

# QUIRKY SUBJECTS IN ICELANDIC, FAROESE, AND GERMAN

## A RELATIONAL ACCOUNT

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### 1 Introduction

- Quirky Subject Constructions: non-nominative subjects & nominative objects

- (1) a. Jóni líkar þessi bók. [lexical quirks]  
Jón.DAT likes this book.NOM  
*Jón likes this book.*
- b. Þeim var hjálpað. [passive quirks]  
they.DAT was helped  
*They were helped.*

(Icelandic)

- Two prominent approaches: the standard analysis vs. the multistratal analysis
- Standard analysis: quirky subjects are regular subjects to which lexical/idiosyncratic case is assigned
  - LFG: Zaenen et al. 1985; Schätzle et al. 2015; Willgoths & Farrell 2009
  - HPSG: Bouma 1992; Sag et al. 1992; Müller to app.
  - Construction Grammar: Barðdal 2006; Barðdal & Eyþórsson 2012
  - GB & MP: Jónsson 1996, 2003; Sigurðsson 1989, 1992; Þráinsson 2007
- Multistratal analysis: quirky subjects are initial subjects that demote to indirect object
  - RG: Dziwirek 1994; Harris 1981; Perlmutter 1984
- Aims of this talk
  - I. discuss two sets of data that are problematic for the standard analysis (Faroese and Imbabura Quechua, and German)
  - II. present an alternative Arc Pair Grammar analysis of quirky subjects, which involves GFs at *multiple strata*
  - III. argue that the Arc Pair Grammar analysis captures quirky subjects in Icelandic, Faroese, Imbabura Quechua, and German
  - IV. conclude that the multistratal analysis is empirical superior and hence theoretically preferred

## **2 Quirky Subjects in Icelandic and Subjecthood**

- Analyzing the dative-marked nominals in (1) as subjects is due to the fact that they pass most subjects tests

### (2) Controllability

- a. Jón<sub>i</sub> vonast til að [PRO<sub>i</sub> líka þessi bók].  
Jón.NOM hopes PREP to like this book.NOM  
*Jón hopes to like this book.*
- b. Jón<sub>i</sub> vonast til að [PRO<sub>i</sub> vera hjálpað].  
Jón.NOM hopes PREP to become helped  
*Jón hopes to be helped.*

### (3) Subject-to-Subject Raising

- Ólaf<sub>i</sub> virtist [t<sub>i</sub> hafa leiðst].  
Ólaf.DAT seemed have bored  
*Olaf seemed to be bored.*

### (4) Subject-to-Object Raising (ECM)

- a. Hann telur Jón<sub>i</sub> [t<sub>i</sub> líka þessi bók].  
he.NOM believes Jón.DAT like this book.NOM  
*He believes Jón to like this book.*
- b. Hann telur Jón<sub>i</sub> [t<sub>i</sub> hafa verið hjálpað].  
he.NOM believes Jón.DAT have become helped  
*He believes Jón to have been helped.*

### (5) Reflexivization

- Henni<sub>i</sub> leiðist bókin sín<sub>i</sub>.  
her.DAT bores book.NOM REFL  
*She finds her book boring.*

- The only subject test they do not pass: verb agreement
- Standard analysis: the difference between quirky and non-quirky subjects reduces to case
  - quirky subjects bear lexical case, which cannot be overwritten
  - non-quirky subjects bear structural case, which can be overwritten

## **3 Problem I: Quirky Subjects in Faroese and Imbabura Quechua**

- The problem
  - Faroese and Imbabura Quechua have quirky subjects, that is, subjects bearing lexical case
  - But lexical case can be overwritten

### 3.1 Faroese

- Faroese (Barnes 2001) possesses quirky subjects that pass a number of subject tests, like controllability and reflexivization

### (6) Controllability

- a. Mær dámar mjólkina.  
I.DAT likes milk  
*I like milk.*

- b. Hann<sub>i</sub> royndi at [PRO<sub>i</sub> dáma matin].  
 he.NOM tried to like food  
*He tried to like the food.*

(7) Reflexivization

- Kjartani<sub>i</sub> dámar væl nýggja bil sin<sub>i</sub>.  
 Kjartin.DAT likes well new car REFL  
*Kjartin likes his new car.*

- Faroese differs from Icelandic in two ways
  - First, Faroese does not possess passive quirks, that is, passivized indirect objects appear in the nominative (Barnes 2001: Þráinsson et al. 2004: §5.4.4), cf. (4).

