

CASE AND DOUBLE OBJECTS IN ICELANDIC

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Abstract

This paper argues that case assignment to indirect objects in Icelandic is determined by theta-roles in that recipient and benefactive indirect objects are always assigned dative case. Indirect objects with accusative case are neither recipients nor benefactives. The association between dative case and recipients or benefactives holds for direct objects and subjects as well as indirect objects. Nominative subjects which seem to be counterexamples are argued to have some agent properties which prevents them from getting dative case. The idea is independently motivated by the fact that all ditransitive verbs in Icelandic have nominative subjects even if some of these subject are not agents in the usual sense of that word.

1. Introduction

It is a fairly standard assumption that case on arguments divides into structural case and lexical (inherent) case.¹ This is particularly clear in a language like Icelandic which makes productive use of four morphological cases: nominative, accusative, dative and genitive. Structural case can be seen as the default case assigned by general rules of syntax, yielding nominative on subjects and accusative on objects. By contrast, lexical case is specified in the lexical entry of a predicate as it is associated with the theta-role of the argument that receives lexical case. The lexical cases in Icelandic are dative and genitive (on subjects and objects) and accusative case on subjects.

It is often assumed that assignment of lexical case in Icelandic is quite idiosyncratic even though certain tendencies have been noted, e.g. for dative case to appear on goals. However, Jónsson (1997-1998) and Maling (2000) have shown that lexical case assignment is much more predictable than previously thought. Thus, Jónsson (1997-1998) illustrates that certain verb classes can have dative but not accusative subjects and Maling (2000) identifies classes of transitive verbs that can only have dative objects. This is not to deny that lexical case is truly idiosyncratic in some cases, but the lesson to be learned is that many regularities can be found once lexical case assignment is thoroughly examined.

This paper reports the results of an extensive investigation into the semantics of case in the double object construction in Icelandic, building on the earlier works of Zaenen, Maling & Thráinsson (1985) and Yip, Maling & Jackendoff (1987). Syntactic issues concerning double objects in Icelandic have been widely discussed (see e.g. Rögnvaldsson 1982, Falk 1990, Ottósson 1991, Holmberg 1991, Holmberg & Platzack 1995, Collins & Thráinsson 1996 and Jónsson 1996:132-143) but they will be largely ignored here. A major aim of this paper is to supply further evidence for the view that lexical case assignment in Icelandic is quite regular, not only because of the association between dative case and certain theta-roles but also because of negative

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conditions blocking the assignment of lexical case in general or some lexical case in particular.

The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 provides an overview of possible case patterns with ditransitive verbs in Icelandic. Section 3 addresses the fact that subjects of ditransitive verbs in Icelandic always have nominative case and argues that this follows from the semantic properties of the subject in almost all cases. Case marking on indirect objects is discussed in section 4 and shown to be mostly predictable from the theta-roles borne by indirect objects. In particular, it is argued that recipient and benefactive indirect objects always get dative case. Case marking on direct objects is examined in section 5 and shown to be more idiosyncratic than case marking on indirect objects. Section 6 presents arguments for the view that recipients and benefactives receive dative case irrespective of grammatical function. Finally, some concluding remarks are offered in section 7.

2. Overview of ditransitive verbs in Icelandic

Since Icelandic has four morphological cases (nominative, accusative, dative and genitive) there are 64 logically possible case patterns with ditransitive verbs. Still, Icelandic only has five attested case patterns (cf. Yip, Maling & Jackendoff 1987) as exemplified in (1) below:

- (1) a. Hann gaf litla barninu bókina (dative - accusative)
he (N) gave the small child (D) the book (A)
- b. Jón skilaði henni vasanum (dative - dative)
John (N) returned her (D) the vase (D)
'John returned the vase to her'
- c. Ég synjaði þeim leyfis (dative - genitive)
I (N) denied them (D) permission (G)
'I refused to grant them permission'
- d. Þú leynir mig sannleikanum (accusative - dative)
you (N) hide me (A) the truth (D)
'You (sg.) hide the truth from me'
- e. Þeir spurðu manninn tveggja spurninga (accusative - genitive)
they (N) asked the man (A) two questions (G)

Note that there are no genitive indirect objects in Icelandic. This is probably not a coincidence, but see 4.3 below for further discussion.

The subject of double objects verbs in Icelandic is always nominative and the objects are always non-nominative. The second fact follows from the first because nominative objects in Icelandic only occur with oblique subjects ("quirky subjects") as exemplified below:

- (2) a. Jóni leiðast **þessir fundir**
John (D) bore these meetings (N)
'John finds these meetings boring'

b. Barninu batnaði **veikin**
 the child (D) recovered the illness (N)
 ‘The child recovered from the illness’

c. Þeim áskotnaðist **þessi stóll**
 them (D) acquired this chair (N)
 ‘They acquired this chair’

Some verbs in Icelandic take an oblique subject and a nominative object, but no verb has nominative case on both subject and object.² Hence, the absence of oblique subject ditransitives rules out the possibility of nominative objects with ditransitive verbs.

The dative-accusative verbs are by far the most common class of ditransitive verbs in Icelandic. The other classes are very similar in size but accusative – genitive verbs are the smallest class. This can be seen in the following table:

(3) Verb class	Approximate number
Dative - Accusative verbs (NDA-verbs)	220
Accusative - Dative verbs (NAD-verbs)	37
Dative - Dative verbs (NDD-verbs)	29
Dative - Genitive verbs (NDG-verbs)	28
Accusative - Genitive verbs (NAG-verbs)	21

These numbers are based on extensive lists of ditransitive verbs in Icelandic (see appendix). They include verbs that require a reflexive indirect object, idiomatic expressions and verbs that are archaic as ditransitives (as most of the NAG-verbs are). Hence, these numbers are probably too high for Modern Icelandic.

In Modern Icelandic, NDA-verbs are the only productive class of ditransitive verbs, i.e. the only class that is open to new lexical items such as the verb *faxa* ‘fax’:

(4) Hann *faxaði* mér *samninginn*
 he (N) faxed me (D) the contract (A)

The NDA-verbs are also syntactically different from other double object verbs in that they allow inversion of the two objects under certain conditions and passivisation of the direct object³ (but see Zaenen, Maling & Thráinsson 1985, Ottósson 1991, Holmberg 1991 and Collins & Thráinsson 1996 for further discussion).

² At least three verbs in Icelandic can have an accusative subject and a nominative object: *grípa* ‘catch’, *henda* ‘happen’ and *sækja* ‘fetch’. With all of these verbs the nominative argument can be a subject (and it usually is with *grípa* and *sækja*).

