preposition *eftir* ‘after’ + Dat instead of older *bíða* + Gen., both meaning ‘wait for’ (cf. Jónsson 1997–98, Eythórsson 2000, 2002, 2009, Thráinsson et al. 2012: 431).

Given the main topic of the present paper, it is useful to consider the thematic vs. idiosyncratic dichotomy in more detail with Icelandic subjects as examples (see e.g. Jónsson 1997–1998, 2003, 2005, Maling 2002, Thráinsson 2007: 198 ff.).⁵

First, dative is arguably a regular lexical case with subjects of semantically coherent classes of verbs, notably experiencers (e.g. with *leiðast* ‘be bored’) and recipients (e.g. with *áskotnast* ‘get’). This does not mean that all subject experiencers and recipients will be marked dative, however, since subjects carrying the structural (or default) nominative case can also have these semantic roles. This is illustrated in (6)–(7):

- (6) a. *Haraldur hatar Maríu.* (Haraldur.NOM experiencer)
Harold.NOM hates Mary.ACC
- b. *Haraldi leiðist María.* (Haraldi.DAT experiencer)
Harold.DAT is-bored-by Mary.NOM
- (7) a. *Hún fékk nýja skauta.* (Hún.NOM recipient)
she.NOM got new skates.ACC
- b. *Henni áskotnuðust nýir skautar.* (Henni.DAT recipient)
she.DAT got new skates.NOM

4. Some linguists (e.g. Woolford 2006) want to maintain that the dative of indirect objects is a structural rather than a lexical case. With respect to alternations like the ones illustrated in (3)–(5) above, however, it behaves like a lexical case. For a similar conclusion see Jónsson 2013.

5. Needless to say, not all linguists agree with the classification of case described here. Thus Jóhanna Barðdal has argued against the distinction between structural and lexical case (see e.g. Barðdal 2011a and references cited there).

An important argument for the productivity of dative as the case of experiencer subjects is the tendency to generalize it at the expense of accusative with some experiencer verbs. This is the (in-)famous Dative Substitution (or *þágufallssýki* ‘Dative Sickness’) in Icelandic illustrated in (8b) and frowned upon in Icelandic schools:

- (8) a. *Stelpuna vantaði nýja skauta.*
 girl-the.ACC lacked new skates.ACC
 b. *Stelpunni vantaði nýja skauta.* (Dative Substitution)
 girl-the.DAT lacked new skates.ACC

This phenomenon will be discussed in detail in Section 3 (see also Smith 1994).

Second, both accusative and dative case with theme subjects (e.g. *reka* ‘drift’, *ljúka* ‘finish’) are unpredictable in Icelandic, and thus idiosyncratic (in addition to the already cited literature, see e.g. Jónsson 2003, Ingason 2010 and Nowenstein 2014).⁶ The diminished productivity of oblique theme subjects in Icelandic is manifested by the tendency to replace this oblique case by nominative (Nominative Substitution). The example in (9b) shows Nominative Substitution with the Icelandic verb *reka* ‘drift’, which takes an accusative theme subject in the standard language, as in (9a), although many speakers accept a nominative subject (cf. Thráinsson et al. 2015:52).

- (9) a. *Bátinn rak að landi.* boat-the.ACC drifted to land
 b. *Báturinn rak að landi.* (Nominative Substitution)
 boat-the.NOM drifted to land
 ‘The boat drifted to the land.’

In general, it seems that nominative subjects can have any thematic role, whereas the thematic roles of lexically case marked subjects are restricted. This can be illustrated as in (10), where the markings for the (arguably) idiosyncratic lexical cases are in parentheses (based on Thráinsson 2007:206):⁷

(10)		Thematic role:				
	Subject case:	agent	experiencer	goal	source	theme
	nominative	+	+	+	+	+
	accusative		(+)			(+)
	dative		+	+		(+)

6. Ingason (2010) does, however, present a more detailed way of representing different degrees of productivity of “non-default” case. We will return to that issue in the final section of the paper.

7. As discussed by Jónsson (2003) and Ingason (2010), it is very likely that the traditional semantic classification of subject arguments assumed here is too crude. See also the discussion in the final section.

As shown here, the structurally case marked nominative subjects can have any thematic role. No oblique subjects can be agents but they can take on various other thematic roles, although the markings imply that only dative experiencers and goals are regular.

2.3 Changes in the case marking of arguments

We have now seen that not all cases are equal. Structural case should be very robust and thematic lexical case should be more robust than idiosyncratic lexical case. As already mentioned, idiosyncratic genitive on arguments has virtually disappeared in Faroese and there is very little left of it in Icelandic. It has also been observed that idiosyncratic accusative on theme subjects tends to yield to structural nominative (cf. the examples in (9)) and idiosyncratic accusative on theme subjects tends to yield to thematic dative (cf. the examples in (8)). On the basis of evidence of this sort, and the threefold division of case presented here, going back to Yip et al. (1987), the following general hypothesis about variation and change in the case marking of arguments has been set forth (cf. Eythórsson 2002, 2009, 2013, 2015b, see also the discussion by Jónsson 1997–1998):

- (11) Case Directionality Hypothesis (CDH)
 - a. lexical case → structural case
 - b. idiosyncratic lexical case → thematic lexical case

According to the CDH, lexical case in general (whether idiosyncratic or thematic) yields to structural case, and idiosyncratic lexical case yields to thematic lexical case. In effect, the hypothesis in (11) means that unmarked (default, productive, more common) case tends to be substituted for a more marked (unproductive, less common) case. Here the key question is how this “tends to” is manifested. As stated, the CDH predicts that eventually there will not be any instances of lexical case left. We know, however, that neither Icelandic nor Faroese have reached that stage yet.

The stage is now set for a detailed discussion of variation in subject case marking in Insular Scandinavian. As promised, we will start with Icelandic.

3. Variation in subject case in Icelandic

In the following sections we will typically assume that we know what is the “original” subject case of most Icelandic verbs. As demonstrated extensively by Viðarsson (2009), there is, however, more variation in subject case in early Icelandic sources than commonly assumed. It would take us too far afield to discuss such variation.

Hence we will concentrate on variation in Modern Icelandic with only occasional references to examples from earlier sources.

3.1 The “early” studies

Prior to the survey conducted within the Icelandic Dialect Syntax project (IceDiaSyn, *Tilbrigði í setningagerð*, 2005–07), two rather extensive surveys of variation in subject case marking in Icelandic had been carried out. The first one was conducted in 1980–81 (Ásta Svavarsdóttir 1982) and the second in 2001 (Jónsson and Eythórsson 2003, 2005, Eythórsson and Jónsson 2003).

The Icelandic part of the second survey was conducted in the fall of 2001, targeting about 900 11-year-olds in 20 elementary schools in various parts of the country (cf. Jónsson and Eythórsson 2003, 2005). A specific objective of this study was to compare the results to those from the survey of Svavarsdóttir 1980–81, in order to find out if any changes had occurred in oblique subjects in the two decades between these surveys. Hence the same age group was selected and the elicitation method was essentially the same as in the earlier study, i.e. fill-ins. The children were given a story about a girl and after a few lines the text had blanks in the subject position. It was clear from the story that the missing subject was in most instances the girl Raket and the children were asked to fill in the blanks by using the pronominal forms *hún*, *hana*, *henni* or *hennar* (Nom, Acc, Dat or Gen of the pronoun ‘she’) as illustrated in (12) (see Jónsson and Eythórsson 2003: 40):

- (12) *Raket vaknar snemma. Þá sér hún að _____*
 Raket wakes-up early then sees she that _____
vantar gemsann sinn ...
 lacks cell phone her

‘Rachel wakes up early. Then she sees that [she] is missing her cell phone.’

Here the participants were supposed to fill in the subject for the verb *vanta* ‘lack, need’ by using one of the pronominal forms supplied.

Both studies focused to a large extent on experiencer verbs that traditionally take Acc subjects (referred to as “accusative experiencer verbs” below). Assuming that Acc is an idiosyncratic lexical case for experiencer subjects, as explained above, the CDH predicts that one (or both!) of two things should happen:

- (13) a. **Nominative Substitution:** The idiosyncratic lexical Acc should be substituted for by the structural Nom case.
 b. **Dative Substitution:** The idiosyncratic lexical Acc should be substituted for by the thematic lexical Dat case.