- (8) √Hann / \*honum bleiv hjálpin.  
 he.NOM he.DAT becomes helped  
*He is helped.*

- Possibly confounding factor: not all indirect objects can be turned into nominative, cf. (9) & (10) (Þráinsson et al. 2004: §5.4.4)

- (9) a. Teir takkaðu honum.  
 they thanked him.DAT  
*They thanked him.*  
 b. Honum bleiv takkað.  
 him.DAT was thanked  
 c. \*Hann bleiv takkaður.  
 he.NOM was thanked  
*He was thanked.*

- (10) a. Tey trúðu henni.  
 they believed her.DAT  
*They believed her.*  
 b. Henni bleiv trúð.  
 her.DAT was believed  
 c. \*Hon varð trúð.  
 she.NOM was believed  
*She was believed.*

- This does not necessarily show that Faroese has passive quirks; it could simply reflect that certain datives fail to undergo passivization, as in German

- (11) a. Sie danken ihm.  
 they thank him.DAT  
*They thank him.*  
 b. Ihm wird gedankt.  
 him.DAT becomes thanked  
 c. \*Er bekam gedankt.  
 he.NOM received thanked  
*He was thanked.*

- (12) a. Sie glauben ihr.  
 they believe her.DAT  
*They believe her.*
- b. Ihr wurde geglaubt.  
 her.DAT was believed
- c. \*Sie bekam geglaubt.  
 she.NOM received believed  
*She was believed.*

- Second, as Barnes (2001: 114) observes, the case quirky subjects bear is not retained under raising in Faroese

- (13) a. Jógvani tørvaði ein nýggjan bil.  
 Jógvan.DAT needed a new car  
*Jógvan needed a new car.*
- b. Eg helt Jógvan<sub>i</sub> [t<sub>i</sub> tørva ein nýggjan bil].  
 I.NOM believe Jógvan.ACC need a new car  
*I believed Jógvan to need a new car.*

- Possibly confounding factor: quirky subjects in present day Faroese are more and more replaced by nominative subjects, cf. (14) (Þráinsson et al. 2004: §5.4.2.1 & §7.6.2)

- (14) Eg dámi ikki tvøst.  
 I like not whale.meat  
*I don't like whale meat.*

- However, it is unlikely that (13b) is the result of such a change because *tørva* is listed in Þráinsson et al. 2004: 255 to only allow dative subjects

### 3.2 Imbabura Quechua

- The Faroese pattern is also found with quirky subjects in Imbabura Quechua (Jake 1983)
- Imbabura Quechua has quirky subjects passing subjects tests

#### (15) Controllability

- a. Ñuca-ta nana-n.  
 I-ACC hurt-3  
*I have pain.*
- b. Warmi<sub>i</sub> mana gushta-n-llu [PRO<sub>i</sub> nana-ju-na]-ta.  
 woman not like-3-neg hurt-PROG-INF-ACC  
*A woman doesn't want to have pain.*

(Cole & Jake 1978: exx. 10a & 18b)

- Imbabura Quechua differs from Icelandic
  - First, passivization of indirect objects and instrumentals in Imbabura Quechua results in the loss of their lexical case

- (16) a. Ñuca rucu-man micuy-ta cara-rca-ni.  
 I old-DAT food-ACC serve-PST-1.SG  
*I served food to the old man.*

- b. Rucu-ca micuy-ta cara-shca ca-rca.  
old-TOP food-ACC serve-PASS be-PST.3.SG  
*The old man was served food.*
- (17) a. Pala-wan alla-rca-ni.  
shovel-INSTR dig-PST-1.sg  
*I dug with the shovel.*
- b. Pala-ca alla-shca ca-rca.  
shovel-TOP dig-PASS be-PST.3.SG  
*The shovel was dug with.*
- Second, lexical quirks lose their case marking under raising, but show no case alternations otherwise
- (18) a. Ñuca-ca<sub>i</sub> tucu-shca-mi ca-ni [t<sub>i</sub> uma nana-chun]  
I-TOP happen-PRF-WIT be-1.SG head hurt.DS  
*My head happens to hurt (literally: I happen to hurt the head).*
- b. Ñuca-ca can-da<sub>i</sub> ricu-rca-ni [t<sub>i</sub> chaki nana-j]-ta  
I-TOP you-ACC see-PST-1.SG foot hurt-PRS-ACC  
*I saw that your foot was hurting (literally: I saw you the foot hurting).*
- (19) a. Jari-ta-ca uma-ta nana-n  
man-ACC-TOP head-ACC hurt-3
- b. \*Jari-ca uma-ta nana-n  
man-TOP head-ACC hurt-3  
*The man's head hurts (literally: to the man hurts the head).*
- In sum, Faroese and Imbabura Quechua show a combination of two properties that the standard analysis does not expect: they have quirky subjects and overwriting of lexical case

