

Ditransitive passives in Faroese and the role of case

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Abstract Passives of ditransitive verbs in Faroese have been widely discussed in the literature (see Barnes 1986, Henriksen 2000:69, Eypórssón 2012, Thráinsson et al. 2012:269–273, Galbraith 2018 and Petersen 2020:223–225). To this date, the discussion has only involved ditransitives of the type DAT-ACC, which is by far the most common case pattern for ditransitive verbs in Faroese. The regular passive of DAT-ACC verbs is a passive where the theme undergoes NP-movement to subject position and the dative recipient stays in situ. However, there are two other classes of ditransitive verbs that need to be taken into account to get a full picture of ditransitive passives in Faroese: ACC-ACC verbs and DAT-DAT verbs. The DAT-DAT class shows a preference for theme-passives (NOM-DAT) whereas the ACC-ACC clearly favors recipient-passives where the unmoved theme retains accusative case (NOM-ACC). In both cases, the argument moved by NP-movement loses its case and gets nominative instead, just as in passives of DAT-ACC verbs. The overall conclusion is that NP-movement in Faroese passives is driven by the need for nominative case in Spec,T. This is different from Icelandic where dative is always preserved under NP-movement and nominative can be assigned to objects. Hence, locality conditions dictate that the higher object will always undergo NP-movement in Icelandic passives.

1 Introduction

Passives of ditransitive verbs in Faroese have been widely discussed in the literature (see Barnes 1986, Henriksen 2011:69, Eypórssón 2012, Thráinsson et al. 2012:269–273, Galbraith 2018 and Petersen 2020:223–225) but the discussion so far has been limited to DAT-ACC verbs, which is by far the biggest class of ditransitive verbs in Faroese.¹ There are two other classes of ditransitive verbs, DAT-DAT verbs and ACC-ACC verbs, and they need to be examined to get a full picture of ditransitive passives in Faroese. My informant work shows that the former class patterns with DAT-ACC verbs in that theme-passives are the preferred option, whereas ACC-ACC verbs show a strong preference for recipient-passives. In all cases, the argument that moves to subject position in the regular passive gets nominative case but the argument in situ preserves the case of the corresponding active. Thus, I will argue here that NP-movement in ditransitive passives in Faroese is driven by the need for nominative case in Spec,T.

Ditransitive passives in Faroese are interesting from a cross-linguistic perspective because they present a clear example of case-driven NP-movement, consistent with the traditional view of NP-movement within generative syntax (Chomsky 1981). However, it is also well-known that this view is problematic for a language like Icelandic, where the association between nominative case and Spec,T is obscured by the presence of non-nominative subjects as well

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as nominative objects. Hence, it can be argued that NP-movement in ditransitive passives in Icelandic is determined by locality rather than case.

This paper is organized as follows. Section 2 briefly reviews the basic facts about the three classes of ditransitive verbs in Faroese. Section 3 discusses ditransitive passives in Faroese, focusing on NP-movement to subject position and case preservation of the argument in situ. Section 4 examines some comparative data from ditransitive passives in Icelandic, showing that locality conditions rather than case determine NP-movement in such passives. The paper ends with some concluding remarks in section 5.

2 Ditransitive verbs in Faroese

Faroese has a number of ditransitive verbs in the DAT-ACC class. These include *bjóða* ‘invite, offer’, *læna* ‘loan’, *sýta* ‘deny’ and *vísa* ‘show’, as shown by the following examples from Thráinsson et al. (2012:261–263):

- (1a) Hann beyð henni starv
 he offered her.DAT job.ACC
 ‘He offered her a job.’
- (1b) Pápin lænti soninum bilin
 father.the lent son.the.DAT car.the.ACC
 ‘The father lent the car to his son.’
- (1c) Hon vildi sýta barninum mat
 she wanted deny child.the.DAT food.ACC
 ‘She wanted to deprive the child of food.’
- (1d) Hann vísti henni húsini
 he showed her.DAT house.the.ACC
 ‘He showed her the house.’

The regular order of two objects in Faroese is indirect object before the direct object. As shown in (2), reversing this order is not possible (Thráinsson et al. 2012:237 and Petersen 2020:176):²

- (2a) Eg gav Hjalvari tað
 I gave Hjalmar.DAT it.ACC
 ‘I gave it to Hjalmar.’
- (2b) *Eg gav tað Hjalvari
 I gave it.ACC Hjalmar.DAT
 ‘I gave it to Hjalmar.’

This observation is important for the analysis of NP-movement in ditransitive passives in Faroese because it suggests that theme-passives are not derived from an order where the theme

² Faroese allows prepositional datives to some extent (Fiebig 2012 and Ussery & Petersen 2023), but this construction will not concern us here since it does not create any issues for passive NP-movement.

precedes the recipient. This is in clear contrast to Icelandic, where theme-passives can be argued to arise from an inverted order of recipient and theme (see section 4).

A vast majority of ditransitive verbs in Faroese belongs to the DAT-ACC class exemplified in (1) but a handful of verbs take two accusative objects, as in the following examples from Thráinsson et al. (2012:263):

- (3a) Kann eg biðja teg eina bøn?
 can I ask you.ACC a favor.ACC
 ‘Can I ask you a favor?’
- (3b) Hann kysti hana ein søtan koss
 he kissed her.ACC a sweet kiss.ACC
 ‘He kissed her a sweet kiss.’
- (3c) Hon lærði meg stev
 she taught me.ACC refrains.ACC
 ‘She taught me refrains.’
- (3d) Tey spurdu meg ein spurning
 they asked me.ACC a question.ACC
 ‘They asked me a question.’