Table 1 illustrates to what extent this happened for the experiencer verbs that were included in both studies (ÁS refers to Svavarsdóttir’s study and J&T to the survey done 20 years later):⁸

Table 1. Selection (%) by 11 year olds of subject case with six accusative experiencer verbs in two studies.

Verbs	Nom		Acc		Dat	
	ÁS	J&T	ÁS	J&T	ÁS	J&T
<i>gruna</i> ‘suspect’	10.8	7.0	65.4	65.4	22.8	27.2
<i>dreyma</i> ‘dream’	6.4	9.3	71.3	64.7	21.3	25.4
<i>langa</i> ‘want’	1.0	1.4	66.8	58.5	31.7	39.8
<i>minna</i> ‘(seem to) remember’	19.8	21.8	57.9	53.0	21.8	24.9
<i>vanta</i> ‘lack, need’	1.5	1.8	63.4	52.2	37.4	45.4
<i>svíða</i> ‘smart, sting’	1.5	3.2	50.5	43.4	47.5	52.9
Average	6.8	7.4	62.6	56.2	30.4	35.9

The results illustrated in Table 1 can be summarized as follows:

- (13) a. Dative Substitution seems to be on the increase: For all the verbs included in both studies, Dat was selected more often in the later study. The increase varies somewhat depending on the verb but the average increase is 5.5%.⁹
- b. Nominative Substitution is found for the same verbs in both studies (mainly *minna* ‘(seem to) remember’, *dreyma* ‘dream’ and *gruna* ‘suspect’) but on the whole it has not increased markedly.

8. The numbers in the table are percentages. A very small number of the participants (less than 1% for each verb) selected a Gen form for some of the verbs or made some random mistake filling in the blanks. These figures are omitted here. Note also that Ásta Svavarsdóttir actually used two slightly different elicitation methods, one where the participants were asked to supply the third person feminine pronominal forms *hún/hana/henni/hennar* and another where they were asked to use the first person pronominal forms *ég/mig/mér/mín*. Here we only report on the results involving the third person pronoun. Her participants “did better” on the first person forms in the sense that they were more likely to select the traditional Acc with experiencer verbs for first person than for third person. A similar tendency has been found in later studies (see e.g. Svavarsdóttir 2013, Nowenstein 2014).

9. The later study did not cover as many locations as the earlier one. In particular, a larger proportion of the participants in the later study came from the Reykjavík area and North-Eastern Iceland and none came from South-Western and Southern Iceland (Jónsson and Eythórsson 2003:15–16n). Since the results of IceDiaSyn indicate that Dative Substitution is actually least common in Reykjavík and North-Eastern Iceland but relatively common in South-Western and Southern Iceland (Thráinsson et al. 2015:50), the average increase from 1980 to 2000 may actually have been more than 5.5% for the whole country although there was very little difference between the parts of the country visited by Jónsson and Eythórsson (2005:234).

The observed change can thus be said to confirm the second part of the CDH (see (13b)): thematic lexical case tends to replace idiosyncratic lexical case.

There is very little evidence, however, for a change from lexical to structural (Nom) case with the experiencer subject verbs. But because that change had mainly been observed with verbs taking theme subjects, three such verbs were included in the later study: the accusative verb *reka* (*á land*) ‘drift (ashore)’ and the dative verbs *hvolfa* ‘capsize (intr.)’ and *ljúka* ‘finish, end (intr.)’. The results are shown in Table 2 (Nominative Substitution highlighted in bold):

Table 2. Selection (%) by 11 year olds of subject case with three theme verbs (J&T 2001).

Verbs	Nom	Acc	Dat
<i>reka</i> ‘drift’	57.2	33.4	9.1
<i>hvolfa</i> ‘capsize (intr.)’	42.8	9.6	47.6
<i>ljúka</i> ‘finish, end (intr.)’	17.0	1.2	80.5

As shown here, there is a clear tendency to select Nom as the subject case with these verbs, especially the first two.

It is not entirely clear why the traditional lexical Dat case is best preserved with *ljúka* ‘finish, end’. It is apparently idiosyncratic so one would expect it to be quite vulnerable. A brief comparison of *ljúka* with three verbs traditionally taking thematic Dat experiencer subjects shows a clear difference, as illustrated in Table 3:¹⁰

Table 3. Selection (%) by 11 year olds of subject case with three dative experiencer verbs (J&T 2001).

Verbs	Nom	Acc	Dat
<i>finnast</i> ‘find’	1.3	3.2	95.1
<i>leiðast</i> ‘be bored by’	2.7	8.0	88.6
<i>þykja</i> ‘find’	3.8	10.2	85.9

There is obviously very little tendency to replace the thematic experiencer Dat with the structural Nom here.¹¹

10. It should be emphasized that the verbs *finnast* and *þykja* mean ‘find’ in the experiencer sense, namely ‘I find this good/bad ...’

11. The relatively high selection of Acc for Dat with *leiðast* and *þykja* (8–10%) may be due to hypercorrection: Some of the children have been told that they should use (the traditional but idiosyncratic) Acc with the semantically similar experiencer verbs like *langa* ‘want’ and *vanta* ‘need, lack’ in order to avoid Dative Substitution (or Dative Sickness) so they pick the Acc here too. For a different explanation see Ingason (2010:99–100), who cites examples (from the Internet) of idiosyncratic Acc instead of thematic Dat with verbs like *finnast* ‘find’, *leiðast* ‘be bored by’ and *líka* ‘like’. See also Jónsson and Eythórsson (2011) on the concept “structured exceptions”.

The general conclusion from the “early studies” can then be summarized as follows:

- (14) a. **Dative Substitution** is on the increase, as predicted by the CDH (see Table 1).
- b. **Nominative Substitution** is also found, as predicted by the CDH, but mainly with verbs that traditionally take idiosyncratically case marked theme subjects, Acc or Dat (*reka* ‘drift’, *hvolfa* ‘capsize (intr.)’, *ljúka* ‘finish, end (intr.)’), although it also occurs with verbs that traditionally take idiosyncratically marked Acc experiencer subjects (*minna* ‘(seem to) remember’, *gruna* ‘suspect’). It is not clear to what extent this has been on the increase in recent times. It is very rare with dative experiencer verbs (see Tables 1–3).

While these results are at least partially compatible with the CDH, they raise the question why Dat is apparently very robust as a thematically assigned case for experiencer subjects and shows very little tendency to give in to structural Nom. As already mentioned, Faroese differs from Icelandic in this respect to some extent (see further Section 4 below). But let us first consider the results from IceDiaSyn.

3.2 The IceDiaSyn survey

In this section we will first report on the results from IceDiaSyn that are most directly comparable to those from the studies by ÁS and J&T just discussed, namely fill-ins by teenagers. We will then compare results from judgment tasks, both for Dative Substitution and Nominative Substitution.

IceDiaSyn targeted four age groups (15, 20–25, 40–45 and 65–70) and used several elicitation methods (see Thráinsson et al. 2013, Thráinsson this volume). Hence the results are not always easily comparable to those of the earlier studies. But one of the elicitation methods used in IceDiaSyn was a fill-in task virtually identical to the one used by ÁS and J&T. Table 4 shows the results from this fill-in task for the four accusative experiencer subject verbs that were included in all three tests and for the dative experiencer verb *leiðast* ‘be bored’, which was included in the last two. For IceDiaSyn, only the results from the youngest age group (15 year olds) are included (a total of 197 participants in the relevant study and the data were mostly collected in 2007). The “correct” (i.e. traditional) selection is highlighted in boldface (see Thráinsson et al. 2015:44):

Table 4. Selection (%) by 11–15 year olds of subject case for five experienter verbs in three studies.