#### **4 Problem 2: Quirky Subjects in German**

- The problem: subject tests give inconclusive results

##### (20) Controllability

- a. Mir gefällt der Mann.  
I.DAT likes the man.NOM  
*I like the man.*
- b. \*Ich<sub>i</sub> versuche [PRO<sub>i</sub> der Mann zu gefallen].  
I.NOM try the man.NOM to like
- c. Ich<sub>i</sub> versuche [PRO<sub>i</sub> den Mann zu mögen].  
I.NOM try the man.ACC to like  
*I try to like the man.*

##### (21) Subject-to-Object Raising

- a. \*Ich sehe ihm<sub>i</sub> / ihn<sub>i</sub> [t<sub>i</sub> der Mann gefallen].  
I.NOM see he.DAT he.ACC the man.NOM like
- b. Ich sehe ihn<sub>i</sub> [t<sub>i</sub> den Mann mögen].  
I.NOM see he.ACC the man.ACC like  
*I see that he likes the man.*

- On the other hand, lexical quirks but not indirect objects can be controllers for adjunct control and for reflexives

- (22) a. Mir<sub>i</sub> gefällt das Buch [ohne PRO<sub>i</sub> es gelesen zu haben].  
 I.DAT likes the book.NOM without it read to have  
*I like the book without having read it.*
- b. \* Ich helfe ihm<sub>i</sub> [ohne PRO<sub>i</sub> danach gefragt zu haben].  
 I.NOM help he.DAT without thereafter asked to have  
*I help him without that he asked for that.*

- (23) a. Ihnen<sub>i</sub> gefällt es miteinander<sub>i</sub>.  
 they.DAT likes it with.each.other  
*They enjoy each other.*
- b. \* Ich habe den Ärzten<sub>i</sub> einander<sub>i</sub> empfohlen.  
 I.NOM have the doctors.DAT each.other.ACC recommended  
*I have recommended the doctors to each other.*

- German has no passive quirks, but only impersonal passives

- (24) a. Ihnen wurde geholfen.  
 they.DAT became helped  
*They were helped.*
- b. \* Sie<sub>i</sub> hoffen [PRO<sub>i</sub> geholfen zu werden].  
 they.NOM hope helped to become  
*They hope to be helped.*
- c. \* Ihm<sub>i</sub> wird geholfen [ohne PRO<sub>i</sub> danach gefragt zu haben].  
 he.DAT becomes helped without thereafter asked to have  
*He is helped without having asked for it.*
- d. \* Den Ärzten<sub>i</sub> wurde einander<sub>i</sub> empfohlen.  
 the doctors.DAT became each.other.ACC recommended  
*The doctors were recommended to each other.*

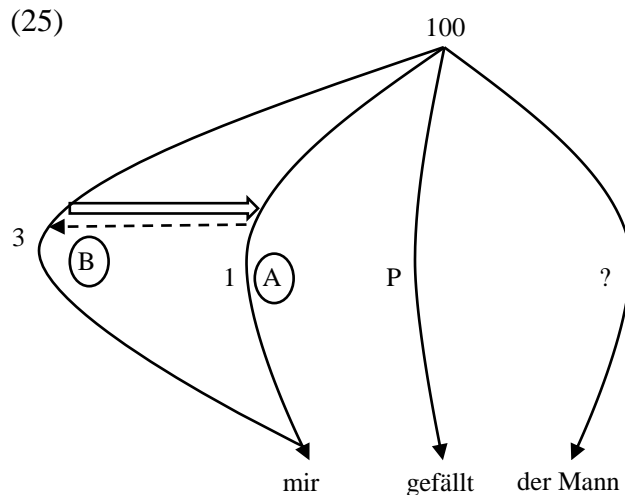
- Two strategies to deal with that mismatch
  - German lacks quirky subjects (Sigurðsson 2002, Bayer 2004, Haider 2010)
  - German is like Icelandic (Barðdal 2006; Barðdal & Eypórssson 2003; Fanselow 2002)
- Problems for the first strategy
  - It does not capture the overlap of quirky subject predicates in Icelandic and German
  - It does not account for the subject properties of lexical quirks (22 & 23)
- Problems for the second strategy
  - It does not explain why German doesn't pass all the tests Icelandic passes
  - It does not explain why German lacks passive quirks

## **5 Interim Conclusion**

- A language can have quirky subjects but not behave like Icelandic
- This is a problem for the standard analysis because the Icelandic pattern is a consequence of the analysis of quirky subjects
- So either quirky subjects are only quirky subjects when they behave like Icelandic quirky subjects (cf. Willgoß & Farrell 2009: 640 for precisely this claim regarding Quechua)
- Or the standard analysis mixes general aspects of quirky subjects with language particular properties of Icelandic

