

Quirky Case in Faroese

Ópersónlig Sagnorð í Føroyskum

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Úrtak

Her verður víst á, hvørji sagnorð eru ópersónlig í føroyskum, hvat tema grundorðið skal hava, og tær broytingar sum hendar eru frá hvønnfalli til hvør- ella hvørjumfall og frá hvørjumfalli til hvørfall. Greinin byggir á tilfar funnið í orðabókum, bløðum, bíbliutýðingum og heimasíðum.¹

Abstract

In this paper we will discuss impersonal verbs in Faroese. The thematic role of the subject and the changes that have occurred from accusative to nominative or dative and from dative to nominative. In addition to this we compare the Faroese data with Icelandic. The data we have used is from dictionaries, newspapers, translations of the Bible and home-pages.

Introduction

Faroese and Icelandic are the only modern Scandinavian languages that allow Accusative and Dative Subject Constructions (hence: ASC and DSC); see among many others (Ura, 2000; Jónsson, 1997/98; Barnes, 1986), and it has been shown in Barnes (1986) that the the NP subject in ASC and DSC behave like ordinary subjects in Faroese. The same has been shown to be the case for Icelandic (Zaenen *et al.*, 1985).

The aim of the present paper is to describe ASCs and DSCs in Faroese, and to show any changes that have occurred. The nature of these changes are that accusative

subjects change to either nominative or dative, while dative subjects change to nominative, if they have changed at all.

Our goal is purely descriptive – we have not included any theoretical section, since we will leave this to future research and researchers².

Illustrating ASC and DSC

Accusative Subject Constructions like (1a) below are as a general rule not represented in spoken Faroese. Speakers use nominative, see (1b). The example in (1a) is from the classical Bible translation of Viderø and Dahl. (1c) would be ungrammatical or at least very strange in modern Faroese, hence the star.

The verb, *kitla* ‘tickle’ in (1c), occurs also in Icelandic, where it takes an accusative subject, as opposite to Faroese, which only allows nominative subjects with this verb. Note that dative is also ruled out with the verb *kitla* ‘tickle’ (1d).

- (1) a. **meg** droymdi (ein) **dreym**
me-acc. dreamt (a) dream-acc.
‘I had a dream’ (Bible)
- b. **eg** droymdi (ein) **dreym**
I-nom. dreamt (a) dream-acc.

'I had a dream'

(Colloquial Faroese)

- c. ***mæg** kitlar
me-acc. tickles-3sg.
- d. ***mær** kitlar
me-dat. tickles-3sg.
- e. **eg** kitlist
I-nom. tickle-refl.-1sg.
'I am tickeling'

In addition to a change from accusative to nominative, we see changes in ASC from accusative to dative. The verb in (2) is in third person singular, while the pronoun *teimum* 'them' is in dative plural. The object is, generally, in the accusative in Faroese, although we have found examples with nominative objects, see also Barnes (1986). These examples will be discussed in the following sections.

- (2) **teimum** vantar **dirvi** at taka sær um reiggj
them-dat. lacks-3sg. courage-acc. to pull themselves together
'They lack the courage to pull themselves together'

The verb *vanta* 'lack' requires accusative in Icelandic. We presume this to be the original pattern in both languages, and note, as mentioned above, a change in Faroese from accusative to dative, while the subject theme is the same, the one of experiencer, see Jónsson (1997/98) for Icelandic.³

Another verb that has taken the same

route is the verb *leingjast eftir* 'long for', which takes acc. in Icelandic, dative or nominative in Faroese:

- (3) a. **mær** leingist eftir henni
me-dat. longs-refl. for her-dat.
'I miss her'
- b. **eg** leingist eftir henni
I-nom. long-refl. for her-dat.
'I miss her'

Some verbs take either accusative or dative subjects, as in (4) below. This will be described in detail in *Accusative and Dative Subjects*.

We have included (4b) and (4c), since the sentences show a general pattern with impersonal constructions in Modern Faroese, namely that a nominative subject is ungrammatical, while sentences with an the pronoun *tað* 'it' + verb + acc./dat. are grammatical.

