

Prepositional vs. indirect objects in Icelandic

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Abstract A corpus study of the Prepositional Object Construction (POC) in Icelandic shows that the POC is basically restricted to ditransitive verbs encoding motion or entailing successful transfer (Kristínardóttir 2021). By contrast, non-transfer verbs, e.g. communication verbs and verbs of future having, are more or less excluded from the POC. The goal, flagged by the preposition *til* ‘to’, preferably refers to clubs, associations, institutions, unspecified groups of people etc. rather than specific individuals or specific groups of individuals. Since the preposition *til* encodes the endpoint of motion in a broad sense, typical possessors like specific individuals are rare in the POC.

1 Introduction

Ditransitive verbs raise important issues about the syntactic realization of arguments because many languages allow the dative alternation where the two internal arguments of ditransitive verbs are expressed as two DPs (goal-theme) or as a DP-PP (theme-goal). For convenience, we will refer to the DP-DP variant as the double object construction (DOC) and the DP-PP variant as the prepositional object construction (POC). Much of the literature on the dative alternation is focussed on in English but the dative alternation has also been investigated in other languages (see e.g. Coleman 2009 on Dutch, Adler 2011 on German, Fedriani 2020 on Latin and Valdeson 2021 on Swedish).

The dative alternation in English is sensitive to verb class as some ditransitive verbs allow both the DOC and the POC (*give John a book* vs. *give a book to John*), whereas other verbs allow only the DOC (*refuse him a raise* vs. **refuse a raise to him*) or only the POC (*donate some books to the library* vs. **donate the library some books*). These verb classes are strongly linked to lexical semantics (Gropen et al. 1989) and many scholars have suggested that the two constructions also have different event structures. More specifically, the DOC encodes *caused possession* whereas the POC encodes *caused motion*, where both concepts must be understood broadly (see e.g. Goldberg 1995, Hale & Keyser 2002, Harley 2003 and Krifka 2004).

In contrast to English and many other languages, Icelandic has been claimed to allow the POC only to a very limited extent (Ottósson 1991, Holmberg & Platzack 1995:204-205 and Thráinsson 2005:293-294). However, two recent studies, Kristínardóttir (2021) and Ussery et al. (2022) show that the POC is more widely used and accepted than previously thought although it is much more restricted than the DOC. In this paper, we will discuss the corpus study of Kristínardóttir (2021), which shows that the POC in Icelandic is sensitive to the semantic class of the ditransitive verb and the type of the PP-goal. The POC is restricted to cases where the verb expresses transfer and the goal denotes something that can be viewed as a location. As discussed in more detail below, this follows from the fact that the preposition *til* ‘to’ encodes an endpoint of motion.

2 The basic facts

Ditransitive verbs in Icelandic have been studied within the generative literature since the early eighties (see Rögnvaldsson 1982:133-135, Zaenen, Maling & Thráinsson 1985, Falk 1990, Holmberg 1991, Holmberg & Platzack 1995:185-214, Ottósson 1991, Collins & Thráinsson 1996, Dehé 2004, Barðdal 2007, Ussery 2017, 2018 and Jónsson 2020, 2022). As discussed in these works, the two internal arguments of ditransitive verbs in Icelandic are usually expressed as two DPs with two different cases, as in (1) below:

- (1) a. Þóra lánaði Kristínu bókina
 Þóra lent Kristín-DAT book.the-ACC
 ‘Þóra lent Kristín the book.’
- b. Jón seldi einhverjum bílinn
 John sold somebody-DAT car.the-ACC
 ‘John sold somebody the car.’
- c. Ég hef sýnt gestunum stofuna
 I have shown guests.the-DAT living.room.the-ACC
 ‘I have shown the guests the living room.’

The verbs illustrated above belong to the biggest class of ditransitive verbs in Icelandic, the class where the indirect object is a dative goal and the direct object is an accusative theme. There are also four smaller classes of ditransitive verbs in Icelandic (Zaenen, Maling & Thráinsson 1985, Yip, Maling & Jackendoff 1987, Jónsson 2000, and Maling 2002) but they will only be discussed briefly in 4.1 since they generally do not permit the POC with the preposition *til*.