³ In my judgment, this is not true for all NDA-verbs, especially those that have a benefactive indirect object, e.g. the verb *halda* ‘hold’:

- (i) a. Þeir *héldu* Jóni *þessa veislu*
 they threw John (D) this party (A)
 b. *Þeir *héldu* *þessa veislu* Jóni
 they threw this party (A) John (D)
- (ii) a. Jóni *var* *haldin* *þessi veisla*
 John (D) was thrown this party (N)

As discussed by Zaenen, Maling & Thráinsson (1985), there are no genuine double object verbs with two accusative objects in Icelandic. Some verbs take two accusative NPs where the second one is not an object but rather a predicate (e.g. *skipa* ‘appoint’, *kalla* ‘call’ and *kjósa* ‘elect’) a cognate object (e.g. *kyssa e-n rembingsskoss* ‘kiss sby a big kiss’) or an adverbial NP (e.g. *keyra e-n þessa leið* ‘drive sby this way’). In addition, the verbs *taka* ‘take’ and *kosta* ‘cost’ take two accusative NPs where the second one is a measure phrase:

- (5) *Bókin kostar nemendur 30 dollara*
the book (N) costs students (A) 30 dollars (A)
‘The book costs students 30 dollars’
- (6) *Þetta tekur mig tíu mínútur*
this (N) takes me (A) ten minutes (A)

Measure phrases differ syntactically from objects e.g. in that they cannot be extracted across negation (Rizzi 1990) as shown below:

- (7) **Hvað* trúir hann ekki [að bókin kosti nemendur ___]?
what believes he not that the book costs students
‘How much doesn’t he believe that the book costs students?’
- (8) **Hversu langan tíma* trúir hann ekki [að þetta taki mig ___]?
how long time believes he not that this takes me
‘How long doesn’t he believe that this will take me?’

In contrast to measure phrases, objects can be extracted across the negation in Icelandic as shown in (9):

- (9) *Hvað* trúir hann ekki [að ég hafi gefið barninu ___]?
what believes he not that I have given the child
‘What doesn’t he believe that I gave the child?’

In my judgment, (7) and (8) improve somewhat if the objects of the verbs *kosta* and *taka* are left out but there is still a contrast between these examples and (9).

3. Subjects of ditransitive verbs

That subjects of ditransitive verbs in Icelandic always have nominative case is not surprising, since they are usually agents. As many researchers have observed, oblique subjects in Icelandic are typically experiencers and cannot be agents. This is true even if the term agent is understood in a rather broad sense, including participants that (unwillingly) bring about the event (see Jónsson 1997-1998). The validity of this claim is e.g. shown by the fact that subjects of psych-verbs with experiencer objects (e.g. *angra* ‘anger’, *gleðja* ‘please’, *hneyksla* ‘shock’, *hryggja* ‘sdden’, *pirra* ‘annoy’ etc.) are always nominative but subjects of these verbs are usually non-volitional agents.

b.??Þessi veisla var haldin Jóni
this party (N) was thrown John (D)

However, there are some ditransitive verbs in Icelandic whose subject is not an agent. With most of these verbs, the subject is an experiencer of some emotion or cognition.⁴ These verbs are either NDA-verbs (10) or NDG-verbs (11):

- (10) eiga sér ‘have’, eiga sér stað ‘happen’, geta sér gott orð ‘get a good reputation’, hugsa sér ‘imagine’, ímynda sér ‘imagine’, kunna þakkir ‘be grateful to’, lá ‘blame’, líða ‘tolerate’, muna ‘remember’, skulda ‘owe’, standast snúning ‘be sby’s equal’, umbera ‘tolerate’, vilja ‘want’, virða til vorkunnar ‘have sympathy for’, þola ‘tolerate’
- (11) frýja ‘question’, kenna sér meins ‘feel pain’, ryðja sér rúms ‘spread’, unna ‘not begrudge’, vænta sér góðs af ‘expect good from’

Since all of these verbs have a dative indirect object and an accusative or genitive direct object, the expected case patterns with oblique subjects would be DDA, DDG, ADA and ADG. As oblique subject verbs in Icelandic never have dative objects, it could be argued that the absence of these case patterns follows from a syntactic ban on dative objects cooccurring with oblique subjects. That may be correct, but it is more appealing to exclude non-existing case patterns by semantic restrictions on oblique case assignment that are independently motivated and I will attempt to do so here.

Many of the verbs in (10) - (11) require a reflexive indirect object (which in third person dative is *sér* ‘self’). There are also many verbs that are only found in fixed expressions which include the second object (e.g. *standast snúning* (A)) or even both objects (e.g. *kenna sér* (D) *meins* (G)).

For those ditransitive verbs that require a simple reflexive object, only nominative is a possible subject case. This is so because verbs with oblique subjects in Icelandic cannot have simple reflexive objects. It should be noted that a few verbs with accusative subjects can take the complex reflexive *sjálfan sig* as an object, e.g. *dreyma* ‘dream’:

- (12) a. Manninn dreymdi sjálfan sig
the man (A) dreamed self Refl (A)
‘The man dreamed about himself’
- b.*Manninn dreymdi sig
the man (A) dreamed Refl (A)
‘The man dreamed about himself’

This leaves us with a few non-reflexive ditransitive verbs like *kunna þakkir*, *lá*, *frýja* and *unna*:

- (13) a. **María** kann honum bestu þakkir fyrir allt saman
Mary (N) knows him (D) best thanks (A) for all together
‘Mary is very grateful to him for everything’

⁴ Note that ditransitive verbs like *óska* ‘wish’ or *þakka* ‘thank’ denote feelings (in which case the subject is an experiencer) or expressions of feelings (in which case the subject is an agent). As expected, all such verbs in Icelandic have nominative subjects.

- b. **Ég** lái þeim það ekki að hafa gefist upp
I (N) blame them (D) it (A) not to have given up
'I don't blame them for giving up'
- c. **Enginn** frýr honum vits
nobody (N) doubts him (D) intelligence (G)
'Nobody questions his intelligence'
- d. **Sumir** gátu ekki unnt Jóni þess að hafa unnið
some (N) could not accept John (D) it (G) to have won
'Some people begrudged John for having won'

All of these verbs have a nominative subject even if the subject is an experiencer and a reflexive is not required. Thus, there is no obvious reason why these verbs could not have oblique subjects like the verbs shown in (14):

- (14) a. **Mér** finnst erfitt að ljúga
me (D) finds difficult to lie
'I find it difficult to lie'
- b. **Fólkinu** gramdist þessi framkoma
the people (D) angered this behavior (N)
'The people were angered by this behavior'
- c. **Þig** vantar ekki peninga
you (A) lacks not money (A)
'You (sg.) don't need money'

However, a closer inspection reveals an important semantic difference between oblique subject verbs and the non-reflexive verbs listed in (10) - (11). Most of the verbs in the latter class denote feelings or situations which the subject can have some control over as seen by the fact that they are possible as complements of the verb *reyna* 'try'.⁵ This is exemplified below with the verbs *líða*, *virða til vorkunnar* and *skulda*:

- (15) a. ?Ég reyni að líða fólki svona hegðun
I (N) try to tolerate people (D) such behavior (A)
- b. Ég reyni að virða honum þetta til vorkunnar
I (N) try to respect him (D) this (A) to sympathy
'I try to excuse him because of this'
- c. Ég reyni að skulda þeim sem minnst
I (N) try to owe them (D) as least (A)
'I try to owe them as little as possible'

⁵ Most of the reflexive verbs listed in (10)-(11) are also possible as complements of *reyna*.

By contrast, oblique subject verbs seem to denote feelings or situations which the subject has no control over and therefore cannot be complements of *reyna* ‘try’. This is shown in (16):

- (16) a. *Ég reyni að finnast erfitt að ljúga
I (N) try to find difficult to lie
‘I try to find it difficult to lie’
- b. *Ég reyni að gremjast þessi framkoma
I (N) try to anger this behavior
‘I try to be angered by this behavior’
- c. *Ég reyni að vanta ekki peninga
I (N) try to lack not money
‘I try not to run out of money’

Note that the ungrammaticality of these examples has nothing to do with the fact that the oblique subject is a null subject of an infinitival clause, so called PRO. Oblique subjects can be PRO if the control verb takes an experiencer subject, e.g. *reikna með* ‘expect’:⁶

- (17) Ég reikna með að vanta peninga fljótlega
I (N) expect to lack money (A) soon

The contrast between (15) and (16) suggests that the verbs *líða*, *virða til vorkunnar* and *skulda* have agent properties not shared by oblique subject verbs, and as a result, cannot have lexical case on the subject.