- (4) a. **mæg/mær** lystir at vita
me-acc./me-dat. likes-3sg. to know
'I would like to know'
- b. ***eg** lysti at vita
I-nom. like-1sg. to know
'I would like to know'
- d. **tað** lystir **mæg** at vita
it likes-3sg. me-acc. to know
'I would like to know that'

Dative Subject Constructions are more common in Faroese than ASC, although the tendency is for them to be replaced by different expressions or nominative, or an ex-

pletive construction, see also *Dative Subject Constructions*.

(5a) is a common DSC with the verb *dáma* 'to like'. This verb is extremely frequent in spoken Faroese, and it is not uncommon for people to have dative subjects in front of *dáma* 'to like' ⁴, although nominative is just as common.

The subject in (5a) is in the dative, the verb in 3 person singular, and the object in accusative. Nominative subjects are also frequent with this verb. An example would be (5b). Note that the synonym verb *líka* 'to like' may take a dative subject (5c), but never occurs together with nominative case (5d). We note also further the use of an expletive in (5e). Note in addition to this (5f), where we find a dative subject and a nominative object, that is, the pattern in Icelandic (and Japanese, Ura, 2000), even though accusative is the usual object case in impersonal construction (Barnes, 1986).

- (5) a. **mær** dámar **mjólkina**
me-dat. likes-3sg. milk-the-acc.
'I like the milk'
- b. **eg** dámi **mjólkina**
I-nom. like-1sg. milk-the-acc.
- c. **mær** líkar **mjólkina**
me-dat. likes-3sg. milk-the-acc.
'I like the milk'
- d. ***eg** líki **mjólkina**
I-nom. like-1sg. milk-the-acc.
'I like the milk'
- e. **Tað** líkar **mær**

it likes-3sg. me-dat.

- f. **mær** eydnaðist **gongutúrurin**
me-dat. succeeded walk-the-nom.
'the walk turned out OK for me'

Summarizing the data we see that the following changes have occurred in Faroese:

- (i) There are some archaic expressions with accusative subjects (1a), although we may as a rule say that these are ruled out, and we see nominative subjects instead (1b).
- (ii) In some archaic expressions we see ASC, and we will show in the following sections that the subject has to be an experiencer.
- (iii) There is a change from accusative to dative (3a, 4a), which may change further to nominative (3b). Some verbs are in a grey area, allowing both accusative and dative subjects (4a), but not nominative (4b), and we note further the possibility with an the pronoun *tað* in Faroese (4d).

Turning to DSCs (5a) shows a dative subject and an accusative object together with the verb in 3. person singular indicative.

With some verbs the dative subject may take nominative (5b), while nominative is ruled out in other instances (5d), although an expletive is allowed (5e). We note also an example with a dative subject and a nominative object (5f).

We will look into these changes in the following sections, listing each impersonal construction in Faroese, and look into the nature of the thematic roles, and try to see,

or uncover, if there is any connection between thematic roles and the changes taking place.

The paper is organized as follows. In section 2 we look into ASC and the changes that have occurred in these constructions (*Change from Accusative to Dative*). We then have a short comparison with Icelandic, just to complete the picture (*Comparing Faroese with Icelandic and Summarizing the Data*). In section three we turn to DSC and consider these constructions in the light of the meaning of the verbs and the thematic nature of the subject, while we have some few concluding remarks in section four.

Accusative Subject Constructions

Faroese does not have Accusative Subject Constructions like the Icelandic example in (6) below:

- (6) **Tröllkonuna** dagaði uppi (Icl.)
the giantess-acc. dawned-3sg. up
'The giantess was caught by the daylight'

Some verbs allow ASC, but these constructions are archaic, as pointed out. (7) is from Viderø's and Dahl's Bible translation. Note that the subject is always in nominative in colloquial Faroese, that is: *eg droymdi* (Lit.: I-nom. dreamt 'I dreamt').

- (7) Eisini **meg** droymdi **dreym**
also me-acc. dreamt a dream-acc.
'I also had a dream' (1 Gen 40,16)

jects with the pronoun *meg* 'me'.