Verbs	Nom			Acc			Dat		
	ÁS	J&T	IceDia	ÁS	J&T	IceDia	ÁS	J&T	IceDia
<i>dreyma</i> ‘dream’	6.4	9.3	10.7	71.3	64.7	67.3	21.3	25.4	21.9
<i>langa</i> ‘want’	1.0	1.4	1.0	66.8	58.5	64.0	31.7	39.8	35.0
<i>minna</i> ‘(seem to) remember’	19.8	21.8	13.3	57.9	53.0	69.4	21.8	24.9	17.3
<i>vanta</i> ‘lack, need’	1.5	1.8	1.0	63.4	52.2	55.3	37.4	45.4	43.7
<i>leiðast</i> ‘be bored’		2.7	0.5		8.0	9.6		88.6	89.8

Interesting facts revealed by this comparison include the following:

- (15) a. **Nominative Substitution** is mainly found with the same accusative experienter verbs in all three studies, namely *dreyma* ‘dream’ and *minna* ‘(seem to) remember’. It is very rare for the dative experienter verb *leiðast* ‘be bored’.¹²
- b. **Dative Substitution** with accusative experienter verbs appears to be somewhat less common in IceDiaSyn than it was in J&T some 6 years earlier (cf. rows 1–4 in the last two columns of Table 4).

Based on the comparison between ÁS and J&T described above, we might have expected there to be some increase in Dative Substitution between J&T and IceDiaSyn. The reason why we do not find this is probably the fact that the youngest participants in IceDiaSyn were about 4 years older than the participants in the previous studies and hence they might be more likely to select the “standard” accusative. As Table 5 shows, there was a very clear difference between the age groups in IceDiaSyn in the selection of Dat with the accusative experienter verbs in question (see Thráinsson et al. 2015:44).

Table 5. Selection (%) by different age groups in IceDiaSyn of Dat case with four accusative experienter verbs (Dative Substitution).

Verbs	15	20–25	40–45	65–70
<i>dreyma</i> ‘dream’ w. Dat	21.9	19.7	9.2	5.6
<i>langa</i> ‘want’ w. Dat	35.0	17.6	9.8	13.2
<i>minna</i> ‘(seem to) remember’ w. Dat	17.3	21.1	17.4	16.5
<i>vanta</i> ‘lack, need’ w. Dat	43.7	35.5	15.5	13.3
Average:	29.5	23.5	13.0	12.2

12. J&T included several other dative experienter verbs in their study and the results for most of them were similar in this respect, the average selection of Nom being 4.6%, ranging from 1.3% (*finnast* ‘seem, find’, and *takast* ‘succeed’) to 9.8% for *liggja á* ‘be in a hurry’ (see Jónsson and Eythórsson 2003:19).

The difference between the age groups illustrated in Table 5 is even clearer on the bar chart in Figure 2.

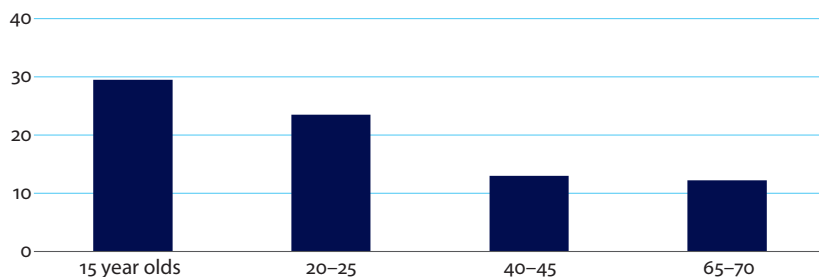


Figure 2. Average Dative Substitution (%) by different age groups.

Most linguists would probably interpret the numbers in Table 5 and the bars in Figure 2 as evidence for “change in apparent time”: Dative Substitution is on the increase, witness the fact that it is more common among the younger speakers than the older ones. Comparison of the results for 11 year olds around 1980 and 2000 (the studies by ÁS and J&T) also supports this interpretation. But now consider the following: The 40–45 year olds in IceDiaSyn are in fact the generation that was “tested” by ÁS over 25 years earlier. Speakers of this generation selected Dat with these verbs 28% of the time on the average in ÁS (see Table 4) but in IceDiaSyn they did so only 13% of the time. So there is a clear tendency here towards the “standard language” as the speakers grow older. This is reminiscent of the so-called **adolescent peak** often found in many sociolinguistic studies: Linguistic innovations are most popular among adolescents (age may vary, cf. Labov 2001: 169ff., Tagliamonte and D’Arcy 2009). Thus there is probably some age grading effect in Figure 2.

As mentioned above, Nominative Substitution is more typical for verbs with idiosyncratically case marked theme subjects than with experiencer verbs. Verbs with theme subjects were not included in ÁS and not included in the fill-in task in IceDiaSyn either. But two of the theme subject verbs included in J&T were also included in IceDiaSyn, namely *reka* ‘drift’ and *ljúka* ‘finish, end (intr.)’, but here the elicitation task was different. The participants were presented with sentences on a written questionnaire and asked to evaluate them on the following scale (for a more detailed description of the methodology see Thráinsson et al. 2013 and Thráinsson 2013: 164ff.):

- (16) Yes = A **natural** sentence. I could easily say this.
 ? = A **questionable** sentence. I would hardly say this.
 No = An **unacceptable** sentence. I could not say this.

The IceDiaSyn sentences relevant in this context were the following:¹³

- (17) a. *Það var brjáláð veður og trilluna hans rak á land.*
 it was crazy weather and boat-the.ACC his drifted on land
 ‘There was crazy weather and his boat drifted ashore.’
- b. *Það var ofsarok og einn togarinn rak upp í fjöru.* (Nom. Substit.)
 it was violent-storm and one trawler-the.NOM drifted up in
 beach
 ‘There was violent storm and one of the trawlers drifted ashore.’
- (18) a. *Leiknum lauk með jafntefli.*
 game-the.DAT ended with draw
 ‘The game ended in a draw.’
- b. *Önnur skákin lauk með sigri Jóhannesar.* (Nom. Substit.)
 second game-the.NOM ended with victory Jóhannes.GEN
 ‘The second game ended with Jóhannes’ victory.’

Comparison of the results of fill-ins and sentence evaluation shows that when there is variation in the linguistic community, the acceptance rate for a particular variant is typically higher than the selection rate, i.e., speakers may find a variant acceptable although they do not necessarily select it in a fill-in task (see e.g. the discussion in Thráinsson 2013: 168–169).

With this in mind, we can now compare the results for the theme verbs *reka* ‘drift’ and *ljúka* ‘finish, end (intr.)’ from the fill-in task used in J&T (see also Table 2 above) and the judgments of the youngest age group in IceDiaSyn (the 15 year olds) of the sentences in (17)–(18). In Table 6 we show the percentages of speakers who selected the relevant case in the J&T study or found it “natural” in IceDiaSyn (Nominative Substitution highlighted in bold, cf. Jónsson and Eythórsson 2003: 19, Thráinsson et al. 2015: 54):

Table 6. Selection (%) by 11 year olds (J&T) and positive evaluation (%) by 15 year olds (IceDiaSyn) of different subject cases with two theme verbs.

Verbs	Nom		Acc		Dat	
	J&T	IceDia	J&T	IceDia	J&T	IceDia
<i>reka</i> ‘drift’	57.2	59.7	33.4	57.4	9.1	
<i>ljúka</i> ‘finish, end (intr.)’	17.0	57.0	1.2		80.5	88.8

13. All the example sentences in IceDiaSyn were introduced by a context sentence to set the stage and make sure that all participants were thinking of a similar speech situation. The context sentences are omitted here.

As explained above, we would not have expected the percentages to be exactly the same in the two studies because of the differences in the elicitation method. The most unexpected difference is probably the large acceptance of Nom with *ljúka* ‘finish, end’. As indicated by the figures in Table 7, this is apparently a more recent innovation than Nominative Substitution with *reka* ‘drift’ (see Thráinsson et al. 2015: 54).

Table 7. Positive evaluation (%) by different age groups in IceDiaSyn of Nom with two theme verbs (Nominative Substitution).

Verb	15 year olds	20–25	40–45	65–70
<i>reka</i> ‘drift’ w. Nom	59.7	53.7	51.3	41.7
<i>ljúka</i> ‘finish, end (intr.)’ w. Nom	57.0	58.4	38.1	32.1

As Table 7 shows, Nom is accepted by a large proportion of all age groups with the verb *reka* ‘drift’ whereas Nom with *ljúka* ‘finish, end (intr.)’ is much more readily accepted by the two youngest age groups. Here the difference between age groups is presumably not due to different adaptation to some linguistic standard, since Nominative Substitution is very rarely mentioned in discussions of a linguistic standard (and the development with *ljúka* ‘finish, end’ seems to have gone virtually unnoticed).