## 6 The Arc Pair Grammar Analysis

- Arc Pair Grammar is the successor of Relational Grammar (Aissen 1987; Johnson & Postal 1980; Pankau 2013; Postal 2010)
- The Arc Pair Grammar Analysis rests on two ideas
  - First, quirky subjects result from INVERSION, that is, an initial subject is demoted to indirect object
  - Second, given multistratality, subject properties are not tied to final subjects, but can make reference to subjects at distinct strata
- Inversion in German is illustrated in (25)



- Labels on arcs indicate GF: 1 = subject; 3 = indirect object; P = predicate
- Two metarelations: Sponsor (dotted arrow) and Erase (double arrow)
  - Sponsor (A,B): B's presence is due to A
  - Erase (B,A): A's morphological invisibility is due to B
- Subject properties
  - initial subjects: unsponsored subjects (arc 'A' in 25)
  - final subjects: non-sponsoring subjects
  - working subjects (arc 'A' and arc 'B' in 25)

(26) Def.: *Working 1*

An arc A is a Working 1 iff A is a final Term-Arc and A is R-sponsor-linked to a 1-Arc

- Term arcs comprise subject and object arcs
- R-Sponsor-Linked (A,B): (i) A = B; (ii) A sponsors B, or A sponsors a C that sponsors B, etc.; (iii) B sponsors A, or B sponsors C that sponsors A, etc.
- Three important laws

(27) *Unique Eraser Law*

If A erases B and C erases B, then A is identical to C

(28) *Final Arc Word Order Law*

Final Arcs determine word order

(29) *Case Marking Law*

Output Arcs determine Case Marking

[Output Arc  $\approx$  unerased arc]

## 7 Quirky Subjects in Icelandic

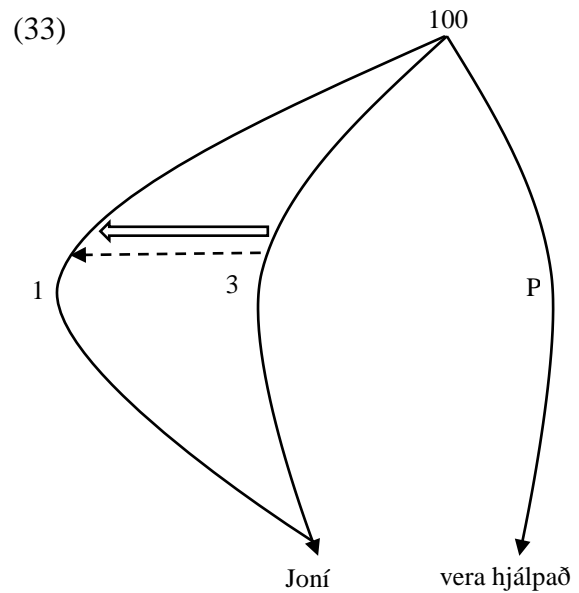
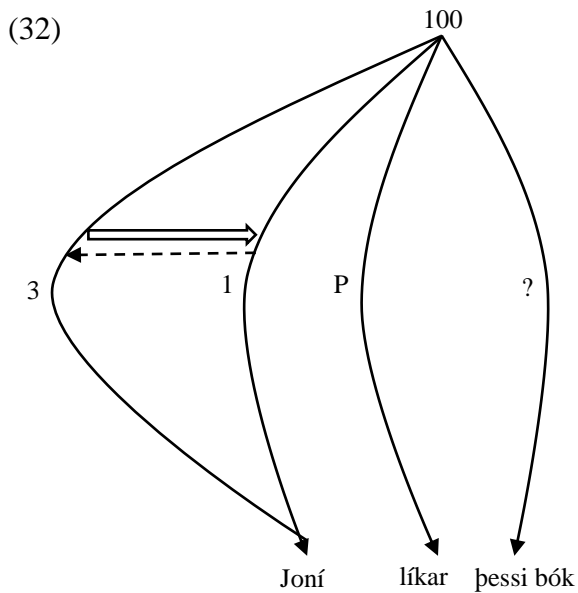
- Analysis
  - Lexical quirks and passive quirks have fundamentally different structures
  - Icelandic is subject to two language particular constraints that conspire to make lexical and passive quirks look similar