- (8) a. **Meg** fýsir ikki at hava hana
me-acc. like-3sg. not to have her
'I do not want her' (5 Gen 25,8)
- b. alt, **meg** gremur er, at bestu árinu eru farin
all me-acc. grieves-3sg. is that best years are gone
'What I grieve most is that the best years have gone' (FD)⁵
- c. **meg** grunar
me-acc. suspects-3sg.
'I suspect...'
(DD)
- d. **meg** harmar
me-acc. grieves-3sg.
'I regret...'
- e. minnist **meg** rætt
remember-refl. me-acc. correctly
'If I remember correct'
- f. **meg** órar ikki, at...
me-acc. suspects-3sg. not that...
'I did not suspect that...'
- g. **meg** nøtrar í holdið
me-acc. shudders-3sg. in flesh-the-acc.
'I am shuddering' (DD, FD)
- h. **meg** skríður í el. um feginsbrúgv
me-scratches-3sg. in (or around) left eyebrow-acc.⁶ (FD)

The examples in (8) show accusative sub-

A nominative subject is ruled out with the

verb *fýsa* 'to like' **eg fýsi* 'I like', while an expletive construction like *tað fýsir meg at vita* 'it/that likes-3sg. me to know' is grammatical. It is, in fact, not uncommon to have expletives with impersonal verbs, where nominative is ungrammatical. This holds also for *óra* 'suspect', which does not allow a nominative subject **eg óri* 'I suspect', while *tað órar meg* (Lit.: it suspects-3sg. me-acc. 'I did suspect that') is grammatical. Cf. also the ungrammaticality of **eg nøtri* 'I shudder' and **eg skríði* 'I scratch'. An expression like *tað nøtrar meg í holdið* (Lit.: it shudders-3sg. me-acc. in flesh-acc. 'I am shuddering') and *tað skríður mær í oyranum* (Lit.: it tickles me-dat. in ear-the-dat. 'My ear tickles').

Nominative is possible with the verb *minnast* 'to remember', *gremjast* 'to grieve'.

Nominative is also possible with the verb *gruna* 'to suspect' if it occurs together with an expletive *tað grunar meg* (Lit.: It suspects-3sg. me-acc. 'I suspect that'). The use with an expletive is illustrated in (9) with the verb *níta* 'to shudder':

- (9) Maður verður eisini agaður við svárum sjúkum, so at **tað nítur honum**
 Man becomes also disciplined with bad sickness, so that it shudders him-dat.
í merg og mønuni...
 in marrow-acc. and spinal cord-acc.
 (Job 33,19)

The expression *tað nítur í mønuni og merg* 'it stings in marrow and spinal cord' is a common idiom in Mod. Faroese.

Fig. 1 below shows the semantic class

*Fig. 1. shows the semantic verb classes that take ASC, an example with the verbs in Faroese that actually may take an accusative subject, and a column listed Nominative, which says that the relevant verb allows nominative case, or if it does not allow nominative case. *eg fýsi with nominative in front of fýsa 'want' is not possible in Faroese, while nominative is allowed in front of gruna 'suspect' and minnst 'remember'. We have listed dative for the sake of completeness, and the data shows that none of these verbs take a dative subject. They do, however, all allow constructions with expletives such as a change from meg fýsir at vita 'me-acc. wants-3sg. to know' to tað fýsir meg at vita 'it wants-3sg. me-acc. to know'. The last column shows that the thematic role of the subject is in every instance experiencer.*

Semantic verb class	Verb	Accusative subject	Nominative subject	Dative subject	Expletives	θ-role of subject
psych-verb	<i>fýsa</i> 'want'	+	-	+	+	EXPERIENCER
	<i>nøtra</i> 'shudder'	+	-	-	+	EXPERIENCER
	<i>níta</i> 'shudder'	+	-	-	+	EXPERIENCER
verbs of perception and of cognition	<i>óra</i> 'suspect'	+	-	-	+	EXPERIENCER
	<i>gruna</i> 'suspect'	+	+	-	+	EXPERIENCER
	<i>minnast</i> 'remember'	+	+	-	+	EXPERIENCER
Verbs involving the body	<i>skríða</i> 'tickle'	+	-	-	+	EXPERIENCER

these verbs belong to (Jónsson, 1997/1998; Levin, 1993), and to what extent they may take nominative in Faroese or have changed their case to Dative. It shows also the thematic role of the subject.

The data will be summarized in detail in Fig. 2.