Of all the non-reflexive verbs listed in (10) and (11) only *kunna þakkir* and *vilja* are excluded as complements of *reyna*:

- (18) a. *Ég reyni að kunna honum þakkir fyrir bókina
I (N) try to know him (D) thanks (A) for the book
‘I try to be grateful to him for the book’
- b. *Ég reyni að vilja börnunum allt hið besta
I (N) try to want the children (D) all the best (A)
‘I try to want all the best for the children’

This suggests that there is no principled reason why these two ditransitive verbs have nominative subjects rather than oblique subjects but for all other ditransitive verbs in Icelandic oblique case on the subjects seems to be excluded on semantic or syntactic grounds.

4. Indirect objects of ditransitive verbs

As illustrated in section 2, dative case is by far the most common case on indirect objects of ditransitive verbs in Icelandic but accusative case is also possible. There are no genitive indirect objects and a possible reason for that is discussed in 4.3 below. Whether indirect objects get dative or accusative case depends on the theta-role

⁶ For further discussion of oblique PRO in Icelandic, see Sigurðsson (1991).

of the indirect object. As argued in 4.1 and 4.2 below, indirect objects which are recipients or benefactives always get dative case.

4.1 Dative case

As many authors have observed, there is a significant link between dative case and goals in Icelandic. This is particularly clear with case marking on indirect objects. Unfortunately, this is only a strong correlation, not an absolute rule, since there are some ditransitive verbs that have accusative goals (see 4.2 below) and monotransitive verbs that have accusative or nominative goals (see 6.2 below).

Under the usual definition, goals are ‘endpoints of motion’ both literally and metaphorically. Since this is a very broad definition, it is reasonable to assume that there are at least three subclasses of goals: recipients, benefactives and what we might call targets. The last term is simply intended to cover those goals that are neither recipients nor benefactives. Once goals are divided into three subclasses, the next step is to investigate if any of these classes can be associated with dative case as a genuine linguistic rule (i.e. a rule without exceptions).

Dative indirect objects are usually recipients or benefactives but some seem to be targets, e.g. the indirect objects of the psych-verbs discussed in section 3. These verbs include *kunna þakkir* ‘be grateful’, *lá* ‘blame’, *frýja* ‘question’ and *unna* ‘not begrudge’.

As shown below, many ditransitive verbs denoting transfer or communication have dative recipients as indirect objects:

- (19) a. Hann sendi **mér** þessa grein
he (N) sent me (D) this article (A)
- b. Nefndin úthlutaði **henni** þessari íbúð
the committee (N) assigned her (D) this flat (D)
- c. Við óskum **þeim** allra heilla
we (N) wish them (D) all luck (G)
‘We wish them good luck’

As these examples illustrate, dative recipients are not only found with NDA-verbs but also with NDD-verbs and NDG-verbs.

It is sometimes difficult to distinguish recipients from benefactives. Roughly speaking, the difference is that benefactives are intended rather than actual recipients and they are not part of the verb’s core meaning. Benefactives are typically found with verbs of creation (including verbs of cooking), selection or acquisition:

- (20) a. Ég bakaði **mér** köku
I (N) baked me (D) a cake (A)
‘I baked myself a cake’
- b. Konurnar pöntuðu **sér** eftirrött
the women (N) ordered Refl (D) a desert (A)
‘The women ordered themselves a desert’

- c. Þú veiddir þér fisk í soðið
 you (N) caught Refl (D) fish (A) for cooking
 ‘You caught yourself fish for cooking’

In many cases, a benefactive must be a reflexive pronoun bound by the subject of the same clause (see Holmberg & Platzack 1995:201-204). In that respect, Icelandic clearly differs from e.g. Swedish or English where benefactives can easily be non-reflexive.⁷ However, with some verbs in Icelandic the benefactive does not have to be a reflexive:

- (21) a. Þeir fundu henni nýtt starf
 they (N) found her (D) a new job (A)
- b. Samningurinn opnar fyrirtækinu nýja möguleika
 the contract (N) opens the company (D) new possibilities (A)
 ‘The contract opens new possibilities for the company’
- c. Bærinn reisti skáldinu minnisvarða
 the town (N) erected the poet (D) a monument (A)

With some verbs the benefactive is simply someone who benefits from the action denoted by the verb. In such cases the benefactive need not be a reflexive:

- (22) a. Þetta tæki auðveldar okkur störfin
 this tool (N) facilitates us (D) the jobs (A)
 ‘This tool makes the jobs easier for us’
- b. Hann gerði mér stóran greiða
 he (N) did me (D) a big favor (A)
- c. Þetta sparar fólkinu mikla vinnu
 this (N) saves the people (D) much work (A)
 ‘This saves the people a lot of work’

The term benefactive also includes those that are adversely affected by the action denoted by the verb (so called malefactives):

- (23) a. Myrkrið torveldaði þeim leitina
 the dark (N) made difficult them (D) the search (A)
 ‘The dark made the search difficult for them’
- b. Við gerðum henni grikk
 we (N) did her (D) a trick (A)
 ‘We played a trick on her’

⁷ For discussion on benefactives in English, see Green (1974), Oehrle (1976), Pinker (1989), Gropen et.al. (1989), Jackendoff (1990), Goldberg (1995) and Wechsler (1995) among others.

Non-reflexive benefactives seem to have been more common in Old Icelandic than Modern Icelandic. This can be seen in the famous poem attributed to Egill Skallagrímsson when he was only 7 years old:

- (24) Það mælti mín móðir / að **mér** skyldi kaupa /
it (A) said my mother (N) that me (D) should buy

fley og fagarar árar...
ship and beautiful oars (A)

‘My mother said that (they) should buy a ship and beautiful oars for me’
(Egils saga p. 415)

In this example, a non-reflexive benefactive occurs with the verb *kaupa* ‘buy’. This would be impossible in Modern Icelandic.

4.2 Accusative case

In view of the data discussed in 4.1, it is reasonable to hypothesize that there is a general rule linking dative case on indirect objects with recipients and benefactives in Icelandic. Hence, there should be no accusative indirect objects that are recipients or benefactives. As discussed below, this prediction is borne out.

There are two types of ditransitive verbs that have accusative case on the indirect object: NAG-verbs and NAD-verbs. Since these two classes are quite different they will be discussed separately.

There are only about six NAG-verbs in current use in Icelandic (see appendix) and they all denote communication which has the purpose of making the referent of the indirect object respond (or not respond) in some way:⁸

- (25) a. Þeir spurðu **manninn** fréttu
they (N) asked the man (A) news (G)
‘They asked the man if he had any news’
- b. Við kröfðum **þau** skýringa
we (N) demanded them (A) explanations (G)
‘We demanded explanations from them’
- c. Ég vil biðja **þig** þess að fara hljóðlega
I (N) want ask you (A) it (G) to leave quietly
‘I want to ask you to leave quietly’

The accusative objects in (25a) and (25b) are targets but not recipients since the referents of these objects do not receive the direct object. Clearly, (25a) does not imply that the man received news nor does (25b) imply that they got explanations.