The literature on ditransitive verbs in Icelandic has largely ignored the POC with the exception of the two recent studies, Kristínardóttir (2021) and Ussery et al. (2022). According to Thráinsson (2005:293-294), the POC is mainly found with verbs denoting motion such as *senda* ‘send’, the endpoint of which is expressed by the PP-goal, but it is also possible with *gefa* ‘give’ if the goal is an association or an institution. This is shown by the following examples (from Thráinsson 2005:293-294):¹

- (2) a. Ég sendi Guðmundi bókina
 I sent Guðmundur-DAT book.the-ACC
 ‘I sent Guðmundur the book.’
- b. Ég sendi bókina til Guðmundar
 I sent book.the-ACC to Guðmundur
 ‘I sent the book to Guðmundur.’
- (3) a. Ég gaf Guðmundi bókina
 I gave Guðmundur-DAT book.the-ACC
 ‘I gave Guðmundur the book.’

¹ Example (3c) was added by the authors for completeness.

- b. *Ég gaf bókina til Guðmundar
I gave book.the-ACC to Guðmundur
- c. Ég gaf Háskóla Íslands bókasafnið
I gave university-DAT Iceland book.collection.the-ACC
'I gave the University of Iceland the book collection.'
- d. Ég gaf bókasafnið til Háskóla Íslands
I gave book.collection.the-ACC to university Iceland
'I gave the book collection to the University of Iceland.'

Holmberg & Platzack (1995:204-205) claim that with ditransitive verbs like *gefa* 'give', the goal PP must be interpretable as a "pure goal" rather than an experiencer. As a result, the goal PP is preferably inanimate, e.g. an institution. They also suggest that the PP-goal need not be understood as the receiver or new possessor of the theme object, at least with verbs like *senda* 'send'. In a similar vein, Thráinsson (2005:294) suggests that there may be a difference between (2a) and (2b) in that the DP-goal in (2a) more strongly implies that the book is intended for the goal, e.g. for reading or owning. It seems to us that our claims about the POC are very similar in spirit to Holmberg & Platzack's remark about a "pure goal". However, we do not think that there is any truth-conditional difference between examples like (2a) vs. (2b) or (3c) vs. (3d).

As illustrated in (2) and (3) above, the preposition used in the POC in Icelandic is *til* 'to'. In its basic meaning, *til* is a directional preposition denoting the endpoint of motion, or at least something that can be conceptualized as motion (e.g. *Vegurinn nær frá Keflavík til Reykjavíkur* 'The road goes from Keflavík to Reykjavík'). Thus, the goal-PP headed by *til* in the POC can encode a pure location whereas this is impossible for the goal-DP in the DOC:

- (4) a. Þóra sendi pakka til Akureyrar
Þóra sent parcel-ACC to Akureyri
'Þóra sent a parcel to Akureyri.'
- b. *Þóra sendi Akureyri pakka
Þóra sent Akureyri-DAT parcel-ACC

Since a town like Akureyri cannot possess anything, it cannot be the indirect DP-object of verbs like *senda*. This contrast is well-known from languages like English and it illustrates a crucial difference between the DOC and the POC, namely that the former construction can only express caused possession. In this respect, Icelandic *til* behaves exactly like English *to*, as has been amply documented in the literature (see Green 1974:103-104 and much subsequent work). However, *til* is very different from *to* in that it has no grammatical uses as a case assigner. For instance, the adjectives *andvígur* 'opposed', *skyldur* 'related' and *vanur* 'used to' take dative objects in Icelandic (see Jónsson 1996:109 for examples) whereas the corresponding adjectives in English require the preposition *to*. More generally, there are no clear examples of *til* being grammaticalized and this can also be seen in the POC where *til* retains its basic meaning, encoding endpoint of motion.