Accusative and Dative Subject

Some verbs that take accusative subjects in Icelandic, may take either accusative or dative subject in Faroese. These verbs are listed below. The role of the subject is experiencer, and they are all psych-verbs.

The verb *fýsa* 'to want' does not allow a nominative subject (10a), while it might take the pronoun *tað* 'it' (10c).

- (10) a. **meg/mær** fýsir at vita
me-acc./me-dat. likes-3sg. to know
(FD)
- b. ***eg** fýsi at vita
'I would like to know'
'I want to know'
- c. **Tað** fýsir **mær** einki
That likes-3sg. me-dat not
'I do not like that' (FD)

An example from the Bible translation is shown in (11)

- (11) »**Meg** fýsir ikki at hava hana«
Me-acc. likes-3sg. not to have her-acc.
'I do not want to have her'
(5 Gen 25,8)

The verb *hugbjáta* (Lit.: mind-bite) 'to want,

to like' – a verb that I have not found in Icelandic – has the same thematic role and is also a psych-verb.

- (12) **meg/mær** hugbjátur tað el. eftir tí
me-acc./me-dat. wants-3sg. it-acc.
or after it-dat.
'I want it' (FD)

We see the same pattern in (13) with the verb *lysta* 'to want, to like'.

- (13) a. **meg/mær** lystir
me-acc./me-dat. likes-3sg. (FD)
- b. **meg** lystir at vita
me-acc. likes-3sg. to know

'I would like to know'
'I want to know' (DD)
- c. men tey kunnu seta hana so høga, **teimum** lystir
but they-nom. can set her-acc. as high [as] them-dat. likes-3sg.
'They may set it [the quota] as high as they like' (Diml.)
- d. ikki bara sleingja út við tí, **einum** lystir
not just throw out with what-dat. one-dat. likes-3sg.
'Not to say just what one wants'
'Not just to blurt out whatever one likes' (homepage)

Change from Accusative to Dative

The verb *vanta* 'lack' takes accusative in Icelandic and an experiencer subject, (Jónsson, 1997/98). In Faroese *vanta* 'to lack' re-

quires a dative subject as in (14). Note that nominative is also possible:

- (14) a. **teimum** vantar dirvi at taka sær um reiggj
 them-dat. lacks-3sg. courage-acc. to pull themselves together
 'They lack the courage to pull Themselves together'
- b. meðan **tað figgjarliga tilfeingið** vantar
 while the economical resources — nom. lacks-3sg.
 'While the economical resources lack'

There is a verb in Icelandic *furða* meaning 'to be surprised at'. It requires an experiencer subject and is a psych-verb, (Jónsson, 1997/98). This verb is not found in Faroese, only the noun *furða* 'miracle'. There is however a common expression, which means the same as the Icelandic verb *furða* 'be surprised'. This is the expression in (15):

- (15) **teimum** var dátt við dagin
 them-dat. was-3sg. surprised with day-the-acc.
 'They were surprised'

We also find the expression *standast við e-t* 'to detest, to feel nauseated' in Faroese, corresponding in meaning to the Icelandic verb *velgja* 'to feel nauseated'. It takes an experiencer subject in Icelandic, as it does in Faroese, and is a body verb. I have found the following examples with this verb:

- (16) a. **honum** stendst við ein/nakað
 him-dat. detests with one-acc./something-acc.
 'He feels nauseated by someone/something' (DD)
- b. Síðan segði Rebekka við Ísak:
 »**Mær** stendst við lívið vegna
 Then said Rebekka to Isak: "Me-dat. detests with life-the-acc. because of dǫtur Hets
 daughters Hets (1 Gen 27,46)
- c. Fiskarnir í Nílánni skulu doyggja, og Níláin skal dampa so illa,
 Fish-the in Nile river shall die and Nile river-the shall smell so bad at **Egyptum** stendst við at drekkva vatnið úr Nílánni!«
 that Egyptians-dat. detests with to drink water-the from Nile river (3 Gen. 26,15)

Another expression with an experiencer subject and a psych-verb is *vera annað innari* 'to have other things to think about' as in:

- (17) **mær** er annað innari
 me-dat. is other [things] inner
 'I have other things to think about' (FD)

A common idiom in Faroese is also *mongum brestur ætlan* 'many-dat. burst-3sg. plan-nom.' = 'things do not always go as planned'. The verb *bresta* 'burst' is a psych-verb, requiring an experiencer sub-

ject (Jónsson, 1997/98).