The situation in (25c) is different because the accusative object of *biðja* ‘ask’ is a recipient in the sense that it receives the message expressed by the infinitival clause but also a non-recipient in that it is expected to act according to this message. In Talmy’s (1985) system of force dynamics, the accusative object of *biðja* is an agonist

⁸ Interestingly, the indirect object of *biðja* ‘ask’ gets dative case if it is a benefactive (e.g. *biðja sér griðu* ‘ask for mercy for oneself’). This is exactly what one would expect if there is a rule linking dative case to benefactives.

(the focal force entity) whereas the subject is an antagonist (the force element that opposes the agonist). As discussed in 6.2, arguments which are only partly recipients are not subject to the rule assigning dative case to recipients. It is therefore unsurprising that the indirect object of *biðja* gets accusative case.⁹

NAD-verbs have a rather different meaning from other ditransitive verbs in Icelandic. There are basically two kinds of verbs in this class. First, verbs denoting deprivation such as *ræna* ‘rob’, *svipta* ‘deprive’ and *ryja* ‘rob’:

- (26) a. Þjófarnir rændu **hana** aleigunni
 the thieves (N) robbed her (A) everything (D)
 ‘The thieves robbed her of everything’
- b. Lögreglan sviptir **marga** ökuskírteininu
 the police (N) deprives many (A) the driver’s license (D)
 ‘The police takes the driver’s license away from many people’
- c. Þetta hneyksli hefur rúið **ráðherrann** öllu trausti
 this scandal (N) has robbed the minister (A) all credibility (D)
 ‘This scandal has ruined the minister’s credibility’

The accusative object of these verbs is presumably a source (cf. Zaenen, Maling & Thráinsson 1985) but crucially it is neither a recipient nor a benefactive. Hence, the dative rule does not apply here.

The other class of NDA-verbs are verbs denoting connection:

- (27) a. Sumir vísindamenn tengja **flóðin** loftslagsbreytingum
 some scientists (N) connect the floods (A) atmosphere changes (D)
 ‘Some scientists connect the floods to changes in the atmosphere’
- b. Innflytjendur reyna að samlaga **sig** nýju þjóðfélagi
 immigrants (N) try to adapt Refl (A) a new society (D)
 ‘Immigrants try to adapt themselves to a new society’

As with deprive-verbs, the accusative on the indirect object of connect-verbs is expected given the fact that it is neither a recipient nor a benefactive. This object is probably best classified as a theme.

As Maling (2000) points out, the dative on the direct object of connect-verbs is presumably of the same kind as the dative assigned by adjectives that denote connection or comparison (such as *áþekkur* ‘similar’, *háður* ‘dependent on’, *líkur* ‘similar’, *skyldur* ‘related to’, *svipaður* ‘similar’, *tengdur* ‘connected to’ etc.):

- (28) Sveinn er líkur **móður sinni**
 Sveinn (N) is similar mother Refl (D)
 ‘Sveinn resembles his mother’

Before we part with accusative indirect objects, I would like to discuss a class of verbs that superficially look like ditransitive NAD-verbs. Most of these verbs are spray-load

⁹ The same applies to the NGA-verbs *hvetja* ‘urge’ and *letja* ‘discourage’.

verbs or fill verbs (see Levin 1993:117-120 for a list of such verbs in English). They include *hlaða* ‘load’, *klæða* ‘dress’ and *gæða* ‘endow’:

- (29) a. *Vinumennirnir hlóðu vagninn heyi*
the farm workers (N) loaded the wagon (A) hay (D)
‘The farm workers loaded the wagon with hay’
- b. *María klæddi barnið hlýjum fötum*
Mary (N) dressed the child (A) warm clothes (D)
‘Mary dressed the child in warm clothes’
- c. *Ég vil gæða söguna meira lífi*
I (N) want endow the story (A) more life (D)
‘I want to make the story more lively’

A list of these verbs is provided in (30). As in other lists in this paper, I have put in brackets those verbs that I have found in dictionaries of Modern or Old Icelandic and are not part of my vocabulary.

- (30) *ata auri* ‘throw mud at, slander’, *ausa* ‘ladle’, *blanda* ‘mix’, *búa* ‘fill’, (*byggja* ‘inhabit’), (*dreifa* ‘distribute’), (*drepa* ‘butter’), *fylla* ‘fill’, *gyrða sverði* ‘arm with a sword’, *gæða* ‘endow’, *hjúpa* ‘cover’, *hlaða* ‘load’, *hylja* ‘cover’, *húða* ‘plate’, *klæða* ‘dress’, (*rjóða* ‘anoint’), *skipa* ‘fill’, *skreyta* ‘decorate’, *slá* ‘decorate with metal’, *smyrja* ‘anoint, butter’, (*spenna belti* ‘put a belt on’), (*stökkva* ‘splash’), *sveipa* ‘cover’, *sæma* ‘honour’, *troða* ‘fill’, *umvefja* ‘surround’, *úða* ‘spray’, *vefja* ‘wrap’, (*verpa* ‘burden’), *þekja* ‘cover’

The accusative with verbs like *hlaða* ‘load’, *klæða* ‘dress’ and *gæða* ‘endow’ is a location¹⁰ whereas the dative denoting the thing that is put in or on that location is a theme. The accusative on the first NP is presumably due to the fact that the object is a location as I am not aware of any example of a lexically case-marked argument that is a location in Icelandic. The dative on the second NP is also expected since transitive verbs of movement typically govern dative case on the object undergoing movement (see Maling 2000).

As discussed by Maling (1991), there are reasons to believe that the dative NP is an adjunct. First, the dative is optional with most of these verbs and its use is stylistically marked as formal.¹¹ To take an example, it is much more natural with *klæða* ‘dress’ to use a PP instead of the dative NP:

- (31) *María klæddi barnið í hlý föt*
Mary (N) dressed the child (A) in warm clothes (A)

¹⁰ Yip, Maling & Jackendoff (1987) claim that the accusative object of *gæða* ‘endow’ and *sæma* ‘honour’ is a recipient. If correct, these verbs would be a counterexample to my claim that recipients always get dative case in Icelandic. However, I believe that this object is a location. For *gæða*, this is supported by the fact that the accusative object is usually something inanimate whereas recipients are typically animate. As for *sæma*, the argument is that the dative NP must be something that can be put on the person who gets the honour, e.g. a medal.

¹¹ More accurately, the dative is optional with most of these verb if the accusative object is present. Some of the verbs in (30) can have a dative object and a PP denoting the location (e.g. *hlaða heyi á vagninn* ‘load hay on the wagon’) in which case the dative is obligatory.

This contrasts with typical ditransitive verbs where the second object is obligatory and cannot be replaced by a PP.

Second, it seems that the dative cannot be extracted across the negation, an indication that the dative is an adjunct and not an argument:

- (32) ??**Hvaða fötum** trúir þú ekki [að María hafi klætt barnið ___]?
 which clothes believe you not that Mary has dressed the child
 ‘Which clothes don’t you believe that Mary dressed the child in?’