3.3 Interim conclusion

From the year 1980 onwards variation in subject case in Icelandic has been studied extensively. The main landmarks in this enterprise were the survey by Svavarsdóttir (1982), the survey by Jónsson and Eythórsson (2003, 2005), and the extensive IceDiaSyn survey (see e.g. Thráinsson et al. (eds.) 2013, Thráinsson et al. (eds) 2015). These surveys above all shed light on the conditions on and the diffusion of the variation and changes. The results show that the diffusion is subject to, among others, grammatical factors such as lexical semantics (experiencer, theme) and person (third person as against other persons) and social factors such as age, gender and education. The diffusion is doubtless also conditioned by use, e.g. type frequency (the number of verbs in each semantic class) and token frequency (the occurrence of the verbs in the language at any given time); however, the surveys actually did not consider such matters in great detail.

In this section we have concentrated on variation in subject case marking in Icelandic with special attention to the direction of the change. In particular, we have been comparing the results to the Case Directionality Hypothesis (CDH). The main conclusions so far are the following:

- (19) a. **Dative Substitution** seems to be on the increase with verbs that traditionally take an accusative experiencer subject. Comparison of the results reported on by Svavarsdóttir (1982) and by Jónsson and Eythórsson (2003) indicates this, as does the clear difference in this respect between age groups in Ice-DiaSyn (see Tables 4-5 and Figure 2). There is some evidence, however, for an “adolescent peak” in Dative Substitution, i.e. that some speakers at least have a tendency to select (and use?) Dat less frequently with the relevant verbs as they grow up (see the discussion around Figure 2).
- b. **Nominative Substitution** is on the increase with verbs taking an oblique theme subject, especially in the sense that it is apparently spreading to more verbs (e.g. to *ljúka* ‘finish, end’ in addition to verbs like *reka* ‘drift’, for instance, see Tables 6-7).

These results are at least partly in accordance with the CDH in (11), repeated here for convenience:

- (11) Case Directionality Hypothesis (CDH)
- a. lexical case → structural case
- b. idiosyncratic lexical case → thematic lexical case

The Icelandic results raise some questions, however, including the following:

- (20) Why hasn’t thematic lexical case (here Dat with experiencer subjects) yielded more extensively to structural case?

As shown above, the semantically regular (i.e. thematic) lexical Dat case is much less frequently substituted for by structural Nom than the idiosyncratic lexical Acc case on theme subjects (see e.g. Tables 4 and 6). By (11a), however, we would eventually expect all lexical case to yield to structural case, as it has in the history of English, for instance.¹⁴ As hinted at above, Faroese offers an excellent opportunity to study this matter and thus further test the CDH. The Faroese case system is very similar to the Icelandic one, but the external linguistic conditions have been somewhat different in the Faroes (different literary tradition, partially different language policy). Hence it is interesting to see if we find the same kind of variation in subject case in Faroese and a similar directionality of the changes. This matter will be scrutinized in more detail in the next section.

14. For an interesting survey of previous and ongoing developments in subject case marking in Icelandic, Faroese, English, Swedish and German see Árnadóttir and Sigurðsson (2013). They suggest that Icelandic is on its way towards losing Dat subjects in certain contexts, but it would take us too far afield to describe their arguments and evidence here.

4. Variation in subject case in Faroese

4.1 Experiencer verbs

First, it should be pointed out that Faroese has already lost Dat subjects in predicative constructions with an animate subject. Thus the contrast illustrated in (21) for Icelandic no longer exists in Faroese, as shown in (22) (see e.g. Thráinsson et al. 2012: 233–234, Thráinsson 2007: 226, see also Petersen this volume):

- (21) a. *Drengnum* er kalt/heitt.
boy-the.DAT.M is cold/hot.N
b. *Ofninn* er kaldur/heitur.
radiator-the.NOM.M is cold/hot.M
- (22) a. *Drongurin* er kaldur/heitur.
boy-the.NOM.M is cold/hot.M
b. *Ovnurin* er kaldur/heitur.
radiator-the.NOM.M is cold/hot.M

In Icelandic the animate experiencer shows up in Dat in (21a) (and hence the predicative adjective does not agree with it but shows up in the default neuter singular form), but the inanimate subject shows up in Nom in (22b) (and the predicative adjective agrees with it). There is no such difference in constructions of this sort in Faroese – the subject shows up in Nom in both instances (and the predicative adjective agrees with it). Several experiencer predicates (i.e. ‘be’ + adjective) take a Dat subject in Icelandic, but this does not seem to be the case in Faroese.¹⁵

As mentioned, Barnes (1986) was the first linguist to study oblique subject case in Faroese, followed by Petersen (2002). The recent study by Malmsten (2015) is also of interest here, although her results are somewhat difficult to compare to those of the Icelandic studies reported on above because of her different research method. She describes the use of Dat in essays written by students graduating from the Faroese Senior High School in Tórshavn during the period 1940–1999. She investigated the use of Dat in various syntactic positions, including subject, direct object and indirect object, and found that the students used Dat subjects over 80% of the time where it was “expected” on historical grounds (see e.g. Malmsten 2015: 231). While the percentage of “correct” or “expected” Dat was higher for direct objects

15. Hjalmar Petersen and Zakaris Hansen (p.c.) point out that one can say *Henni var dátt við* ‘She (Dat) was startled, (unpleasantly) surprised’ and *Mær var (skjótt) greitt, at ...* ‘I (Dat) was (soon) clear that ...’ [i.e., ‘It was (soon) clear to me that ...’], but otherwise constructions of this sort seem (virtually) non-existent in Faroese. In German, on the other hand, expressions like *Mir ist kalt/heiß ...* ‘I (Dat) am (feel) cold/hot ...’ are just as natural as their Icelandic counterparts.

and especially indirect objects, Malmsten's results show that Dat case marking of subjects was relatively robust during this period.¹⁶

Jónsson and Eythórsson did an extensive survey of subject case variation in Faroese in 2002 (see e.g. Eythórsson and Jónsson 2003, Jónsson and Eythórsson 2005, 2011, Eythórsson 2009). An important objective of their survey was a detailed comparison with the results obtained in the Icelandic studies by ÁS and J&T reported on above. Hence they focused on the same age group, namely elementary school children around 12 years of age (a total of 286), and used the same elicitation method (the fill-ins described above, cf. the discussion around (12)). The following experiencer subject verbs were among those included in the survey:¹⁷

- (23) a. Verbs originally taking an idiosyncratic Acc subject: *gruna* 'suspect', *droyma* 'dream' and *minnst* 'remember'
- b. Verbs originally taking a thematic Dat subject: *dáma* 'like', *tykja* 'seem, find'

An overview of the results is given in Table 8 (cf. Jónsson and Eythórsson 2005: 237; selection of Gen and random errors omitted as before).

Table 8. Selection (%) by Faroese elementary school children of subject case with two accusative experiencer verbs and three dative experiencer verbs.

Verbs	Nom	Acc	Dat
<i>gruna</i> 'suspect'	82.2	0.7	15.7
<i>droyma</i> 'dream'	99.0	0.0	0.3
Average:	90.6	0.4	8.0
<i>dáma</i> 'like'	14.3	1.0	82.2
<i>tykja</i> 'seem, find'	38.8	1.7	57.0
<i>lukkast</i> 'succeed'	44.8	1.4	51.4
Average:	32.6	1.4	63.5

16. In an attempt to get a picture of the development of Dat case marking from 1940 to 1999, Malmsten compared the use of Dat in the students' essays during three ten year subperiods: 1940-1949, 1965-1974 and 1990-1999. The percentage of "non-use" of expected Dat in subject position (basically Nominative Substitution) was 13.3%, 0.0% and 17.2% for these subperiods, respectively (Malmsten 2015:275). The difference in Dat usage between the first and the last subperiods is relatively small, but Malmsten suggests that the reason why the middle subperiod stands out may be strong normative awareness by the students of that time (Malmsten 2015:276). This is supported by the fact these students actually showed some tendency to use Dat case marking of subjects of verbs that historically did not take Dat subjects. There were no instances of this kind of hypercorrection in the oldest batch of essays and virtually none (1.1%) in the most recent one (Malmsten 2015:275).