The verb *tróta* 'lack' takes an experiencer subject and requires accusative in Icelandic. It takes a dative subject in Faroese. Note that the object may be in accusative or nominative.

- (18) **honum** trýtur pening/ur
him-dat. lacks-3sg. money-acc./nom.

Comparing Faroese with Icelandic and Summarizing the Data

Jónsson (1997/98) lists all the verbs and idioms that take accusative subjects in Icelandic. If we compare this data with Faroese, only taking into consideration verbs that actually occur in Faroese either in form or meaning or both, then the following picture emerges:

Fig. 2 is to be read as follows. First we list the Icelandic and corresponding Faroese verb – either form or meaning or both. Note that all the verbs in official Icelandic require an accusative subject. We have also listed the meaning of the class for each verb, and the thematic role of the subject. Then we give the meaning of the verb. The fourth column shows the case the verbs require in Faroese, while the fifth column shows the case of the object. and the sixth column shows if the verb allows an expletive subject as in tað grunar meg 'it-expletive suspects-3sg. me-acc.'

Icelandic	Faroese	Meaning	Case/Subj.	Case/Obj.	Expletive subject	Example (the number in the text)	θ-role of subject
EXPERIENCER							
Psych-verb							
bresta	bresta	'burst'	dat.	nom.	-		
furða	vera dátt við	'be surprised at'	dat.	-	-	(15)	
fýsa	fýsa	'want'	acc./dat.	-	+	(8a, 10a,b,c, 11)	
langa	hugbíta	'want'	acc./dat.	acc.	-	(12)	
lengja eftir	leingjast eftir	'long for, want'	nom./dat.	dat.	-	(3a,b)	
lysta	lysta	'want'	acc./dat.	-	+	(13)	
hrylla við	níta	'shudder at'			+	(9)	
hrylla við	nøtra	'shudder at'	acc.		+	(8g)	
iðra	harma	'regret'	acc./nom.	acc.	+	(8d)	
vanta	vanta	'want'	nom./dat.	acc.	+	(2, 14a,b)	
þrjóta	tróta	'lack'	dat.	acc./nom.		(18)	
Verbs involving the body							
dreyma	droyma	'dream'	(acc./)nom.	acc.	-	(1a,b)	
hungra	hungra	'hunger'	nom.	-	-		
kitla	kitlast	'tickle'	nom.			(1c,d,e)	
kitla	skríða	'tickle'	acc. (archaic)		+	(8h)	
klígja	klíggja	'feel nauseated'	nom.				
svíma	svíma	'feel dizzy'	nom.				
svíða	svíða	'smart, sting'					
þyrsta	tyrsta	'thirst'	nom.				
Verbs of cognition and perception							
gruna	gruna	'suspect'	nom./acc.	-	tað grunar meg	(8c)	
minna	minnast	'remember'	nom./acc.		tað minnist eg	(8e)	
óra fyrir	óra	'suspect'	acc.		?	(8f)	
velgja	standast við	'detest'	dat.	acc.	-		

Summarizing the data we see that it is only an experiencer subject that occurs with ASCs in Faroese. The case of the subject may have changed to dative or nominative. In cases where Icelandic has a patient theme, that is with verbs like *bróta* 'to break', *fylla* 'to fill', we find nominative subjects in Faroese. The same is to be observed with themes as subjects *hefja* 'start' in Icelandic, although we find an idiomatic expression in *mær barst fyri* 'it occurred to me', with a dative subject *mær* 'me-dat.' in Faroese. The semantic verb classes we have found are: psych-verb, verbs involving the body and verbs of cognition and perception verbs, and we note that verbs of involving the body take, as a general rule, nominative in Faroese.

Dative Subject Construction

DSCs are more common in Faroese than ASCs, although they are, sometime linked, to certain discourses or are to be found in high style like the language of the Bible, or who people like to give the impression of scholarship. The most common DSC is with the verb *dáma* 'like', as in (19) with a dative subject, the verb in 3 person singular and the object in the accusative.