One may wonder why POC is relatively unrestricted in English but not in Icelandic. We will not go into this issue in detail here but the standard answer for English relates this to the lack of morphological case as the POC began to spread in the history of English at roughly the same time as case endings started to disappear (McFadden 2002). The erosion of case endings created a need to distinguish between indirect and direct objects in English and this was achieved by employing the preposition *to* as a marker for indirect objects. Conversely, the limited use of the POC in Icelandic can be attributed to the fact that Icelandic has a rich case morphology where the two objects of ditransitive verbs have two different cases.² Thus, the use of prepositions like *til* is not called for to distinguish goals from themes.³

3 Kristínardóttir (2021)

3.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the corpus study of Kristínardóttir (2021) which was based on extensive searches in the 2019 edition of the Risamálheild Corpus (RMC). The verbs examined are listed in Table 1 and the classification shown below is based on Barðdal (2007):⁴

I. Motion verb(s)	
send-verb(s)	senda ‘send’
II. Transfer verbs	
give-verbs	afhenda ‘deliver, hand over’, gefa ‘give’, selja ‘sell’, veita ‘award, provide’
pay-verbs	borga ‘pay’, bæta ‘compensate’, greiða ‘pay’, launa ‘reward’
loan-verbs	lána ‘loan’, leigja ‘rent’
III. Non-transfer verbs	
communication verbs	kenna ‘teach’, segja ‘tell’, sýna ‘show’
verbs of future having	bjóða ‘offer’, skulda ‘owe’, tryggja ‘guarantee’, ætla ‘intend’
verbs of enabling	auðvelda ‘make easier’, heimila ‘permit’, leyfa ‘allow’
verbs of hindrance	banna ‘prohibit, ban’, meina ‘prevent, deny’

The main division here is that between transfer verbs and non-transfer verbs because verbs in the latter class are very rarely found in the POC. The smaller verb classes in Table 1 should not be taken too literally since there are alternative ways of grouping ditransitive verbs together on a semantic basis; see e.g. Gropen et al. (1989). In fact, the results from the corpus study

² The only exception is a small class of verbs taking two dative objects.

³ It is interesting to note that the POC is on the rise in Faroese (Fiebig 2012, Ussery & Petersen in press), a language that makes a clear morphological distinction between accusative and dative case. The reason for this may be that language contact with Danish plays a crucial role in this development.

⁴ We leave out three verbs investigated by Kristínardóttir (2021), *flytja* ‘move’, *færa* ‘bring’ and *skrifa* ‘write’, because they introduce complications that we want to avoid here. It should also be pointed out that *senda* is not the only *send*-verb in Icelandic but all the others are compounds based on *senda*, e.g. *áframsenda* ‘forward’, *endursenda* ‘resend’ and *póstsenda* ‘send by mail’.

discussed in 3.2 below show that verbs within the same class may behave very differently with respect to the POC and verbs may also pattern the same way across classes.

We use the term transfer verb to refer to verbs that entail successful transfer (*give*-verbs, *pay*-verbs and *loan*-verbs). Typical verbs in this class include *gefa* ‘give’ and *lána* ‘loan’. These verbs entail successful transfer and thus the transfer cannot be denied. We illustrate this with the DOC but the same applies to the POC:

- (5) #Ég gaf/lánaði henni bókina en hún fékk hana aldrei
 I gave/lent her-DAT book.the-ACC but she got it never
 ‘I gave/lent her the book but she never got it.’

This example sounds like a contradiction. By contrast, verbs like *kenna* ‘teach’ (communication verb) and *bjóða* ‘offer’ (verb of future having), do not entail successful transfer, as shown in (6) below:

- (6) a. Ég kenndi þeim þýsku en þau lærðu ekki neitt
 I taught them-DAT German-ACC but they learned not anything
 ‘I taught them German but they did not learn a thing.’
 b. Ég bauð honum aðstoð en hann sagði nei takk
 I offered him-DAT assistance-ACC but he said no thanks
 ‘I offered him assistance but he said no thanks.’

It is quite obvious that (6b) is not a contradiction but the status of (6a) is perhaps less clear. Our intuition is that (6a) is acceptable and the same applies to comparable examples with the other communication verbs examined by Kristínardóttir (2021). Thus, we will henceforth assume that communication verbs should be classified as non-transfer verbs.