By contrast, it is more natural to extract the second object of a genuine ditransitive verb like *ræna* ‘rob’ across negation as illustrated below:

- (33) ?**Hvaða fötum** trúir þú ekki [að þjófarnir hafi rænt hana ___]?
 which clothes believe you not that the thieves have robbed her
 ‘Which clothes don’t you believe that the thieves robbed her of?’

Admittedly, the contrast illustrated in (32) and (33) is subtle and may not hold for all native speakers of Icelandic.

To conclude this section, we have seen that ditransitive verbs with accusative indirect objects are semantically different from ditransitive verbs with dative indirect objects. Most importantly, verbs in the former class do not have indirect objects which are recipients or benefactives. With NAG-verbs the indirect object is usually a target but with NAD-verbs (of the deprive-class) the indirect object seems to be a source.

4.3 Why are there no genitive indirect objects?

As discussed in section 2, genitive case only occurs on direct objects of ditransitive verbs. In most earlier studies, the absence of genitive indirect objects has been treated as an accidental gap. Still, the number of verbs with genitive objects is sufficiently high to suggest that this cannot be an accident although the number is quite low compared to those verbs that have dative or accusative objects.

It is quite revealing in this respect to look at the following lists of verbs that take genitive subjects and monotransitive verbs that take genitive objects:

- (34) Verbs with genitive subjects:

bíða ‘await’, geta ‘be mentioned’, gæta ‘be noticable’, (kenna ‘be noticable’),
 missa við ‘be absent’, njóta ‘be present’, þurfa ‘be needed’

- (35) Monotransitive verbs with genitive objects:

biðjast ‘ask’, bíða ‘wait’, freista ‘tempt, try’, geta ‘mention’, gjalda ‘pay for’,
 gæta ‘look after’, hefna ‘revenge’, iðrast ‘repent’, kenna ‘feel’, krefjast
 ‘demand’, minnst ‘remember, commemorate’, (missa ‘lose’), njóta ‘enjoy’,
 sakna ‘miss’, vitja ‘visit’, þarfnast ‘need’, þurfa ‘need’

Interestingly, all the intransitive verbs with genitive subjects listed in (34) can also be transitive verbs with genitive objects (as seen in (35)). It is also striking that no genitive subjects are experiencers since accusative and dative subjects are usually experiencers. The subject of all the verbs listed in (34) is best labelled as a theme,

where theme is taken to be the unmarked theta-role. The same also holds for the genitive objects of the verbs in (35) and the NAG-verbs and NDG-verbs listed below:

(36) Dative – Genitive verbs (NDG-verbs):

afla ‘acquire’, árna heilla ‘wish luck’, (beiða ‘ask’), biðja ‘ask’, (bæta ‘make up to’), (fá ‘cause’), frýja ‘question’, (fyrirmuna ‘prevent’), geta sér til ‘guess’, (hefna ‘revenge’), (hverfa hugar ‘change sby’s mind’), kenna sér meins ‘feel pain’, kveðja sér hljóðs ‘speak’, leita ‘look for’, (ljá ‘give’), (misunna ‘envy’), (nema ‘take’), (orka ‘get’), óska ‘wish’, (reka ‘revenge’), ryðja sér rúms ‘spread’, synja ‘deny’, unna ‘not begrudge’, varna ‘prevent’, (væna ‘wish’), vænta sér góðs af e-u ‘expect good from sth’, æskja ‘wish’, (örvænta sér ‘despair’)

(37) Accusative – Genitive verbs (NAG-verbs):

(beiða ‘ask’), biðja ‘ask, request’, dylja ‘not tell’, (eggja ‘exhort’), (firna ‘blame’), (fregna ‘ask’), (frétta ‘ask’), (fylla ‘fill’), (fyrirkunna ‘blame’), (fýsa ‘exhort’), hvetja ‘urge’, krefja ‘demand’, (kunna ‘accuse’), (kveðja ‘call on, summon’), letja ‘discourage’, (minna ‘remind’), (saka ‘accuse’), spyrja ‘ask, inquire’, (væna ‘promise’), (æsa ‘exhort’), (æsta ‘demand, ask’)

That the genitive objects with NAG-verbs and NDG-verbs are only themes in the unmarked sense (and not e.g. in the sense of undergoing movement) is shown by the fact that none of the NAG-verbs or NDG-verbs denote transfer. This is an interesting fact, especially concerning NDG-verbs, since many ditransitive verbs with dative indirect objects denote transfer (e.g. *gefa* ‘give’ and *skila* ‘return’).

In view of this, we can conclude that all genitive arguments must be themes whatever grammatical function they have. This rules out genitive case on indirect objects as indirect objects cannot be themes. Since genitive is clearly the most idiosyncratic case on arguments in Icelandic, this also shows that there are severe limits to the ‘quirkiness’ of lexical case marking.

5. Direct objects

In this section, I will briefly discuss case assignment to direct objects of ditransitive verbs in Icelandic. In comparison to indirect objects, case on direct objects seems to be much more idiosyncratic (cf. Maling 2000). This can be seen in pairs like the following:

(38) NDA-verbs	NDD-verbs
útvega ‘get, procure’	redda ‘get, procure’
rétta ‘hand, pass’	slaka ‘hand, pass’
afhenda ‘deliver’	skila ‘return’

Since the contrasting verbs in these pairs are quite similar in meaning, there is no obvious semantic reason why the direct object is accusative with the verbs in left hand column but dative with the verbs in the right hand column. In fact, the main difference between *útvega* ‘get, procure’ and *redda* ‘get, procure’ is that the second verb is informal. Similarly, the main difference between *rétta* ‘hand, pass’ and *slaka* ‘hand, pass’ is that *slaka* is slang.

The verbs in (38) above denote transfer but verbs of future having also have accusative or dative case on the direct object. To give a few examples, *bjóða* ‘offer’, *dæma* ‘award by a ruling’ and *tryggja* ‘guarantee’ are NDA-verbs whereas *lofa* ‘promise’, *heita* ‘promise’ and *úthluta* ‘award’ are NDD-verbs.

Note also the non-agentive ditransitive verbs discussed in section 3. Most of these verbs have accusative direct objects but some have genitive direct objects even if there seems to be no systematic difference in meaning (as can be seen e.g. with the NDA-verb *þola* ‘tolerate’ vs. the NDG-verb *unna* ‘not begrudge’).

However, there is at least one class of ditransitive verbs where accusative is the only possible case on the direct object. This is the class of verbs denoting preparation of food or the creation of a new object by using tools e.g. *byggja* ‘build’, *elda* ‘cook’, *höggva* ‘carve’, *prjóna* ‘knit’, *rista* ‘toast’, *sjóða* ‘boil’, *smíða* ‘build’ and *tálga* ‘whittle’ (see appendix). Levin (1993:172-175) refers to these verbs as build-verbs and verbs of preparing and they are a subclass of verbs of creation. All of these verbs are NDA-verbs where the dative is a benefactive and the accusative denotes the thing being created.¹² There are NDD-verbs and NDG-verbs that take benefactive objects but none of them belong to this semantic category (see appendix).

6. Beyond double objects

As argued in section 4, indirect objects that are recipients or benefactives are always assigned dative case in Icelandic. This raises the following question: Does this association only hold for indirect objects? In other words, does the grammatical function of recipients and benefactives make a difference? As discussed in 6.1-6.3 below, the answer seems to be that this association holds across grammatical functions (i.e. subjects, direct objects and indirect objects).