- (19) **mær** dámar mjólkina
me-dat. likes-3sg. milk-the-acc.
'I like the milk'

Subject is Experiencer

The only thematic role with DSCs is experiencer, just as in the case of ASC, and the verb classes are roughly the same as those we found in ASC. We may illustrate the ex-

periencer subject in DSCs with the expression *berast fyri* 'seem', an idiomatic expression that is not uncommon in the colloquial language, and we see in (20b) that nominative subjects are ruled out, while (20c) shows the use of an expletive. Note also the dative subject and the 'expletive' object in (20d).

- (20) a. **mær** barst fyri
me-dat. seemed for (FD)
- b. ***eg** barst fyri
I-nom. seemed for
- c. **Tað** barst **mær** fyri
It-expl. seemed me-dat. for
'I thought'
- d. **Mær** barst **tað** fyri
me-dat. seemed it-expl. for
'It seemed to me'

Subject is Experiencer, achievement verbs
We find in Faroese the synonyms *eydnast* and *lukkast* 'to succeed', which take a dative subject as well as a nominative subject, and an expletive. Note that the object is in the nominative in (21a) and presumably also in (21b).

- (21) a. **mær** eydnaðist **gongutúrurin**
me-dat. succeeded walk-the-nom.
'the walk turned out OK for me'
- b. **mær** eydnaðist ikki **lopið**
me-dat. succeeded not jump-the-nom.
'I did not manage to jump' (FD)

- c. **eg** lukkaðist til skipið
I-nom. succeeded to ship-the
'I succeeded in getting to the ship'
(FD)
- d. **Tað** lukkast **tykkum** at tapa ÍF, ja so
man standa illa til
It succeed you-dat. to loose ÍF, yes
then might stand bad to
'When you managed to lose against
ÍF, then things must be bad'
(homepage)

Note that *mær lukkaðist til skipið* (Lit.: me-dat. succeeded to ship-the) would be equally grammatical.

Subject is Experiencer, psych-verbs

There are different verbs meaning 'to like' one is *at líka* 'to like' in Faroese, these have been illustrated in e.g. (4a, 5a-c) and so forth.

Another verb belonging to this class is *hóva* 'to like', which occurs in expressions like:

- (22) a. **honum** hóvaði lítið skrivborðsar-
beiði
him-dat. liked little paperwork-acc.
'He did not like paperwork'
(FD)
- b. **mær** hóvaði so illa millum teir høgu
harrarnar
me-dat. liked so bad among the-acc.
high-acc. masters-the-acc.
'I did not like to be among the élité'
(FD)

- c. Men **hendan greiða og upplýsandi**
tíðindasending hóvaði ikki hesum
But this-nom. explicit-nom. and in-
formative-nom. broadcast-nom.sg.
liked not this-dat.
løgtingsmanni...
Member of the Faroese parliament
(homepage)
- d. **Tað** hóvar eftir øllum at døma ikki
fíggingarstovnunum, at...
It likes-3sg. after all to judge not fi-
nance institutions-the that...
'The Finance institution do not ap-
parently, like...'

Note that the object is in the accusative in (22a). In (22c) it seems that the NP *hendan greiða og upplýsandi tíðindasendingin* is in fact the object, and that the Experiencer subject is *hesum lögmanni* in the dative case.

The verb *hugar* 'to like' cannot take a nominative subject; it requires an expletive, and we have not found any examples with accusative objects.

- (23) a. men um tað ikki **hugar** honum
but if it not likes-3sg. him-dat.
'but if he does not like it'
(Ruth 3,13)
- b. **Tað** hugar **mær** einki
It likes-3sg me-dat. not at all
'I do not like it at all'

The verb *hugna* 'to like' shows the same pattern as *huga* 'to like' and *hóva* 'to like', so we will not list any examples with this

verb, which is rare in Faroese.

The verb *líka* 'to like' is more frequent than *hugna* 'to like' and *huga* 'to like'. It cannot take a nominative subject, but may take an expletive. The following examples are from the dictionaries I have used and the classical Bible translation. In (24c) we find an example with the verb in the plural *líkaðu* 'liked', not, as expected, *líkaði* 'liked'.