Note that successful transfer is not the same as caused possession because verbs of future having encode caused possession but do not entail successful transfer of the theme object, as exemplified in (6b). Thus, (6b) claims that the goal came to possess an offer of assistance but not necessarily the assistance itself.⁵ For further discussion of ditransitive verbs (in English) that do or do not entail successful transfer, see Rappaport Hovav & Levin (2008).

3.2 The results

The following table gives an overview of the frequency of the POC vs. the DOC across all the verb classes studied by Kristínardóttir (2021) that allow the POC, i.e. transfer verbs as well as the motion verb *senda* ‘send’. Since the POC is highly infrequent with non-transfer verbs, these verbs are not included here:⁶

⁵ Alternatively, one could say that assistance was successfully transferred in a “subset of the set of possible circumstances” (Koenig & Davis 2001:85) but this would still mean that verbs of future having are crucially different from the verbs we have defined here as transfer verbs.

⁶ The numbers in brackets show the estimated number of examples of the two constructions in the RMC but see Kristínardóttir (2021) for further information about the corpus searches.

Table 2	Verbs which allow the POC	POC	DOC
send-verb(s)	senda ‘send’	54% (13.289)	46% (11.481)
give-verbs	afhenda ‘deliver, hand over’	8% (553)	92% (6527)
	gefa ‘give’	3% (1990)	97% (61.131)
	selja ‘sell’	48% (5111)	52% (5566)
	veita ‘award, provide’	7% (3026)	93% (43.259)
pay-verbs	borga ‘pay’	20% (618)	80% (2405)
	bæta ‘compensate’	0% (0)	100% (2987)
	greiða ‘pay’	14% (4678)	86% (28.953)
	launa ‘reward’	0% (0)	100% (336)
loan-verbs	lána ‘loan’	27% (793)	73% (2199)
	leigja ‘rent’	20% (443)	80% (1765)

This table shows the frequency rates for individual verbs but Kristínardóttir (2021) also investigated different semantic classes of goals. The goals were divided into four groups and the results for each group were as follows: (a) a company, club, association or an institution (53%), (b) non-specific individuals or groups of individuals (31%), (c) specific individuals or groups of individuals (15%) and (d) other types of goals (1%). This is consistent with the requirement of the preposition *til* to express an endpoint of motion rather than a possessor because specific individuals or groups of individuals are more typical possessors than the other goal types mentioned above.

In the following subsections, we will discuss the verb classes shown in Table 2 as well as non-transfer verbs. We will also examine one class not included in the study of Kristínardóttir (2021), verbs of instrument of communication. It will be argued that the key property of the POC is that the event described by the ditransitive verb can be conceptualized as something (concrete) expressed by the direct object being moved from the agent of the action to the endpoint encoded by the goal.

3.3 POC-verbs

3.3.1 *Send-verb(s)*

The POC with *senda* ‘send’ in the RMC is exemplified in (7a). As expected, the DOC can also be used instead without any obvious change in truth conditions, as in (7b):⁷

- (7) a. En auðvitað geta allir sent klæðnað til Rauða krossins
 but of.course can everybody send clothes-ACC to red cross.the
 ‘But of course, anyone can send clothes to the Red Cross.’
- b. En auðvitað geta allir sent Rauða krossinum klæðnað
 but of.course can everybody send red-DAT cross.the-DAT clothes-ACC

⁷ In the interest of space, we will henceforth not show the corresponding DOC examples for the POC examples illustrated here unless it is important for the issue at hand.

The verb *senda* is very common in the POC, as can be seen in Table 2, and this is because it encodes caused motion. Thus, it is very natural to view the goal as an endpoint of motion in examples like (7a) as required by the preposition *til*.