6.1 Benefactives

As far as I know, benefactive objects of verbs always bear dative case in Icelandic.¹³ This can be seen in monotransitive verbs that take a (reflexive) benefactive object:

(39) a. Jón kveikti sér í vindli
John (N) lit Refl (D) in a cigar
‘John lit (himself) a cigar’

b. Hann náði sér í ríka eiginkonu
he (N) got Refl (D) in a rich wife
‘He got himself a rich wife’

In these examples, the benefactive is a direct object, but that has no effect on the case marking. The benefactive still gets dative case.

Additional examples of benefactive datives that are not indirect objects of ditransitive verbs can be seen in (40) below:

(40) a. Þetta er allri þjóðinni til hagsbóta
this is all the nation (D) to advantage

¹² It is not easy to find verbs of creation in Icelandic which assign dative case to the direct object but such verbs exist, e.g. *breyta* ‘change’ and *umblyta* ‘transform’.

¹³ There are two prepositions in Icelandic that take benefactive objects: *fyrir* ‘for’ which governs accusative case and *handa* ‘for’ which governs dative case. They differ in that the object of *handa* must be an intended recipient whereas *fyrir* has many other uses (just like *for* in English).

‘This is to the advantage of the nation’

- b. Þessi niðurstaða var **öllum** til sóma
 this result was everyone (D) to honour
 ‘This result was to the honour of everyone’

In these examples, the benefactives go with the underlined PPs headed by *til* ‘to’. What is particularly interesting about these examples is that there is no verb here that could be responsible for the dative on the benefactives and PPs do not assign case. This means that the dative on the benefactives in (40) could only be supplied by a general rule which assigns dative case to benefactives.¹⁴

6.2 Recipients or targets as direct objects

There are some monotransitive verbs in Icelandic that govern accusative case on goal objects, e.g. *aðstoða* ‘assist’, *heimsækja* ‘visit’, *kveðja* ‘say goodbye to’, *styðja* ‘support’ and *styrkja* ‘support, make stronger’. These objects should be targets rather than recipients, if my claim that recipients always get dative case is correct. I think this is rather straightforward with *heimsækja* and *kveðja* but some discussion is required for the other verbs.

Let us begin by looking at *styðja*. One could argue that the accusative object is a recipient because it has a ditransitive paraphrase with *veita* ‘give’ where the first object is a dative recipient: *veita e-m stuðning* ‘give sby support’. However, there are various differences between *styðja* and *veita stuðning* which suggest that the accusative object of *styðja* is a target. This can be illustrated by the following examples:

- (41) a. Ég styð **Eirík**
 I (N) support Eric (A)
 b. Ég veiti **Eiríki** stuðning
 I (N) give Eric (D) support (A)

In (41a), *styðja* is most naturally understood as having a stative meaning, i.e. ‘I am in favour of Eiríkur’ (e.g. for a job or elected office). This example does not entail transfer of anything from the subject to the accusative object. By contrast, (41b) implies some transfer from the subject to the dative indirect object. In (41b), *styðja* is eventive and as a result the present tense must be understood as habitual (‘I usually give Eric support’) or referring to a future time (‘I will give Eric support’).

The contrast between *styðja* and *veita stuðning* is even clearer when the first object is an abstract thing as in (42) below:

- (42) a. Ég styð **þessa tillögu**
 I (N) support this proposal (A)
 b.??Ég veiti **þessari tillögu** stuðning
 I (N) give this proposal (D) support (A)

¹⁴ See also Maling (1991) for similar examples.

Since recipient objects usually denote animate things, (42b) sounds very strange. However, (42a) is perfectly acceptable because targets can easily be abstract things.

Similar considerations apply to *styrkja*. This verb can take an inanimate object (43a) but the ditransitive paraphrase *veita styrk* cannot (43b):

- (43) a. Sjóðurinn styrkir **rannsóknir**
the fund (N) supports research (A)
- b. *Sjóðurinn veitir **rannsóknnum** styrk
the fund (N) gives research (D) support (A)

The verb *aðstoða* is different from *styðja* and *styrkja* in that the accusative object must be animate. Therefore, it is much more difficult to argue that the object is a target rather than a recipient. Still, I think there are subtle differences between *aðstoða* and the ditransitive paraphrase *veita aðstoð* ‘give assistance’ which suggest that the object of *aðstoða* is a target. This can be seen e.g. in (44) below:

- (44) a. Lögreglan aðstoðar **gangandi vegfarendur**
the police (N) assists pedestrians (A)
- b. ?Lögreglan veitir **gangandi vegfarendum** aðstoð
the police (N) gives pedestrians (D) assistance (A)

The example in (44a) is fine because *aðstoða* is most naturally used when no transfer is implied. However, (44b) is less natural since assistance by the police usually does not involve transfer.

On the other hand, *veita aðstoð* is quite normal when the assistance involves actual transfer, e.g. of money as in (45b):

- (45) a. Bankinn aðstoðar **fátækar þjóðir**
the bank (N) assists poor nations (A)
- b. Bankinn veitir **fátækum þjóðum** aðstoð
the bank (N) gives poor nations (D) assistance (A)

Note that (45a) is fine but the most salient reading involves assistance in the form of advice rather than transfer of money.

There is also a difference between *aðstoða* and *veita aðstoð* in terms of temporal boundedness. The former is temporally unbounded as seen by the fact that it is possible with temporal phrases like *í klukku tíma* ‘for an hour’. The latter seems to be temporally bounded as one would expect given the fact that it has a recipient:

- (46) a. Jón aðstoðaði **mig** í klukku tíma
John (N) assisted me (A) for an hour
- b. ?Jón veitti **mér** aðstoð í klukku tíma
John (N) gave me (D) assistance (A) for an hour

To summarize, we have examined some monotransitive verbs governing accusative case on a goal object and concluded that the object is a target rather than a recipient in

all cases.¹⁵ This is consistent with the claim that recipients are always associated with dative case. There are also monotransitive verbs that assign dative case to a goal object, e.g. *fulltingja* ‘assist’, *hjálpa* ‘help’, *leiðbeina* ‘guide’, *liðsinna* ‘assist’ and *refsa* ‘punish’. Presumably, the objects of these verbs are targets, but that does not create any problems because targets can get dative case (as discussed in 4.1).

6.3 Recipients or targets as subjects

Some verbs in Icelandic have goal subjects. As discussed by Jónsson (1997-1998), goal subjects in Icelandic either have nominative or dative case. This is illustrated in (47) and (48) below:

- (47) a. **Sumir** öðlast aldrei innri ró
 some (N) get never inner piece (A)
- b. **Hann** eignaðist þessa jörð
 he (N) became owner of this land (A)
- c. **Margir** græddu peninga á þessu
 many (N) made money (A) on this
- (48) a. **Jóni** áskotnaðist þessi penni
 John (D) got this pen (N)
- b. **Henni** hlotnaðist mikill heiður
 she (D) received a great honour (N)
- c. **Mörgum** græddist fé á þessu
 many (D) made money (N) on this

As pointed out by Jónsson (1997-1998), there are no goal subjects with accusative case in Icelandic. Verbs that take nominative and dative goal subjects are listed in (49) and (50) below:

(49) Verbs with nominative goal subjects

eignast ‘come into possession of’, erfa ‘inherit’, fá ‘get’, græða ‘make money’, hafa upp úr kraftinu ‘get’, hljóta ‘get, receive’, hreppa ‘get’, komast yfir ‘acquire’, vinna ‘win’, öðlast ‘get’

(50) Verbs with dative goal subjects

áskotnast ‘get’, berast ‘receive’, bjóðast ‘be offered’, bætast ‘be added’, falla í skaut ‘get’, fénast ‘make money’, fyrirgefast ‘be forgiven’, fæðast ‘be born to’, gefa góðan byr ‘get a favourable wind’, gefast ‘be given’, græðast fé ‘make money’, hlotnast ‘get’, leggjast til ‘get’, leyfast ‘be permitted’, líðast ‘be tolerated’, opnast ‘be opened’, tæmast arfur ‘get an inheritance’, veitast ‘be given’, vinnast tími til ‘get time to’

¹⁵ The objects of these verbs are not benefactives, as I understand the term, even though the objects benefit from the action denoted by the verb (at least in the case of *stýðja*, *styrkja* and *aðstoða*). This is so because the object is part of the verb’s core meaning.