### (30) Subject Tests in Icelandic

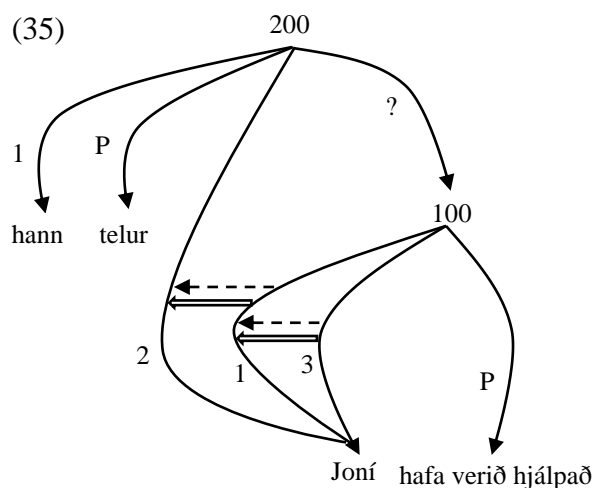
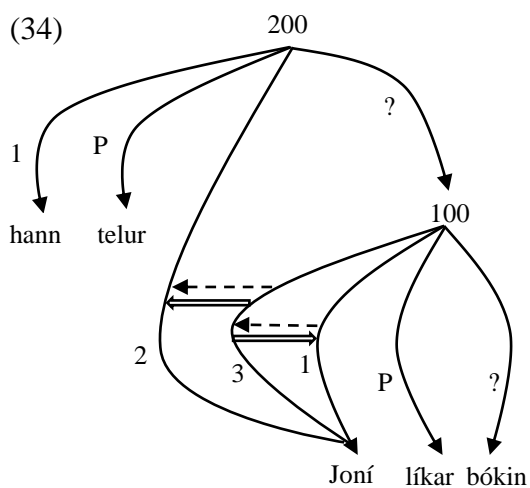
A reflexive is anteceded by a working 1  
 A controller DP is a working 1  
 A controlled DP is a working 1  
 Raising targets working 1s

### (31) 3-Arc = Output Arc Condition 3-Arc (A) → Output Arc

- Lexical and passive quirks in Icelandic



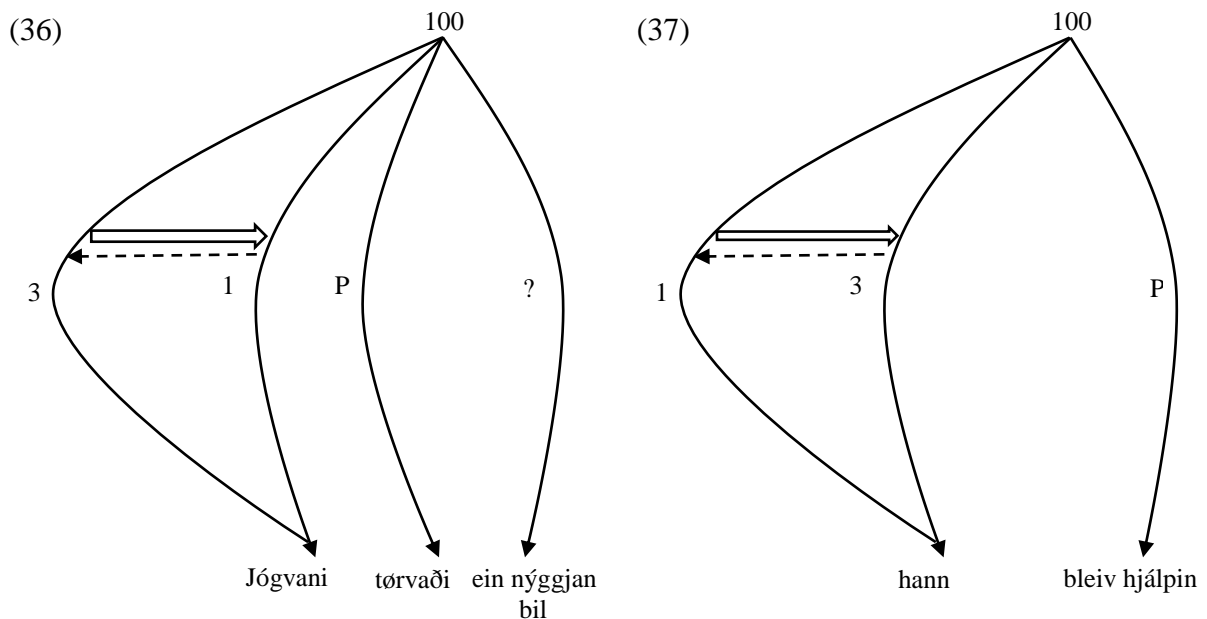
- Illustration: Subject-to-Object Raising