- (24) a. **mær** líkar tað ikki
me-dat. likes-3sg. it-acc. not
'I do not like it' (FD)
- b. set teg niður, hvar **tær** líkar best
sit you down where you-dat. likes-3sg. best
'You sit down where you like to sit'
(Genesis 20,15)
- c. Men ikki **øllum** líkaðu **luktin**
but not all-dat. liked smell-the-acc.-sg.
'But all did not like the smell'
(homepage)
- d. ***eg** líki luktin
I like-1sg. smell-the-acc.
'I like the smell'
- e. **tað** líkar **mær** væl
it likes-3sg. me well
'I like that well'

The verb *lítast* 'like' also takes an experiencer subject in the dative. It is preserved in the idiom *kráku lítst best á unga sín* 'the crow likes her own chick best'.

Another verb meaning 'to like' is *skríma* – which is extremely rare. We have the following example from the Faroese Dictionary (1998):

- (25) a. **mær** skrímir einki um hann
me-dat. likes-3sg. nothing about him-acc.
'I do not like him' (FD)

The verb *unna* 'to like, to love' takes an experiencer subject. Note that the subject is in nominative case, while the object is presumably in the accusative.

- (26) a. Síðan fór Jákup eisini inn til Rakular; og **hann** unti **Rakul** fram um Leu
Then went Jacob also in to Rachel; and he-nom. loved Rachel-acc. to Lena-acc.
'Then Jacob went in to Rachel, and he preferred her to Lea'

There are other psych-verbs with an experiencer subject. The meaning of these verbs is 'to grieve, to regret'. The verb *gremjast um* 'grieve, regret' takes nominative in modern Faroese. It is also reflexive.

- (27) **Teir** gremjast um ósigurin
they-nom. grieve defeat-the-acc.
'They grieve the defeat'

Subject is Experiencer; verbs of cognition and perception

The thematic role of the subject is experiencer. These verbs are grouped as verbs of cognition and perception in Jónsson

(1997/98). The following picture emerges from the Faroese data. There is the verb + particle *berast fyri* 'to seem, to occur' in expressions like those listed in (28). Note that a nominative subject is ruled out (28b), while the sentence is grammatical with an expletive (28c). The sentences in (28a) through (28c) are equally possible with the expression *koma fyri* 'seem' (Lit.: come for).

- (28) a. **mær** berst fyri
me-dat. seems for
'It seems to me' (FD)
- b. ***eg** barst fyri
I-nom. seemed for
- c. **Tað** barst **mær** fyri
It-expl. seemed me-dat.
'It seemed to me'

The most frequent verbs meaning 'to seem' requiring dative subjects in Faroese are the verbs *sýnast*, *tykja* and *tykjast*. (29) illustrates *sýnast* 'to seem' with a dative subject.

- (29) **henni** sýntist sum **tær** sýnist
she-dat. thought as you-dat. thinks
'she thought as you think'

In (30) we have the verb *tykja* 'to seem' with a topicalized subject *skipið* 'ship-the', which seems to be in the accusative, at least if we apply the substitution test giving the pronoun *hvønn* 'whom' with a word in the masculine.

(FD)

- (30) a. **skipið** tókti **honum** illgrunavert
ship-the-nom. seemed him-dat. sus-
picious
'The ship seemed to be suspicious to
him' (FD)

In (31) we have examples with *tykjast* 'to seem'. The first example (31a) is only the verb and the pronoun *mær* 'me-dat.'. In (31b) we have a subject in dative, while the object *óslættarnir* 'irregularities' is in the nominative case. (31c) shows the pattern in Modern Faroese with a nominative subject and dative object.

- (31) a. **mær** tykist
me-dat. seems
- a. **okkum** tykjast **óslættarnir** uttan á
jørðini...
us-dat. seem irregularities-nom. on
earths surface...
- b. **tær føroysku lógirnar** tykjast **van-
liga manningum** fremmandar
the Faroese laws-nom. seem com-
mon man-the-dat. unfamiliar
'The Faroese laws seem unfamiliar
to the common man' (homepage)

Summarizing DSC in Faroese

If we compare DSC with ASC we see that it is always an experiencer subject that is required with these constructions

We may summarize the data from DSC in the following figure, which is to be read as follows (Fig. 3):

Fig. 3. In the first column we list the Icelandic verb, the thematic nature of the subject and what kind of verb we are dealing with. Then we list the corresponding verb (meaning and/or form) in Faroese, and see the case of the subject and object, and if it can occur with an expletive. The last column shows where it is possible to find the examples in the text above.