The English translations might suggest that many of the verbs listed in (49) have exactly the same meaning but they differ in what kind of objects they can take. The verb with the broadest usage is *fá* ‘get’ which can occur with all kinds of objects (similar to English *get*).

All of the dative subject verbs in (50) have the so called middle suffix *-st* except for the fixed expressions *falla í skaut* ‘get’ and *gefa góðan byr* ‘get a favourable wind’ and three of the nominative subject verbs in (49) have this suffix. Most of the dative subject verbs with *-st* in (50) are derived from ditransitive verbs of the NDA-class as shown in the following table:

(51) ditransitive	dative subject
bera ‘carry’	berast ‘receive’,
bjóða ‘invite’	bjóðast ‘be offered’,
fyrirgefa ‘forgive’	fyrirgefast ‘be forgiven’
fæða ‘give birth’	fæðast ‘be born to’
gefa ‘give’	gefast ‘be given’
leggja til ‘provide’	leggjast til ‘get’
leyfa ‘permit’	leyfast ‘be permitted’
líða ‘tolerate’	líðast ‘be tolerated’
opna ‘open’	opnast ‘be opened’
veita ‘give’	veitast ‘be given’

In these pairs, the dative subject corresponds to the dative indirect object. One might conjecture that the dative on the subject is due to case inheritance¹⁶ but this would not carry over to the *-st*-verbs that are not derived from ditransitive verbs (e.g. *áskotnast*, *fénast* and *hlotnast*).

All the nominative subject verbs in (49) and most of the dative subject verbs in (50) have recipient subjects. This is rather clear because these verbs take an object which denotes the thing that is received (the theme). Therefore, the verbs in (49) pose a problem for the view that all recipients get dative case.

As discussed in section 3, nominative subjects can display some agent properties even if they are not agents under the usual definition of that term. This is shown by the fact that they can be embedded under the verb *reyna* ‘try’ (cf. the examples in (15)). By contrast, oblique subjects never display any agent properties and cannot be embedded under *reyna*. Interestingly, most of the nominative recipient subjects pass this test as exemplified in (52):

- (52) a. Sumir reyna að öðlast innri ró
 some (N) try to get inner peace (A)
- b. Hann hefur lengi reynt að eignast þessa jörð
 he (N) has long tried to become owner of this land (A)
- c. Allir reyna að græða peninga
 everybody (N) tries to make money (A)

¹⁶ See Maling (1991) for an extensive discussion of putative case inheritance with *-st*-verbs in Icelandic.

By contrast, dative recipient subjects have no agent properties as shown by the following examples:

- (53) a.*Jón reyndi að áskotnast þessi penni
John (N) tried to get this pen (N)
b.*Margir reyna að hlotnast mikill heiður
many (N) try to receive a great honour (N)
c.*María reyndi að græðast fé
Mary (N) tried to make money (N)

This is not surprising since verbs with dative recipient subjects are typically used in situations where the subjects gets the object by coincidence. Thus, one might say that the dative subjects of these verbs are “pure” recipients. By contrast, nominative recipients are not pure recipients and therefore not subject to the dative rule.

The only verbs with nominative recipients that do not pass the test with *reyna* easily are *erfa* ‘inherit’ and *hljóta* ‘receive’:

- (54) a.?Páll reyndi að erfa húsið
Paul (N) tried to inherit the house (A)
b.*Við reyndum að hljóta verðlaun (A)
we(N) tried to get a price

The problem with *erfa* is that it is difficult to imagine a scenario where the subject can make an effort to get an inheritance. However, once such scenarios are constructed (e.g. involving forged wills or killing of relatives), (54a) becomes acceptable. In fact, the same problem can be seen with *fá* ‘get’. This verb is most naturally embedded under *reyna* if the object is something the subject has some control over. Thus, (55a) is more natural than (55b) because your grades depend to a large degree on your own efforts (assuming that the grading is fair) but it is more difficult to control what Christmas presents you get.

- (55) a.Ég reyndi að fá góða einkunn
I (N) tried to get a good grade (A)
b.?Ég reyndi að fá bækur í jólagjöf
I(N) tried to get books (A) for Christmas present

The problem with (54b) is that the lexical semantics of *hljóta* appear to be incompatible with any kind of control by the subject. However, this verb is different from the dative subject verbs listed in (50) in that it is compatible with various inanimate subjects as shown in (56):

- (56) a. Bókin hlaut mikið lof
the book (N) received great praise (A)

- b. Þessi atburður hlaut litla umfjöllun
 this event (N) received small discussion (A)
 ‘This event was not discussed much (in the media)’
- c. Gatan mun hljóta nýtt nafn
 the street (N) will get a new name (A)

This can be taken as an indication that the nominative subject of *hljóta* is not a pure recipient since recipients are usually animate. Hence, dative case cannot be assigned to the subject of *hljóta*.

7. Conclusion

In this paper I have argued that case assignment to indirect objects in Icelandic is best understood if goals are divided into three subclasses: targets, recipients and benefactives. Indirect objects which are recipients or benefactives are always associated with dative case whereas targets either have dative or accusative case. Moreover, the association between dative case and recipients or benefactives seems to hold irrespective of grammatical function. Thus, in the terminology of Yip, Maling & Jackendoff (1987), dative case on benefactives and recipients is truly a “thematic” case.

In addition to positive associations, some new restrictions on lexical case assignment have emerged from this study. First, it has been argued that subjects with some agent properties cannot have lexical case. This restriction has been evoked to explain two facts: (a) that the subject of a ditransitive verb is always nominative, even if the subject is not an agent (under the usual definition of that term), and (b) that some recipient subjects have nominative case despite the rule associating dative case with recipients. Second, it has been shown that only themes (in the unmarked sense) can have genitive case. As a result, there can be no ditransitive verb in Icelandic with genitive case on the indirect object as indirect objects cannot be themes. Third, verbs of cooking and creation by the use of tools (such as *byggja* ‘build’ and *elda* ‘cook’) always assign accusative case to the object denoting the thing created. Hence, all ditransitive verbs in that semantic class are NDA-verbs.

It should be noted that some issues concerning case marking with ditransitive verbs in Icelandic have not been addressed here. I have e.g. not provided any explanation of the fact that double accusative objects are absent in Icelandic, although I believe that this paper may pave the way for finding the right answer. The relevance of semantic properties other than theta-roles for lexical case marking has also been ignored here, but that issue will have to be taken up in future work.