17. The survey included more experiencer verbs and we will return to those below.

Two facts stand out here. First, this table shows that the idiosyncratic lexical Acc has virtually disappeared as a subject case of the first two verbs. It has been completely replaced by the structural Nom with *droyma* ‘dream’ and also mostly by Nom for *gruna* ‘suspect’. This is the Nominative Substitution expected under the first part of the CDH. There is also some evidence for Dative Substitution for the verb *gruna* ‘suspect’, although much weaker (15.7%).

Second, the thematic Dat case is much better preserved than the idiosyncratic Acc for the verbs included here. Thus the majority of the participants selected Dat with *dáma* ‘like’, *tykja* ‘find’ and *lukkast* ‘succeed, manage’. Nevertheless, Nominative Substitution was also found with these dative experiencer verbs and to a much larger extent than found with comparable verbs in Icelandic. This can be seen from the comparison in Table 9 (see Jónsson and Eythórsson 2003: 19, 2005: 237).

Table 9. Selection (%) by Icelandic and Faroese elementary school children of subject case with comparable dative experiencer verbs.

Verbs	Nom	Acc	Dat
Icelandic			
<i>leiðast</i> ‘be bored by’	2.7	8.0	88.6
<i>þykja</i> ‘find, think’	3.8	10.2	85.9
<i>takast</i> ‘succeed’	1.3	5.2	93.4
Average:	2.6	7.8	89.3
Faroese			
<i>dáma</i> ‘like’	14.3	1.0	82.2
<i>tykja</i> ‘find, think’	38.8	1.7	57.0
<i>lukkast</i> ‘succeed’	44.8	1.4	51.4
Average:	32.6	1.4	63.5

The main difference between the two languages is obviously the more prevalent Nominative Substitution in Faroese. Consequently, the original thematic Dat case is not as persistent in Faroese as it is in Icelandic, although it is very well preserved for *dáma* ‘like’, which is apparently the most common of the Faroese dative verbs under consideration.

In a further investigation of subject case variation in Faroese, Jónsson and Eythórsson did a follow-up study in 2004 (see Jónsson and Eythórsson 2005), this time targeting adults (277 adults participated) and using the same elicitation technique as before (fill-ins in the same text). Table 10 shows a comparison of the results for the two age groups for the verbs included here.

Table 10. Selection (%) by Faroese elementary school children and adults of subject case with two accusative experienter verbs and three dative experienter verbs (J&T 2002 and 2004).

Verbs	Nom		Acc		Dat	
	12 yr	Adults	12 yr	Adults	12 yr	Adults
<i>gruna</i> ‘suspect’	82.2	90.8	0.7	1.7	15.7	6.1
<i>droyma</i> ‘dream’	99.0	98.3	0.0	0.7	0.3	0.3
Average:	90.6	94.6	0.4	1.2	8.0	3.2
<i>dáma</i> ‘like’	14.3	4.4	1.0	0.0	82.2	97.3
<i>tykja</i> ‘seem, find’	38.8	21.8	1.7	1.0	57.0	75.1
<i>lukkast</i> ‘succeed’	44.8	27.0	1.4	0.0	51.4	70.6
Average:	32.6	17.7	1.4	0.3	63.5	81.0

First, the comparison shows that Acc has died out as an idiosyncratic lexical case for the experienter verbs in question, mainly as the result of Nominative Substitution. Although there is some evidence for Dative Substitution by adults for the verb *gruna* ‘suspect’ (Dat selected as a subject case for *gruna* by 6.1% of the adults), it is much less common than among the young speakers. As pointed out by Jónsson and Eythórsson (2005: 237), however, *gruna* is not a common verb in Modern Faroese. Hence some of the participants in the survey may just have been making “an educated guess” when they had to fill in a subject pronoun for this verb, especially the younger ones. According to Jakobsen (1891), *gruna* was already used mostly with Nom in the 19th century, and he does not mention Dat as a possible subject case for this verb.¹⁸ This does not mean, however, that there are no traces of Dative Substitution in Modern Faroese. Thus Petersen (2002: 68ff.) mentions a few such examples (see also Thráinsson et al. 2012: 254), including the following, where the original subject case (and the one still used in Modern Icelandic) is Acc but Dat is also possible or even more common now:¹⁹

- (24) *Meg/mær fýsir at vita ...*
Meg/mær lystir at vita ...
 me.ACC/DAT wants to know

18. Today (March 24, 2016) Google gives no results for *mær grunar*, lit. “me.DAT suspects”, and only four examples of *meg grunar*, “me.ACC suspects”, all from translations of old sagas. *Føroysk orðabók* (1998) gives *hetta mundi meg gruna* ‘this I.ACC could expect’, which may be a quote from an old ballad (cf. “Tíðriks kappar” in *Færøsk anthologi I, 1891: 237*) – and the same example is actually used in Jakobsen’s dictionary (1891) to illustrate the older impersonal use of this verb.

19. As Petersen points out, constructions like *Tað lystir meg at vita* ‘That I would like to know’. In such constructions the oblique subject (here *meg* ‘me.ACC’) follows the finite verb, as subjects normally do in V2-languages when something is preposed.

The verb *fýsa* ‘want’ seems to be quite rare in Modern Faroese but *lysta* is apparently more frequent and here Dat seems to be a more common subject case in recent sources than the original Acc (witness Google).

The Faroese verb *vanta* ‘lack, need’ is also interesting in this connection. It only takes a Dat subject in modern Faroese (cf. Jakob Jakobsen 1891, *Føroysk orðabók* 1998, Petersen 2002: 68–69). It apparently already did so in the early 19th century, witness the following examples (spelling is normalized here):

- (25) a. *hvat vantar mær enn?* (*Evangelium Sankta Matthæussa* 1823, 19:20)
 what lacks me.DAT still
 ‘what do I still lack?’
- b. *og tó vantaði honum nakað í öllum.* (*Færeyínga saga* 1832:152)
 and yet lacked him.DAT something in all
 ‘and still he was behind [the king] in all [sports].’

Comparison with Icelandic indicates that *vanta* originally took an Acc subject, as it still does in “standard” Icelandic (cf. the discussion in Section 3 above). Thus we can say that Dative Substitution has already ousted Acc with this verb in Faroese but the battle is still going on in Icelandic.

Second, Table 10 reveals that Nominative Substitution is less common among adults than teenagers (or children) for the dative experiencer verbs. This suggests that Nominative Substitution may be on the rise for dative experiencer verbs in Faroese.

The results from the extensive variation project FarDiaSyn can be used to determine to what extent Nominative Substitution is gaining ground in the case assignment of dative experiencer verbs. The data for this project were mainly collected in 2008–2009, partly in connection with the larger ScanDiaSyn project. In FarDiaSyn we mainly used the sentence evaluation method described for IceDiaSyn above: The participants (335 in this part of FarDiaSyn) were presented with a written questionnaire and asked to evaluate the sentences on the three point scale explained in Section 3.2 above. The relevant examples included the following near-minimal pairs (context sentences omitted as before):

- (26) a. *Henni dámar at hyggja í sjónvarp.*
 her.DAT likes to look at TV
 ‘She likes to watch TV.’
- b. *Hon dámar at lurta eftir tónleiki.*
 she.NOM likes to listen after music
 ‘She likes to listen to music.’
- (27) a. *Honum manglar at gera húsini liðug.*
 him.DAT needs to make house-the finished
 ‘He needs to finish the house.’

- b. *Hann manglar at prógva tað í verki.*
 he.NOM needs to prove it in work
 'He needs to prove it in action.'
- (28) a. *Henni nýtist ikki at hugsa um klokkuna.*
 her.DAT needs not to think about clock-the
 'She doesn't have to think about the clock.'
- b. *Hon nýtist ikki at standa í bíðirøð.*
 she.NOM needs not to stand in waiting-line
 'She doesn't have to stand in line.'

The judgments of the age groups included are shown in Table 11.

Table 11. Positive judgments (%) by different age groups of Nom and Dat with dative experiencer verbs in Faroese (FarDiaSyn).