3.3.2 Give-verbs

Examples from the RMC of the four *give*-verbs in the study are provided in (8) below:

- (8) a. að þurfa að afhenda lykla til nýs ráðherra
to need to hand keys-ACC to new minister
'to have to hand over keys to a new minister (in the government)'
- b. Gefum peninga til björgunarsveitanna
give money-ACC to rescue.services.the
'Let's give money to the rescue services.'
- c. Þeir eru í raun í því að selja heimahlutabréf til útlendinga
they are in fact in it to sell local.shares-ACC to foreigners
'They are in fact selling local shares to foreigners.'
- d. Þegar Seðlabankinn veitir lán til innlendra banka
when central.bank.the grants loans-ACC to domestic banks
'when the Central Bank grants loans to domestic banks'

The verbs exemplified above do not have a clear sense of motion, unlike e.g. *senda*. With verbs of this kind, it is crucial that the PP-goal can be interpreted as the endpoint of motion in a broad sense, rather than a possessor. This requires the object of *til* to refer to something other than specific individuals or groups of individuals. Hence, it is no coincidence that the objects of the preposition *til* in (8a), (8c) and (8d) are indefinite and the only definite object is in (8b), which refers to the rescue services in Iceland and not some specific individual.

Table 2 shows that the verb *selja* is more common in the POC than the other verbs in the *give*-class. Presumably, this is due to the fact that *selja* tends to involve movement of the things to be sold, e.g. from Iceland to some foreign country, as in (8c). As a result, the object of the preposition *til* can easily be viewed as the endpoint of motion. Moreover, this verb has uses where the POC is possible but the DOC is not:

- (9) a. Fyrirtækið selur margar vörur til útlanda
company.the sells many-ACC products-ACC to countries.abroad
'The company sells many products to foreign countries.'
- b. *Fyrirtækið selur útlöndum margar vörur
company.the sells foreign.countries-DAT many-ACC products-ACC

The goal here is purely spatial and not capable of possession. Therefore, the DOC is excluded, just as in examples like (4b).

3.3.3 *Pay-verbs*

Only two of the four *pay-verbs* included in the study under discussion allow the POC, *borga* ‘pay’ and *greiða* ‘pay’:

- (10) a. Þetta félag hafði ekki borgað krónu til leikmanna allt árið
 this club had not payed penny-ACC to players all year
 ‘This club had not payed a penny to it’s players all year.’
- b. að stefndi hafi áður greitt bætur til tjónþola
 that defendant has before payed compensation-ACC to injured party
 ‘that the defendant compensated the injured party in the past’

Since these two verbs are virtually synonymous, their frequency in the POC might be expected to be roughly equal. As shown in Table 2, *borga* is more common than *greiða*, which may be due to the fact that *greiða* is quite formal and the DOC is generally a more formal construction compared to the POC.

In contrast to *borga* and *greiða*, *bæta* ‘compensate’ and *launa* ‘reward’ are excluded from the POC although they are possible with two DP objects:

- (11) a. bæta bændum tekjumissinn
 compensate farmers-DAT income.loss.the-ACC
 ‘compensate farmers for their loss of income’
- b. *bæta tekjumissinn til bænda
 compensate income.loss.the-ACC to farmers
- (12) a. launa bændum aðstoðina
 reward farmers-DAT assistance.the-ACC
 ‘reward farmers for their assistance’
- b. *launa aðstoðina til bænda
 reward assistance.the-ACC to farmers

The verbs *bæta* and *launa* are quite different from the other *pay-verbs* in that the theme object denotes some past event that the goal was a part of but not something that the goal receives. The farmers will neither receive the loss of income nor the assistance in (11) and (12). The result is that the goal cannot be interpreted as the endpoint of motion in any sense as required by the preposition *til* and thus the POC is ruled out.

3.3.4 *Loan-verbs*

The RMC has various examples of the POC with the two *loan-verbs* in the study, *lána* ‘loan’ and *leigja* ‘rent’. Two of them are shown below:

- (13) a. Molde hefur jafnframt lánað Sverri til FH-inga fram á haustið
 Molde has also lent Sverrir-ACC to FH until fall.the
 ‘Molde has also lent Sverrir to FH-football club until the fall.’

- b. Hugmyndin er að leigja ferjuna til ríkisins
 idea.the is to rent ferry-ACC to state.the
 ‘The idea is to rent the ferry to the authorities.’