Icelandic	Faroese	Meaning	Subject Case in Far.	Object case in Far.	Expletive subject	Example (the number in the text)
Experciencer subj.						
Achivementverbs						
heppnast	eydnast	'succeed'	dat.	nom.	+	(21a,b)
heppnast	lukkast	'succeed'	nom./dat.		+	(21c,b)
Psych-verb						
dáma	dáma	'like'	dat.	acc.		(5a,19)
id	id	id	nom.	acc.	+	(5b)
gremjast	gremjast	'grieve'	nom.	acc.		(27)
líka	hóva	'like'	dat.	nom./akk.	+	(22a,b), (22c), (22d)
líka	huga	'like'			+	(23a,b)
líka	hugna	'like'	dat.		+	
líka	líka	'like'	dat.	acc.	+	(24a,c,e)
lífast á	lífast á	'like'	dat.	acc.		
líka	skríma	'like'	dat.			(25)
líka	unna	'like'	nom.	acc.		(26)
Verbs of cognition and perception						
virðast	berast fyrí	'seem'	dat.		+	(28)
sýnast	sýnast	'seem'	dat.			(29)
þykja	tykja	'seem'	dat.	acc.		(30)
þykja	tykjast	'seem'	dat.	nom.	+	(31a)
þykja	tykjast	'seem'	nom..	dat.		(31b)

We see also examples with a change from dative subject to nominative subjects in these constructions, and do indeed also have examples with a nominative object, just as in Icelandic, see also Barnes (1986) for similar examples.

Concluding remarks

Faroese has lost ASC where the subject is patient or a theme – that is in front of verbs like *bróta* 'break' and *droyma* 'dream'. It does still have ASC in the cases where the

subject is an experiencer. The verb classes are then psych-verbs, and verbs of cognition and perception. We see also a shift from accusative to dative with verbs of cognition and perception and psych-verbs, and there are examples with dative subjects and nominative objects as in (31b). The overall picture is although that there seem to be a change in the colloquial Faroese to change dative subjects with nominative subjects – a matter than needs further investigations. We will not, as mentioned in the beginning of this paper, discuss the syntactic nature of

these changes, since we will leave this to future investigations and researchers.⁷

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Notes

- ¹ I would like to thank M. P. Barnes and Ei. Weyhe for extensive comments on the article and correcting my English.
- ² Or in the words of Dixon: "Documenting languages is the responsibility of linguists." (Dixon, 1997:136), and further: "The most important task in linguistics today – indeed, the only really important task – is to get out in the field and describe languages, while this can still be done. Self-admiration in the looking glass of formalist theory can wait; that will always be possible." (Dixon 1997:144). Since Faroese is the least studied North Germanic language, we can go along with this.

He is here talking about endangered languages, but one can go along with what has been said here when we are talking about Faroese – the least studied North Germanic language.

- ³ The notion *experienter* is to be understood as denoting someone that experiences something without having any influence on what is happening (Jónsson 1997/98:18).
- ⁴ An investigation into the matter, using a short text into which people were asked to add 3 person of the personal pronoun, showed that *dáma* is common with a dative subject
- ⁵ The abbreviations are FD = Faroese Dictionary (1998), DD = Danish Dictionary (1995), Dimml. = Dimmalætting (a Faroese newspaper).
- ⁶ This expression is extremely archaic in colloquial Faroese.
- ⁷ The following expressions are also impersonal in Faroese:
- (i) a. mær líður einki
me-dat. passes nothing
'I am not making any progress'
- b. tær nýtist ikki at renna
you-dat. do not have to run
'you need not to run'
- c. honum nyttar einki at rópa
him-dat. is of no use to yell
'there is no use his yelling'
- d. mær rennur týðan til hansara
me-dat. runs-3.sg. kindness to him-gen.
'I think about him with kind feelings'
- e. mær var rógvandi/gangandi/vitandi
me-dat. was rowing/walking/knowning
'I was rowing/walking'
- f. mær skilst
me-dat. understands
'I understand'