Verbs	< 20		20–39		40–59		60+	
	Nom	Dat	Nom	Dat	Nom	Dat	Nom	Dat
<i>dáma</i> 'like'	77.0	77.9	73.3	81.3	52.6	93.9	48.6	93.0
<i>mangla</i> 'need, lack'	54.0	54.1	80.0	58.7	80.2	65.6	82.6	61.4
<i>nýtast</i> 'need'	54.0	62.1	74.7	76.0	70.4	79.8	57.6	83.6
Average:	61.7	64.7	76.0	72.0	67.7	79.8	62.9	79.3

As the numbers in Table 11 show, many speakers accept both Nom and Dat as subject case with these verbs (the added percentages are typically over 100%). On the average the two cases are evaluated roughly evenly by the two younger groups whereas the Dat gets a more positive marking by the two older groups. A closer scrutiny of the numbers reveals that the averages do not tell the whole story. Thus the Dat is very heavily favored for *dáma* by the two oldest groups whereas Nom is favored for *mangla* for three of the older groups. The verb *mangla* is of special interest because it is a loanword from Danish. It is actually enclosed in brackets in the dictionary compiled by Jakobsen (1891) and marked "danisme". We will return to it in Section 6 below.

Although the figures in Tables 10 and 11 show that Nominative Substitution affects all the dative experiencer verbs included in the surveys, it should be noted that some dative experiencer verbs do not seem to be influenced by it at all. Thus the verb *líka* 'like', synonymous with *dáma* 'like', can only take a Dat subject and Nom is ungrammatical, according to Petersen (2002: 65):

- (29) *Mær líkar/*Eg líki mjólkina.*
 I.DAT like/*I.NOM like milk-the

Thráinsson et al. (2012:255–256) also list over 20 verbs (or expressions) that exclusively take Dat subjects. Although some of these are quite rare in the modern language or have a restricted usage, this indicates that Dat subjects are still somewhat robust in Faroese (see also Petersen 2002:71 ff.).

The most important points of this section can be summarized as follows:

- (30) a. Idiosyncratic Acc as subject case of experiencer verbs has virtually disappeared in Faroese, both in the language of older and younger speakers. It has mostly been replaced by structural Nom (Nominative Substitution), but there is also some evidence for Dative Substitution, possibly in case selection for *gruna* ‘suspect’ according to the surveys reported on here (see Tables 8 and 10) but mainly in the case selection of a few accusative verbs not included in the surveys (*fýsa* ‘want’, *lysta* ‘want’). With *vanta* ‘need, lack’ Dative Substitution has completely ousted the original Acc in Faroese.
- b. Thematic Dat as subject case of experiencer verbs is much better preserved than idiosyncratic Acc case, although there is evidence for Nominative Substitution in the case selection of some dative experiencer verbs. For some verbs this is more common among younger than older speakers (cf. the results for *dáma* ‘like’ in Table 11) but for others this is not the case (cf. the results for *nýtast* ‘need’ in Table 11).

4.2 Theme verbs

It seems that oblique theme subjects do not exist any more in Faroese. Acc theme subjects appear to have been completely replaced by Nom with verbs like *daga* (*upp(i)*) lit. “dawn up” and *reka* ‘drift’ (cf. Petersen 2002:66, Thráinsson et al. 2012:428). This was apparently already the case in the 19th century, as suggested by (31b):

- (31) a. *Tindurin*/**Tindin* *dagar upp móti luftini.* (Føroysk orðabók)
 peak-the.NOM/*ACC dawns up against sky-the
 ‘The peak can be seen against the sky.’
- b. *Hann róði ... men báturin rak aftur.* (*Sagnir og ævintýr I*, 15)
 he rowed but boat-the.NOM drifted back
- c. *Báturin*/**Bátin* *rak aftur.*
 the boat.NOM/*ACC drifted back

We have not been able to find a dative theme verb corresponding to e.g. *ljúka* ‘end, finish (intr.)’ in Icelandic. The cognate verb *lúka* seems to be used exclusively as a transitive verb in Faroese, e.g. *Eg havi lokið verkið* ‘I have finished the job.ACC.’

4.3 Conclusion about subject case in Faroese

The main conclusion of this section is that the development of subject case marking in Faroese has followed much the same path as in Icelandic, the main difference being that it has gone further:

- (32) a. **Dative Substitution** has completely ousted idiosyncratic Acc as a subject case with some experiencer verbs in Faroese, e.g. *vanta* ‘need, lack’, whereas Dat and Acc are still competing as subject cases for corresponding verbs in Icelandic.
- b. **Nominative Substitution** has won out over idiosyncratic Acc as a subject case with theme verbs in Faroese. The same is true of certain predicative constructions like ‘be cold/hot’, where the subject is marked Nom in Faroese whereas an animate experiencer subject shows up in the Dat in Icelandic and an inanimate subject in Nom. Nom is also more common as a subject case with certain dative experiencer verbs in Faroese than with corresponding verbs in Icelandic (see e.g. Tables 9 and 10), although Dat is still quite robust as the subject case of some experiencer verbs in Faroese (see e.g. Table 11).

5. Two apparent puzzles

In the preceding sections we have argued that the distinction between structural case and (two types of) lexical case is supported by the Icelandic and Faroese facts considered. In particular, we have argued that the CDH is confirmed to a large extent by the development of subject case in Icelandic and Faroese. But the facts are actually somewhat more complex than we have made them out to be. We will demonstrate this in the present section by considering two sets of facts that appear puzzling under the assumptions we have been making.

5.1 Case non-preservation in Faroese passives

As described in Section 2.1 above, the preservation of dative case in Icelandic passives has been an important argument for the claim that the dative is a lexical and not a structural case. The examples in (33)–(34) illustrate the contrast between Dat and Acc in this respect:²⁰

20. Because Nom subjects in the passive trigger agreement of the participle but oblique subjects do not, the forms of the passive in (33)–(34) vary depending on the case of the subject.

- (33) a. *Þeir trúðu henni.*
they believed her.DAT
- b. *Henni var trúað/*Hún var trúuð.*
her.DAT was believed/*she.NOM was believed
'She was believed.'
- (34) a. *Þeir skömmuðu hana.*
they scolded her.ACC
- b. **Hana var skammað/Hún var skömmuð.*
*her.ACC was scolded/she.NOM was scolded
'She was scolded.'

The Faroese verb *trúgva* 'believe' can only take a Dat object, like its Icelandic cognate. Under the assumption that Dat is a lexical case in Faroese as it is in Icelandic, the pattern in (35) is what we would expect: The dative is preserved in the passive (cf. Thráinsson et al. 2012: 267):²¹

- (35) a. *Teir trúðu henni ongantíð.*
they believed her.DAT never
'They never believed her.'
- b. *Henni/*Hon bleiv ongantíð trúð.*
her.DAT/*NOM was never believed
'She was never believed.'

Interestingly, however, datives are not always preserved in Faroese passives, as originally pointed out by Smith (1992, see also Henriksen 2000: 69, 74). Consider the following (cf. Thráinsson et al. 2012: 269):

- (36) a. *Teir róstu henni/*hana.*
they praised her.DAT/*ACC
- b. **Henni/Hon varð róst.*
her.*DAT/NOM was praised
'She was praised.'

21. This example is in fact somewhat misleading as it is set up here: If the subject was nominative, i.e. *hon*, then the participle should agree with it and be **trúgvín* (cf. *búgva*, past part. *búgvín*). But as pointed out to us by Hjalmar P. Petersen, *trúgvín* does not exist as a past part. of *trúgva*. So the question is whether **Hon varð trúgvín* in the sense "She.Nom was believed.F" is bad because *trúgvín* does not exist, or whether *trúgvín* does not exist because *trúgva* necessarily preserves the dative marking of the active object when it occurs in a passive construction.

Examples of non-preservation of lexical case can be found in 19th century Faroese (cf. Thráinsson et al. 2012: 435) but it is not known how old this phenomenon is. This non-preservation is a puzzle – and it seems, in fact, that case non-preservation is actually more common than case preservation in Faroese passives (cf. Thráinsson et al. 2012: 267–269). This was confirmed in two surveys conducted in 2008 and 2009 (cf. Eythórssón 2012, Eythórssón et al. 2012). In August 2008 a written questionnaire was administered to 62 informants in six locations. The participants were asked to rate the sentences on a three point scale (see the description in Section 3.2 above). The verbs included *heilsa* ‘greet’, *hjálpa* ‘help’, *mjólka* ‘milk (a cow)’, *steðga* ‘stop’ and *takka* ‘thank’. They all take Dat objects in the active, and the participants were presented with two passive versions for each, one with the Dat preserved and another with Nom (i.e., non-preservation) as illustrated in (37) for *hjálpa* ‘help’:

- (37) a. *Honum bleiv takkað fyri hjálpin.*
 him.DAT was thanked for help-the
 b. *Hann bleiv takkaður fyri hjálpin.*
 he.NOM was thanked for help-the
 ‘He was thanked for the help.’