The example in (13a) is quite typical of examples of *lána* in the RMC as approximately half of them involve football, handball or basketball players lent to sports clubs. Importantly, this may explain why the POC is more common with *lána* (27%) than *leigja* (20%). Since sports clubs do not own their players, it is probably more natural to use the POC rather than the DOC in examples like (13a) because the POC cannot have a pure possession reading. Still, the DOC is possible as an alternative to the POC as shown in (14):

- (14) Molde hefur jafnframt lánað FH-ingum Sverri fram á haustið
 Molde has also lent FH-DAT Sverrir-ACC until fall.the

Although this may not affect the choice between the POC and the DOC, it should be noted that *lána* in this case does not require the goal to return the theme back to the agent. It just means that the new club can use the player without buying him/her from the old club. Thus, loaning a player to a sports club is not quite the same thing as loaning your neighbour a screwdriver.

3.2.5 Verbs of instrument of communication

One class of transfer verbs that could not be tested by Kristínardóttir (2021) is verbs of instrument of communication like *meila* ‘e-mail’. The reason is that the 2019 edition of the RMC mostly contains formal texts where such verbs are more or less absent. The POC and the DOC with a verb of this class is exemplified in (15):⁸

- (15) a. Sigga emeilaði uppskriftina til gamals vinar
 Sigga emailed recipe.the-ACC to old friend
 ‘Sigga e-mailed the recipe to an old friend.’
- b. Sigga emeilaði gömlum vini uppskriftina
 Sigga emailed old-DAT friend-DAT recipe.the-ACC

As shown by Ussery et al. (2022), there is no clear preference for either construction in examples like (15a) and (15b) and this fact puts verbs of instrument of communication in a class with verbs like *senda* ‘send’ and *selja* ‘sell’ discussed earlier. Since verbs of instrument of communication encode caused motion (Rappoport Hovav & Levin 2008), this is exactly what one would expect.

3.4 Non-transfer verbs

Of all the non-transfer verbs investigated by Kristínardóttir (2021), the communication verbs are probably the most interesting from a cross-linguistic perspective. Thus, the preposition *ad*

⁸ Although this is not shown here, the theme argument with these verbs can also have dative case (Jónsson & Thórarinsdóttir 2020), both in the POC and the DOC.

‘to’ is frequently used in Merovingian Latin to express the goal of communication verbs (see Fedriani 2020 and references cited there) even though it is otherwise very similar to the preposition *til* in Icelandic. Note also that the POC was possible in Old English with verbs of motion and communication although it was not attested with verbs describing transfer of possession (Cuypere 2014).

As for communication verbs in Icelandic, no examples of the POC are attested with *kenna* ‘teach’ and *segja* ‘tell’ and the few examples of *sýna* ‘show’ that are attested have the sense ‘show visible signs of, display’, as in (16a). There were no examples of *sýna* in the meaning ‘demonstrate’ and such examples are in fact ungrammatical in our judgment, as shown in (16b).

- (16) a. að meta og sýna náungakærleik til okkar minnsta bróður
to value and show neighbour.love-ACC to our smallest brother
‘to appreciate and show neighbourly love to our smallest brother’
- b. *Leiðbeinandinn sýndi réttu aðferðina til fólks
instructor.the showed right-ACC method.the-ACC to people
‘The instructor showed people the right method.’

Kristínardóttir (2021) found almost no examples of the other subclasses of non-transfer verbs in her study, i.e. verbs of future having, verbs of enabling and verbs of hindrance. As exemplified below, verbs in these three subclasses are either ungrammatical or highly deviant in the POC:

- (17) a. Hann skuldar ríkissjóði háar fjárhæðir
he owes treasury-DAT high-ACC amounts-ACC
‘He owes the treasury a lot of money.’
- b. ??Hann skuldar háar fjárhæðir til ríkissjóðs
he owes high-ACC amounts-ACC to treasury
- (18) a. Þetta auðveldar kjósendum valið
this makes.easier voters-DAT the.choice-ACC
‘This makes it easier for voters to chose between parties.’
- b. *Þetta auðveldar valið til kjósenda
this makes.easier the.choice-ACC to voters
- (19) a. Samningurinn bannar fyrirtækjum afskipti af stjórnmálum
agreement.the prohibits companies-DAT interference-ACC in politics
‘The agreement prohibits companies from interfering in politics.’
- b. *Samningurinn bannar afskipti af stjórnmálum til fyrirtækja
agreement.the prohibits interference-ACC in politics to companies