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Appendix: Lists of ditransitive verbs in Icelandic

The following lists of ditransitive verbs in Icelandic should be fairly exhaustive except for the list of NDA-verbs which is by far the biggest class of ditransitive verbs in Icelandic. The list of NDA-verbs only includes verbs in current usage and I have also left out the non-agentive verbs listed in section 3. Ditransitive verbs that are not part of my vocabulary and I have found in dictionaries or handbooks (of Modern or Old Icelandic) are in brackets. Some of these verbs are probably archaic as ditransitives. For an extensive list of Icelandic verbs with dative objects with examples the reader is referred to Maling (2000).

(A) Dative – Accusative verbs (NDA-verbs)

I. Verb that denote transfer or future having

afhenda ‘hand out’, ánafna ‘leave to sby in a will’, borga ‘pay’, byrta eitru ‘poison’, bæta ‘compensate’, dæma ‘award by a ruling’, eigna ‘claim, attribute’, fá ‘hand over’, færa ‘bring’, gefa ‘give’, gjalda ‘pay’, greiða ‘pay’, launa ‘repay’, lána ‘lend’, láta í té ‘grant’, leggja lið ‘assist’, leggja til ‘provide’, leigja ‘rent’, ljá ‘lend’, rétta ‘pass’, rita ‘write’, selja ‘sell’, senda ‘send’, sjá farborða ‘provide for’, skaffa ‘procure’, skammta ‘give by a portion’, skenkja ‘pour a drink for’, skrifa ‘write’, tryggja ‘ensure’, útvega ‘obtain’, veita ‘award’

II. Verbs that denote communication

banna ‘ban’, bjóða ‘offer’, boða ‘preach, announce’, einsetja sér ‘resolve’, fela ‘entrust’, fyrirgefa ‘forgive’, fyrirskipa ‘order’, heimila, ‘permit’, innprenta ‘instruct’, innræta ‘indoctrinate’, kenna ‘teach’, kunngera ‘announce’, kynna ‘introduce’, láta eftir ‘allow’, leiða fyrir sjónir ‘make understand’, leyfa ‘allow’, lofa ‘permit’, meina ‘deny’, opinbera ‘announce’, ráða ‘advise’, ráðleggja ‘advise’, segja ‘say, tell’, setja fyrir ‘set a task’, skipa ‘order’, slá gullhamra ‘flatter’, sýna ‘show’, telja trú um ‘convince’, tilkynna ‘inform’, tjá ‘tell, express’, vanda ekki kveðjurnar ‘be highly critical of’, vísa veginn ‘show the way’, votta samúð ‘express sympathy’, þakka ‘thank’, ætla ‘intend’

III. Verbs where the first object is a benefactive:

ala barn ‘bear a child’, auðvelda ‘make easier’, áskilja sér ‘reserve the right’, ávinna sér ‘earn’, baka vandræði ‘make trouble’, blanda ‘mix’, bóka sér far ‘book oneself passage’, brjóta sér leið ‘break oneself a passage’, byggja sér ‘build’, byrgja sýn ‘block the view’, draga sér fé ‘embezzle’, eiga sér ‘have’, elda sér ‘cook’, fastna sér konu ‘take a wife’, fá sér ‘get’, finna ‘find’, flytja kvæði ‘recite a poem’, gera ‘do’, geyma sér ‘preserve’, halda veislu ‘throw a party’, hasla sér völl ‘make a name for oneself’, helga ‘dedicate’, hita sér ‘warm, make’, höggva sér ‘carve, cut’, kaupa sér ‘buy’, kjósa sér ‘elect’, létta ‘make easier’, merkja sér ‘mark’, mynda sér skoðun ‘form an opinion’, mæla bót ‘find excuses for’, nota sér ‘make use of’, notfæra sér ‘make use of’, nýta sér ‘make use of’, opna ‘open up’, panta sér ‘order’, þrjóna sér ‘knit’, reikna sér ‘calculate for oneself’, reisa ‘erect’, rista sér ‘toast’, ryðja braut ‘make place for’, sauma sér ‘saw’, setja ‘set, pass’, sjóða sér ‘boil’, skapa ‘create’, skipa ‘appoint’, smíða sér ‘build’, smyrja sér ‘butter’, sníkja sér ‘scrounge’, spara ‘save’, stytta ‘shorten’,

syngja ‘sing’, sækja sér ‘fetch’, taka sér ‘take’, tálga sér ‘whittle’, temja sér ‘make a habit of’, tileinka ‘dedicate’, torvelða ‘make difficult’, treina sér ‘make sth last’, veiða sér ‘hunt, fish’, velja sér ‘choose’, villa sýn ‘deceive’, vinna gagn ‘do a great service’, yrkja ‘write poetry’

(B) Dative – Dative verbs (NDD-verbs)¹⁷

afsala sér ‘renounce’, (beina ‘give’), blása í brjóst ‘inspire’, blóta ‘sacrifice’, (bregða ‘blame’), (fleygja um nasir ‘reproach’), fórna ‘sacrifice’, frábiðja sér ‘beg off’¹⁸, heita ‘promise’, hóta ‘threaten’, játa ‘promise’, lofa ‘promise’, miðla ‘communicate’, núna um nasir ‘reproach’, (offra ‘sacrifice’), (ógna ‘threaten’), redda ‘get, fix’, segja upp ‘fire’, skila ‘return’, (skipta ‘divide, give’), skjóta skelk í bringu ‘frighten’, slaka ‘pass’, spá ‘predict’, (stela ‘steal from’), útdeila ‘distribute’, úthluta ‘distribute, award’, valda ‘cause’, (víkja ‘pass’), (væna ‘promise’)

(C) Dative – Genitive verbs (NDG-verbs); see (36)

(D) Accusative – Dative verbs (NAD-verbs)

I. Deprive-verbs

afklæða ‘undress’, (bera ráðum ‘deprive of authority’), bera sökum ‘accuse’, firra ‘deprive’, fletta klæðum ‘undress’, leynd ‘hide, not tell’, (nema fjörvi ‘kill’), rýja ‘deprive’, ræna ‘rob’, (skirra vandræðum ‘save from trouble’), (sneyða ‘make poor’), (stela ‘steal’), svipta ‘deprive’, (svíkja ‘betray’), undanskilja ‘except’, undanþiggja ‘except’, verja falli ‘defend from defeat’

II. Connect-verbs

gifta ‘marry’, (marka ‘make a mark’), (nálægja ‘bring closer’), samhæfa ‘adapt, adjust’, (samlaða ‘adapt, adjust’), samlaga ‘adapt, adjust’, samlíkja ‘compare’, samrýma ‘reconcile’, samræma ‘coordinate’, (samræta ‘adjust’), samsama ‘adjust’, samtengja ‘connect’, samtvinna ‘combine’, (skuldskeyta ‘connect by a debt’), tengja ‘connect’, (undirgefa ‘make dependent on’), (venja ‘make used to’)

III. Other NAD-verbs

beita ‘apply’, helga sig ‘dedicate oneself’, skipta máli ‘matter’

(E) Accusative – Genitive verbs (NAG-verbs); see (37)

¹⁷ In this list I have not included verbs with a dative object and an instrumental dative, e.g. *ansa* ‘answer, reply’, *gegna* ‘answer, reply’, *launa* ‘pay’ and *svara* ‘reply’.

¹⁸ This verb can also have a direct object with accusative or genitive case.