The results for the five verbs listed above are summarized in Table 12 (some participants skipped a couple of examples, hence the percentages do not always add up to 100).

Table 12. Evaluation (%) by adults of case marking in the Faroese passive with selected verbs taking Dat objects.

Verbs	Nominative (= non-preserv.)			Dative (= preservation)		
	Yes	?	No	Yes	?	No
<i>steðga</i> ‘stop’	100	0.0	0.0	1.6	6.5	85.5
<i>mjólka</i> ‘milk’	95.2	0.0	1.6	1.6	0.0	93.5
<i>hjálpa</i> ‘help’	83.9	11.3	3.2	19.4	37.1	41.9
<i>takka</i> ‘thank’	41.9	35.5	21.0	46.8	33.9	17.7
<i>heilsa</i> ‘greet’	30.6	25.8	38.7	16.1	29.0	48.4

As Table 12 shows, non-preservation of Dat in the passive seems to be much more common than preservation with these verbs, with the exception of *takka* ‘thank’. In the 2009 survey, interviews were conducted with a small group of informants in three locations in the Faroe Islands. The elicitation method involved paraphrasing active sentences by the informant in order to elicit passive sentences reflecting natural language use. The findings essentially strengthened the statistical information

of the 2008 survey. The results from both of these surveys are in accordance with the statements in Thráinsson et al. (2012) in the sense that non-preservation seems to be the rule for many verbs. The picture emerging from the surveys is rather more varied than the one found in the handbook, pointing to a richer variation in passive sentences than suggested in that work.

It seems, then, that the tendency for Nominative Substitution for Dat subjects found in other constructions in Faroese is spreading to passive sentences. For some Faroese verbs Nominative Substitution thus obliterates an important difference between structural and lexical case, namely the preservation of lexical case in passives (for further discussion in a comparative perspective, including Norwegian dative-preserving dialects, see Eythórsson et al. 2012).

5.2 “Impersonalization” in Icelandic and Faroese

The CDH states that structural case should win over lexical case. Although we have seen that this kind of development can happen at different speeds and at different times, we have not presented any direct counterexamples to this, namely development from structural to lexical case. But such counterexamples do exist. Thus it is generally assumed that the Icelandic experiencer verbs *hlakka til* ‘look forward to’ and *kviða fyrir* ‘be anxious about’ originally took a Nom subject, i.e. were “nominative experiencer verbs” in the terminology used here. Yet these verbs now quite commonly take either an Acc or Dat subject (see e.g. the discussion by Svavarsdóttir 1982, Jónsson and Eythórsson 2003, 2005, Eythórsson 2000, 2015a, Thráinsson et al. 2015). Verbs taking oblique subjects do not show any person agreement and hence they are traditionally called impersonal. This development from nominative to oblique subject could thus be called “impersonalization”. This is illustrated in Table 13 where we show the percentages for the 11 year olds in ÁS and J&T and for the youngest group in IceDiaSyn (from the fill-in task; see Svavarsdóttir 1982: 31, Jónsson and Eythórsson 2005: 233, Thráinsson et al. 2015: 44).

Table 13. Selection (%) by 11–15 year olds of subject case for five nominative experiencer verbs in three studies.

Verbs	Nom			Acc			Dat		
	ÁS	J&T	IceDia	ÁS	J&T	IceDia	ÁS	J&T	IceDia
<i>hlakka til</i> ‘look forward to’	19.3	14.9	15.2	60.9	41.4	38.6	19.8	43.2	46.2
<i>kviða fyrir</i> ‘be anxious about’	36.1	49.9	16.8	28.7	26.3	44.7	35.2	22.8	38.6

All the studies show a clear tendency for impersonalization in this sense, although there are some differences in detail (Dat more commonly selected for *hlakka til* in J&T and IceDiaSyn than in ÁS; Nom less frequently selected for *kvíða fyrir* in IceDiaSyn than in the other surveys). Table 14 indicates that this phenomenon is found in the language of all age groups although it is more common among the younger speakers, especially the selection of Dat (see Thráinsson et al. 2015: 44).

Table 14. Selection (%) by different age groups of Acc and Dat subject for five nominative experiencer verbs (IceDiaSyn).

Verbs	15 year olds		20–25		40–45		65–70	
	Acc	Dat	Acc	Dat	Acc	Dat	Acc	Dat
<i>hlakka til</i> 'look forward to'	38.6	46.2	47.0	25.5	44.6	23.8	33.8	21.0
<i>kvíða fyrir</i> 'be anxious about'	44.7	38.6	40.0	32.5	41.0	21.5	16.4	12.5

Now if structural Nom is the original case for *hlakka til*, one would not have expected it to yield to lexical Acc or Dat, especially not the idiosyncratic Acc. Similarly, if structural Nom is the original case for *kvíða fyrir*, it is a puzzle under the CDH why the lexical case marking (Acc or Dat) should ever have developed.

Viðarsson (2009) and Jónsson and Eythórsson (2011) also point out that there is some evidence in the history of Icelandic that Dat has been replaced by (supposedly idiosyncratic) Acc with some experiencer verbs. This issue is further investigated by Ingason (2009: 105ff.), who also cites a few examples of Acc instead of Nom with the verb *kannast við* 'find familiar' in very informal Internet contexts like the following (Ingason 2009: 107):

- (38) *Djöfull kannast mig við hann!*
 devil is-familiar me.ACC with him
 'Fuck, I totally know this guy.'

The informal register here makes hypercorrection an unlikely explanation, as Ingason points out.²²

There is also some evidence for a similar development in Faroese. The Old Norse verb *þurfa* 'need' only takes a Nom subject and this verb still does in Icelandic. Its Faroese descendant *tørva* 'need', on the other hand, takes a Dat subject (cf. *Føroysk orðabók*). It was included in the fill-in task used by J&T 2002 and 2004 and the results are given in Table 15 (see Jónsson and Eythórsson 2005: 237, 239).

22. See also Jónsson (this volume) who discusses instances where one idiosyncratic case (Dat) replaces another (Gen).

Table 15. Selection (%) by different age groups of Acc and Dat subject for the Faroese experienter verb *tørva* ‘need’ (J&T 2002 and 2004).

Verb	Nom		Acc		Dat	
	12 yr	Adults	12 yr	Adults	12 yr	Adults
<i>tørva</i> ‘need’	31.1	2.4	2.1	0.0	64.3	97.3

The fact that so many of the children selected Nom with *tørva* and almost none of the adults, and also the fact that the dictionary *Føroysk orðabók* gives no examples with Nom, suggests that the selection of Nom is due to the Nominative Substitution so commonly found in Modern Faroese and not to a preservation of the original Nom. The results obtained by sentence evaluation in FarDiaSyn and shown in Table 16 support this conclusion.

Table 16. Positive evaluation (%) of Nom and Dat as subject case with the experienter verb *tørva*.

Verb	< 20		20–39		40–59		60+	
	Nom	Dat	Nom	Dat	Nom	Dat	Nom	Dat
<i>tørva</i> ‘need’	32.1	56.5	21.9	76.0	30.9	77.0	23.2	83.8

As Table 16 shows, Dat is more generally accepted than Nom by all age groups²³ and although participants of all age groups also accept Nom to some extent, it is least commonly accepted by the oldest age group. This suggests that Nominative Substitution may be a change in progress with this verb as with many other experienter verbs in Faroese. What is special about *tørva* is that here it would be a restoration of the original structural Nom, if one assumes that *tørva* corresponds to Old Norse *þurfa*.

The facts just presented, together with the ones discussed in the preceding subsection, indicate that the relative “strength” of structural vs. (thematic) lexical case may vary from time to time. We will return to this issue in the next section.

6. The implications of the development of case marking

In this paper we have assumed the tripartite division of case presented schematically in Figure 1, repeated here for convenience.

23. This general conclusion is also supported by a quick search on Google. Here Dat with *tørva* is much more frequent than Nom.

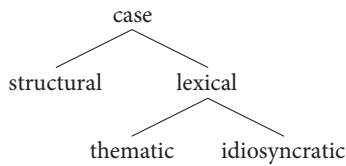


Figure 1. The three types of case proposed by Yip, Maling and Jackendoff 1987.