While we will not discuss this issue in detail here, we hypothesize that non-transfer verbs are excluded from the POC in Icelandic because they are incompatible with the preposition *til*, which encodes endpoint of motion in a broad sense. Crucially, non-transfer verbs like *kenna*

‘teach’ do not describe an event where the referent of the direct object is moved from the agent to the goal. Thus, if Mary teaches John German, the knowledge of German still stays with Mary and may not even reach John. By contrast, if she gives him a book, Mary loses possession of the book and John becomes the new owner. This indicates that verbs like *kenna*, unlike *give*-verbs, cannot express motion in a broad sense. The result is that, when used with *kenna*, the preposition *til* cannot encode an endpoint of motion as required by its semantics and this leads to ungrammaticality.

4 Ditransitive constructions in Icelandic

In this final chapter, the POC will be compared to the other two ditransitive constructions in Icelandic to bring out more clearly the differences and similarities between the POC and these constructions. We start in 4.1 by a short comparison with the DOC, adding a few remarks to what has already been discussed. In 4.2, the POC will be compared to yet another ditransitive construction in Icelandic, which is characterized by a theme-goal order of two DPs. The POC will be shown to be very different from this superficially similar construction and this is consistent with the view that these two constructions have very different syntactic structures.

4.1 The POC vs. the DOC

The restrictions on the POC discussed in chapter 3 clearly set the POC apart from the DOC, which is not restricted to transfer verbs and verbs of motion and can occur with all kinds of goals that are potential possessors.

There are also conditions on the DOC that do not apply to the POC. We have already seen in chapter 2 that the DOC is excluded with purely spatial goals that are not capable of possession. Further restrictions on the DOC can be seen with *throw*-verbs. These verbs are incompatible with the DOC in Icelandic (Barðdal 2007), in contrast to English (cf. *throw me the ball*), whereas the POC is possible with such verbs. This is shown in (20) below (from Jónsson 2022:7):

- (20) a. Hún kastaði/henti/sparkaði boltanum til barnsins (POC)
 she threw/threw/kicked ball.the-DAT to child.the
 ‘She threw/kicked the ball to the child.’
- b. *Hún kastaði/henti/sparkaði barninu boltanum (DOC)
 she threw/threw/kicked child.the-DAT ball.the-DAT

It should also be noted that not all uses of ditransitive transfer verbs allow the POC. Thus, if the transfer does not involve concrete things, the POC seems to be excluded:

- (21) a. Forstjórinn gaf hluthöfum nýja von (DOC)
 director.the gave share.holders-DAT new-ACC hope-ACC
 ‘The director gave shareholders a new hope.’
- b. *Forstjórinn gaf nýja von til hluthafa (POC)
 director.the gave new-ACC hope-ACC to shareholders

This is not surprising, however, since there is no sense of movement of the direct object in examples like (21a) due to its abstract nature.

As already stated in section 2, the DOC is found in five syntactic classes of ditransitive verbs as defined by different case patterns. By contrast, the POC is mostly confined to verbs in the biggest class of ditransitive verbs, the DAT-ACC class. The only exceptions that we know of are two verbs taking two dative objects, *skila* ‘return’ and *úthluta* ‘assign, allot’. Importantly, both verbs are transfer verbs in the sense assumed here because both of them entail successful transfer. For instance, if someone returns a book to the library, the book will inevitably end up in the library. In fact, it appears that there are no restrictions on the POC that relate directly to the case patterns exhibited by ditransitive verbs in Icelandic; rather, all ditransitive verbs are compatible with the POC so long as they describe events that can be conceptualized as something (concrete) expressed by the direct object undergoing movement from the agent to the endpoint encoded by the goal.