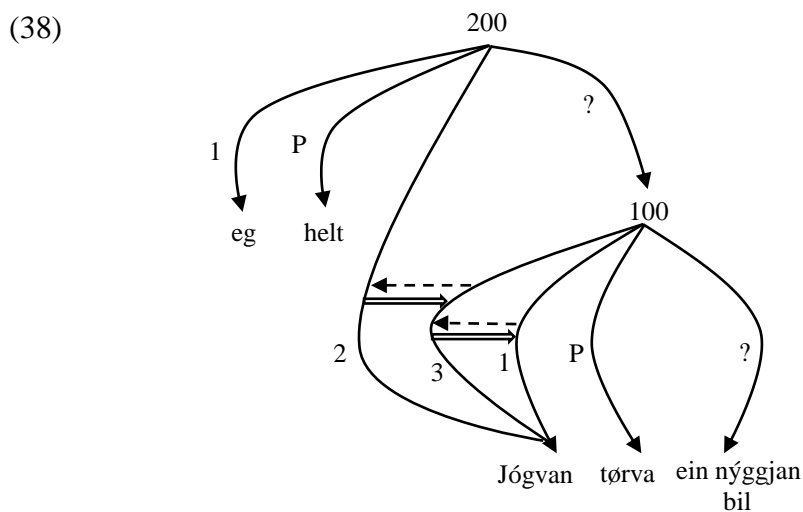


## 8 Quirky Subjects in Faroese and Imbabura Quechua

- Like in Icelandic, lexical quirks in Faroese and Imbabura Quechua pass all subject tests
- But both languages lack passive quirks and features loss of the lexical case under raising
- Analysis
  - That lexical quirks pass all subject tests is due to the same condition at work in Icelandic, namely that subject properties reference working 1s
  - The two differences follow from the *absence* of 3-Arc = Output Arc Condition in both languages
  - Rather, Faroese and Imbabura Quechua stick to a general preference that sponsoring arcs are erased
- Lexical and un-passive quirks in Faroese



- Subject-to-Object Raising in Faroese



## 9 Quirky Subjects in German

- German has neither passive quirks nor do lexical quirks pass all subject tests
- Analysis
  - In contrast to the other three languages, subjects tests in German reference sometimes working 1s and sometimes final 1s

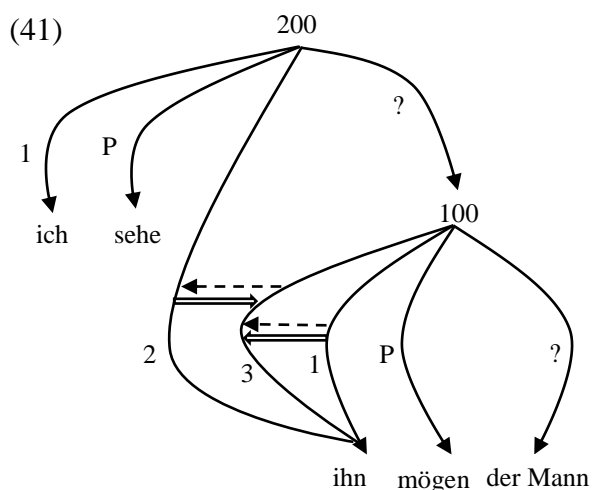
### (39) Subject Tests in German

- A reflexive is anteceded by a working 1
- A controller DP is a working 1
- A controlled DP is a final 1
- Raising targets final 1s

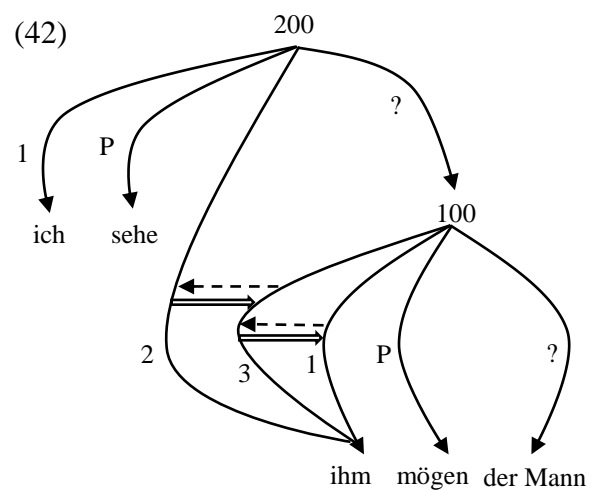
- Given this brute force distinction, the contrasts in (40) follow