We have used this division to explain the observed variation in and development of subject case marking in Icelandic and Faroese, relying heavily on the Case Directionality Hypothesis in (11) repeated once more below:

- (11) Case Directionality Hypothesis (CDH)
- a. lexical case → structural case
 - b. idiosyncratic lexical case → thematic lexical case

As pointed out above, (11a) predicts Nominative Substitution of subject case (Accusative Substitution of object case, cf. below) and (11b) predicts Dative Substitution of subject case. Both are found in Icelandic and Faroese but to a somewhat different extent. The observed similarities and differences can be summarized as follows (see also the summary in (32) above):

- (39) a. **Nominative Substitution** is more extensive in Faroese than in Icelandic. It has led to a complete replacement of Acc as the case of theme subjects, whereas some theme verbs still take Acc subjects in Icelandic, at least in the language of some speakers. Nominative Substitution is also found in Faroese with experiencer verbs originally taking thematically regular Dat whereas this is (still) very rare in Icelandic. In addition, Nominative Substitution affects the subject case of passives of several Faroese verbs taking Dat objects in the active. This is not found in Icelandic.
- b. **Dative Substitution** is found in both languages. It has sometimes gone further in Faroese than in Icelandic. Thus it has completely ousted the idiosyncratic Acc case of some verbs, e.g. *vanta* 'lack, need' whereas Acc is still found with *vanta* in Icelandic.

Needless to say, we have left many stones unturned in this paper. One major issue that has cropped up several times but not been discussed in any detail is the following:

- (40) What determines the relative strength of structural vs. thematic lexical case?

As pointed out above, the CDH predicts that structural case (Nom of subjects, Acc of objects) should replace lexical case, even thematic lexical case. Although this has happened to a certain extent in the history of Icelandic and Faroese, as we have seen

(Nominative Substitution), thematic Dat case is still quite robust as the subject case of certain verbs, especially in Icelandic. There is even some evidence that lexical case has replaced structural Nom in some instances (cf. Section 5.2).

An interesting “case in point” (pun intended) is the development of object case marking of certain verbs in Icelandic and Faroese. In Old Norse verbs of ‘kicking, throwing, moving something (quickly)’ took a Dat object – and they still do in Modern Icelandic (cf. Jónsson 2009, Thráinsson 2015: 191):

- (41) *Hún kastaði/sparkaði/varpaði boltanum/*boltann.*
 she threw/kicked/threw ball-the.DAT/*ACC

In Icelandic this pattern has been extended to new verbs and new uses of old verbs that otherwise take objects marked with structural Acc. Thus many speakers prefer Dat with verbs like *faxa* ‘send as a fax’, *negla* ‘kick a ball hard’ (whereas *negla* ‘nail a nail’ takes Acc), etc. (see Thráinsson 2015: 194, Thráinsson et al. 2015: 57ff.; see also Jónsson 2009). This shows the strength of the thematic Dat as an object case in Icelandic – it can even win out over the structural Acc with certain verbs. In Faroese the opposite development has taken place with verbs of a similar semantic class: With verbs of ‘kicking and throwing’ structural Acc has replaced the thematically regular Dat as object case (cf. Thráinsson et al. 2012: 430, Thráinsson 2015: 191, see also Jónsson 2009). Thus compare (42) to (41):

- (42) *Hon kastaði/sparkaði/varpaði *bóltinum/bóltin.*
 she threw/kicked/threw ball-the.*DAT/ACC

This suggests that Dat is stronger as thematic lexical object case in Icelandic than in Faroese.

The fact that many new verbs in Icelandic take Dat objects has been extensively discussed by Barðdal in several publications (e.g. 1999, 2001, 2008, 2011a). She uses the productivity of Dat object case as a part of her general argumentation against the division of case into structural and lexical (see e.g. Barðdal 2011a, 2011b), as pointed out above. Other linguists have interpreted this as evidence for the claim that dative case marking of objects is sometimes thematic although Dat is always a lexical case, as we have argued here (see e.g. Jónsson 2003, 2005, Maling 2002 in addition to the literature cited above). But what about subject case marking of new experiencer verbs? As mentioned above, the Faroese verb *mangla* ‘need, lack’ is a loanword in Faroese and it is so marked in Jakobsen’s dictionary (1891) and enclosed in brackets as if it does not really count as Faroese. But it is clear that the tendency to mark experiencer subjects of certain verbs with a Dat has affected this verb, since most speakers prefer Dat over Nom with this verb, especially the older ones (cf. Table 11 above).

It has turned out to be very difficult, on the other hand, to find examples of new verbs in Icelandic that take thematically case marked Dat subjects. Thus the recently

introduced verb *fíla* ‘like’ (derived from English *feel*) can only take a Nom subject although it obviously belongs to the same semantic class as the dative experiencer verbs *líka* ‘like’, *leiðast* ‘be bored by’ etc.:

- (43) a. *Ég fíla/*Mér fílar þetta ekki.*
 I.NOM like/*me.DAT likes this not
 b. **Ég líka/Mér líkar þetta ekki.*
 I.*NOM like/me.DAT likes this not
 ‘I don’t like this.’

Barðdal (2001: 137 and in several other publications) maintains that the middle form *analýserast* of the borrowed verb *analýsera* ‘analyze’ can take a Dat subject and gives the following example:²⁴

- (44) *Mér analýseraðist þetta þannig að ...*
 me.DAT analyzed this such that
 ‘I came to the analysis that ...’

This is apparently the closest we can come to a new Icelandic experiencer verb taking a Dat subject.²⁵ Barðdal (2008: 101–118) and Ingason (2010: 108–111) claim, however, that there is some experimental evidence showing that speakers will accept or select oblique subjects with nonce verbs. But why there are not more new experiencer verbs taking Dat subjects is a question we leave for future research.

7. Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the results of recent research into variation and change in subject case in Icelandic and Faroese. We first reviewed the hypothesis that morphological case can profitably be divided into *structural case* and *lexical case* and the latter in turn into *regular* (thematic) and *idiosyncratic case* as first proposed

24. It seems to us that this example sounds a bit like something one could say half jokingly, as a nonce form on the analogy of examples like *Mér reiknaðist til að þetta ...* ‘I (Dat) estimated that this ...’, My estimation was that this ...’, for instance. In any case it is clear that this is not a productive pattern.

25. The verb *lukkast* ‘succeed, manage’ might also be a case in point, albeit an old one. We do not know when it entered the language (from Danish), but it is attested with a Dat subject already in the 16th century, according to *Ritmálssafn*, the vocabulary compiled from written Icelandic sources by the Arnarnagænan Institute in Reykjavík (see <http://lexis.hi.is/cgi-bin/ritmal/leitord.cgi?adg=daemi&n=301048&s=368469&l=lukkast>). But maybe *lykkes* was an oblique subject verb in earlier stages of Danish, cf. Modern Danish *det lykkedes mig at ...* ‘I managed to’ (lit. ‘It managed me (Acc) to ...’).

by Yip, Maling and Jackendoff (1987) and subsequently developed by Jónsson (1997–1998) and others. On the basis of this division the Case Directionality Hypothesis (CDH) was introduced (Eythórsson 2002 and later work), stating that structural case replaces lexical case, with idiosyncratic case yielding to regular case. We then tested this hypothesis on data which were collected in various projects on variation in subject case in Icelandic before moving on to comparable data from Faroese. We concluded that the development of subject case in Icelandic and Faroese is largely in accordance with the prediction of the CDH, although subject case marking is not identical in the two languages. In particular, Faroese seems to be more “advanced” in terms of subject case development than Icelandic, having virtually lost lexical Acc as a subject case and showing more instances of Nominative Substitution for both idiosyncratic Acc and thematic Dat. Finally, we discussed two apparent subject case marking puzzles in Faroese and Icelandic and the relative strength of regular lexical case on the one hand and structural case on the other, relating to the concept of productivity. These puzzles suggest that although the division of case marking assumed here (structural vs. lexical, thematic lexical vs. idiosyncratic lexical) goes a long way in accounting for the observed development and variation found in Icelandic and Faroese case marking, it does not tell the whole story. More work is needed before we fully understand the forces behind case marking and its development.

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