4.2 The POC vs. the OIC

In addition to the DOC and the POC, Icelandic has a third ditransitive construction, the Object Inversion Construction (OIC) where the direct object precedes the indirect object as in (22b):

- (22) a. *Ég gaf barninu boltann* (DOC)
 I gave child.the-DAT ball.the-ACC
 ‘I gave the child the ball.’
- b. *Ég gaf boltann barninu* (OIC)
 I gave ball.the-ACC child.the-DAT

The OIC in Icelandic has been subject to numerous investigations for the past four decades (see e.g. Zaenen, Maling & Thráinsson 1985, Falk 1990, Holmberg & Platzack 1995:185-214, Ottósson 1991, Collins & Thráinsson 1996, Dehé 2004, Ussery 2017, 2018 and Jónsson 2020, 2022). It is restricted to the biggest class of ditransitive verbs in Icelandic, the dative-accusative class, and some verbs with two dative objects (Harðarson 2022). It is also highly infrequent in texts compared to the DOC (Jónsson 2020).

This construction is of special interest here because it has been claimed to be a kind of a POC with a null preposition instead of *til*; see especially Holmberg & Platzack (1995). This analysis is very tempting because it utilizes a structure that is independently attested in the syntax and it also obviates the need for movement of either argument in the OIC. However, as argued by Jónsson (2022), there are such striking differences between the POC and OIC that this analysis is highly implausible. He proposes instead that, due to the strong similarities between the OIC and the DOC, the former is derived from the latter by movement of the direct object across the indirect object (see also Ottósson 1991). This highly local movement has the properties traditionally associated with A-movement as shown by the fact that it creates new binding possibilities for Binding Condition A (see Zaenen, Maling & Thráinsson 1985 for examples).

One of the outstanding properties of the OIC is that the direct object preceding the indirect object must denote old information (Jónsson 2020). Thus, if the direct object is indefinite,

expressing new information, the OIC is ungrammatical, as in (23b). By contrast, this makes no difference for the POC, as exemplified in (23a):

- (23) a. Margir senda föt til Rauða krossins (POC)
 many send clothes-ACC to red cross.the
 ‘Many people send clothes to the Red Cross.’
- b. *Margir senda föt Rauða krossinum (OIC)
 many send clothes-ACC red-DAT cross.the-DAT

In examples where this condition on the OIC seems to be violated, it can be argued that the indirect object has moved to the right of the direct object by Heavy NP Shift (Jónsson 2020). By contrast, there are no known restrictions on the information status of the indirect object following the direct object in the OIC. However, the indirect object cannot be an unstressed pronoun, as shown in (24b). For comparison, the possibility of having an unstressed pronoun as the goal in the POC is shown in (24a).

- (24) a. Ég sendi myndina til hans (POC)
 I sent picture.the-ACC to him
 ‘I sent the picture to him.’
- b. *Ég sendi myndina honum (OIC)
 I sent picture.the-ACC him-DAT

Still, pronominal goals are rare in the POC. Thus, Kristínardóttir (2021) found pronominal goals to be 3% of all the examples collected from the RMC, mainly pronouns referring to individuals. This is not surprising since the POC requires goals that can be viewed as endpoints of motion.

5 Conclusion

This paper reviews a recent corpus study of the POC with ditransitive verbs in Icelandic (Kristínardóttir 2021). The results show that the POC is almost exclusively found with ditransitive verbs encoding motion (*send*-verbs) and verbs which entail successful transfer of possession (*give*-verbs, *loan*-verbs and *pay*-verbs). By contrast, non-transfer verbs (communication verbs, verbs of future having, verbs of enabling and verbs of hindrance) are more or less ruled out in the POC. As for verb classes not studied by Kristínardóttir (2021), it has been shown that verbs of instrument of communication alternate quite freely between the DOC and the POC whereas *throw*-verbs are only possible in the POC.

The type of goal, expressed in a PP headed by *til* ‘to’, is important because the POC is most frequent with goals that do not refer to specific individuals or groups of individuals. Since the preposition *til* encodes the endpoint of motion in a broad sense, also in the POC, typical possessors like specific individuals are expected to be rare in the POC.

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