- (40) a. Ihnen<sub>i</sub> gefällt es miteinander<sub>i</sub>.  
 they.DAT likes it with.each.other  
*They enjoy each other.*
- b. Mir<sub>i</sub> gefällt das Buch [ohne PRO<sub>i</sub> es gelesen zu haben].  
 I.DAT likes the book.NOM without it read to have  
*I like the book without having read it.*
- c. \*Sie<sub>i</sub> hoffen [PRO<sub>i</sub> geholfen zu werden].  
 they.NOM hope helped to become  
*They hope to be helped.*
- c. \*Ich sehe ihm<sub>i</sub> / ihn<sub>i</sub> [t<sub>i</sub> der Mann gefallen].  
 I.NOM see he.DAT he.ACC the man.NOM like  
*I see that he likes the man.*

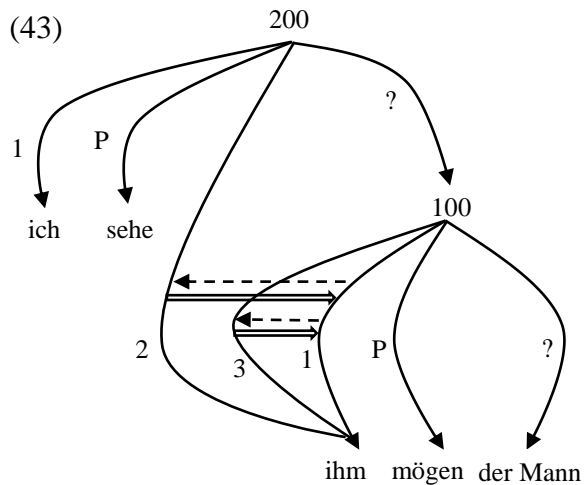
- And similar to Faroese and Imbabura Quechua, German lacks the 3-Arc = Output Arc Condition, and sticks to the general case that sponsoring arcs are erased
- Therefore, no well-formed Raising-to-Object structure is available in German



→ violation of the Unique Eraser Law (27)



→ violation of the condition that only final 1s are licit raising targets



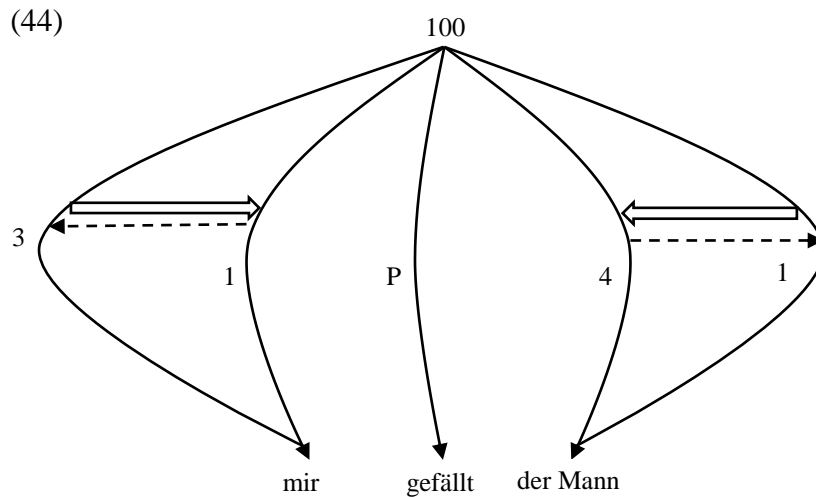
→ violation of the Unique Eraser Law (27)

## **10 Conclusion**

- Monostratal analyses with only one level of GFs (LFG, HPSG, GB) have analyzed non-nominative subjects as arising through a mismatch in the canonical alignment between case and GF
- More specifically, non-nominative subjects result from idiosyncratic case assignment
- Such an account works well for a language like Icelandic where idiosyncratic case is preserved
- But it leaves little room for an analysis of similar constructions in closely related languages (Faroese, German), where idiosyncratic case is not preserved (Faroese) and where subject properties are unevenly distributed
- Multistratal analyses on the other hand (RG, APG) do not require idiosyncratic case assignment and can make reference to several types of subjects (depending on the strata they appear in)
- A comparison of the two approaches shows that the latter is to be preferred, as it does capture non-nominative subjects in closely related languages

## Appendix A: The Status of the “Nominative” “Object”

- The properties of so-called nominative object point to another benefit of the RG/APG treatment
- The complete structure for quirky subjects in German is as follows



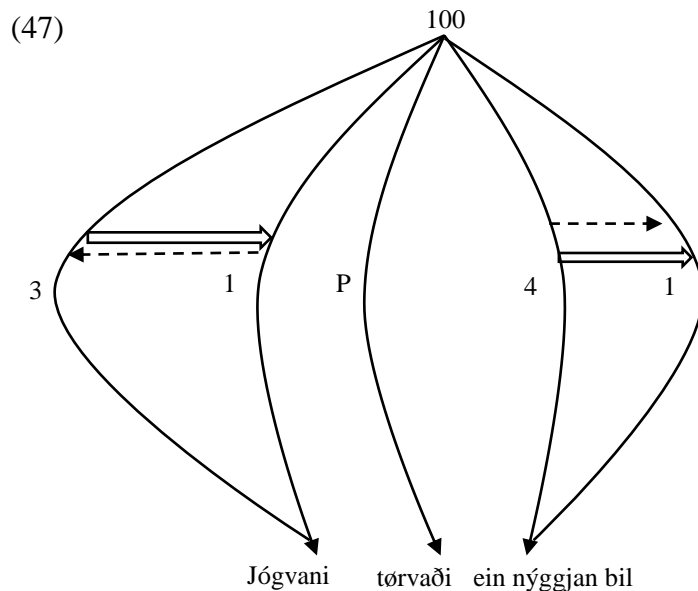
- In this structure, the nominative is due to advancement of a subobject (= 4) to 1
- Subobjects are non-adverbial accusative marked nominals that differ from true direct objects in not showing any kind of object properties
- Object properties in German
  - they can passivize
  - they can combine with adjectives based on past participles
- The nominative object shows no such properties, similar to other subobjects

- (45) a. Mir schmeckt das Essen.  
me.DAT tastes the food.NOM  
*I like the food.*
- b. \* Das Essen wird geschmeckt.  
the food becomes tasted  
*The food is tasted.*
- c. \* das geschmeckte Essen  
the tasted food

- (46) a. Ich bedaure dich.  
I regret you  
*I have pity for you.*
- b. \* Du wirst bedauert.  
you become regretted  
*You are pitied for.*
- c. \* der bedauerte Mann  
the regretted man

- Importantly, passivization is something else than advancement to 1: passivization structures are defined as having a 1 that is put in *chômeage*
- The reason that the 4 can advance to 1 in inversion structures but not in regular active structure is arguably due to the fact that the 4 has a neighboring output 3-arc

- Such a restriction is at work in English as well (cf. Postal 2010: chapter 7)
- Another benefit of this analysis is that it predicts nominative objects to not always be nominative
- This prediction is confirmed for Faroese and Imbabura Quechua (Barnes 2001; Jake 1983)
- Speculative structure for Faroese



### Appendix B: Working 2s in German

- It is predicted that other types of working arcs should exist, independent of lexical case
- In German there is evidence for working 2s

(48) *Attributively used past participles are licit with working 2s*

(49) 3-to-2 advancement & 2-to-4 demotion

- Ich frage ihn einige Dinge ab.  
I ask him.ACC some things.ACC PRT  
*I ask him some things.*
- \* Einige Dinge wurden ihn abgefragt.  
some things.NOM became him.ACC asked  
*Some things were asked him.*
- Einige Dinge wurden abgefragt.  
some things.NOM became asked  
*Some things were asked.*
- Er wurde einige Dinge abgefragt.  
he.NOM became some things.ACC asked
- Er bekam einige Dinge abgefragt.  
he.NOM received some things.ACC asked  
*He was asked some things.*
- die abgefragten Dinge  
*the asked things*
- the abgefragten Studenten  
*the asked students*

(50) 2-to-3 retreat

- a. Ich assistiere ihm.  
I.NOM assist him.DAT
- b. Er wurde assistiert.  
he.NOM became assisted
- c. Er bekam assistiert.  
he.NOM received assisted
- d. der assistierte Bediener  
*the assisted user*

(51) 2-to-1 advancement (unaccusatives)

- a. Der Zug kommt an.  
the train.NOM arrives PRT  
*The train arrives.*
- b. Der angekommene Zug  
*the arrived train*

- Both initial and final 2s license past participles; the notion ‘working 2’ captures this class

### **Appendix C: A Speculation about the New Passive in Icelandic**

- Quirky subjects do not only encompass dative-marked nominals, but also accusative and genitive marked ones
- Taking quirky accusatives to be final 4s, the relevant condition about output arcs (cf. 31) is defined for object arcs quite general, *except for 2s*
- This exception is needed because 2s show up as 1s under passivization
- Speculation: the New Passive in Icelandic overgeneralizes the condition on object output arcs to *all* object arcs, that is, also to 2s
- Prediction: Faroese has no condition comparable to (31) and hence no basis for an overgeneralization; consequently, the New Passive should not occur in Faroese
- As far as I know, this prediction is confirmed

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