One may wonder if the second objects in (3a), (3b) and (3d) are true arguments. As shown in 3.3 below, the second object of *spyrja* (as well as *læra*) behaves like an argument with respect to passive NP-movement and that is sufficient for our purposes in this paper.

In addition to DAT-ACC verbs and ACC-ACC verbs, Faroese has a very small class of verbs taking two dative objects. This class, which has been overlooked in previous literature on Faroese, includes at least the verbs *bjarga* ‘save’, *hýsa* ‘house’ and *svara* ‘reply, answer’:

- (4a) Hann bjargaði tær lívinum (teldni.fo)
 he saved you.DAT life.the.DAT
 ‘He saved your life.’
- (4b) Vinarliga hýsið mær hesum lesarabrævi (teldni.fo)
 kindly house me.DAT this reader.letter.DAT
 ‘Kindly do me the favor of publishing this opinion piece.’
- (4c) Dugir tú at svara mær hesum spurningi? (teldni.fo)
 can you to answer me.DAT this question.DAT
 ‘Can you answer this question from me?’

This is a rather marginal class because all the verbs in this class are rarely used as ditransitives. Moreover, many speakers prefer DAT-ACC with *bjarga* rather than DAT-DAT. The latter variant seems to be more common than the former variant in the Faroese Text Corpus (<http://teldni.fo/tekstasavn>) but less common on Google. I suspect that the double dative with *bjarga* may be an older variant that is gradually giving way to DAT-ACC, which is the most common case pattern in Faroese. In spite of all this, DAT-DAT verbs are important for our

purposes because they provide a valuable insight into the workings of NP-movement in ditransitive passives in Faroese.

3 NP-movement in ditransitive passives

This section focuses on NP-movement in ditransitive passives in Faroese. I will argue below that the crucial factor for NP-movement is case. The object that loses its case in passives is forced to move to subject position to get nominative case, and this holds across the three classes of ditransitive verbs discussed above.

3.1 DAT-ACC verbs

According to Thráinsson et al. (2012:269–273) and Petersen (2020:224–225), the standard passive of DAT-ACC verbs in Faroese is a passive where the theme argument undergoes NP-movement and the recipient argument stays in situ.³ Recipient-passives, by contrast, are marginal, at least in colloquial Faroese. The contrast between theme-passives and recipient-passives is illustrated in (5), from Thráinsson et al. (2012:269–270):

- (5a) Kúgvín varð seld bóndanum
 cow.the.NOM became sold farmer.the.DAT
 ‘The cow was sold to the farmer.’
- (5b) ??Bóndanum varð seld kúgvín
 farmer.the.DAT became sold cow.the.NOM
 ‘The farmer was sold the cow.’
- (5c) ?Bóndanum varð seld ein kúgv
 farmer.the.DAT became sold a cow.NOM
 ‘The farmer was sold a cow.’

Theme-passives like (5a) are known to create problems for locality conditions on movement since the dative recipient is structurally higher than the theme and would thus might be expected to block NP-movement of the theme. The issue is taken up briefly in 3.4 below; for important discussion of locality and theme-passives in various languages, see McGinnis (1998), Anagnostopoulou (2003), Bacovcin (2017:85–97) and Haddican & Holmberg (2019) among others.

The contrast between (5b) and (5c) shows that an indefinite theme is preferred to a definite theme in recipient-passives. This is consistent with my search results for ditransitive passives with the verb *geva* ‘give’ in the Faroese Text Corpus where nearly all recipient-passives feature definite recipients and indefinite themes.

³ Passives of DAT-ACC verbs in Faroese have also been discussed by Barnes (1986), Henriksen (2011:69), Eypórsson (2012), Malmsten (2015:219–225), Sigurðsson (2017:81–82, 387–391) and Galbraith (2018:99–116).

Assuming that the recipients in (5b-c) have been NP-moved to subject position is unproblematic since Faroese has dative subjects. This has been shown by using tests familiar from the literature on Icelandic (see Barnes 1986 and Jónsson 2009a), even if dative subjects are now primarily found with some experiencer verbs in Modern Faroese (Barnes 1986, Petersen 2002, Jónsson & Eypórssson 2005 and Thráinsson et al. 2012:252–257). With most other predicates, the dative has been replaced by nominative.

The main problem with recipient-passives in Faroese is the nominative object since nominative objects have been replaced by accusative in active clauses (Thráinsson et al. 2012:228–229 and Árnadóttir 2021:37–41). Thus, it is natural to assume that T cannot assign nominative case to objects in Faroese and this is what rules out recipient-passives. This is in clear contrast to Icelandic, where nominative objects are productively used with dative subjects in both active and passive clauses. Since nominative is available inside vP, the loss of accusative in Icelandic passives does not create any problems for case assignment and this means that NP-movement in ditransitive passives is not triggered by the need for nominative case. Rather, it can be argued that locality conditions determine which object will move to subject position in Icelandic (see section 4 below).

The problem with nominative objects in recipient-passives cannot be solved by using accusative instead (Barnes 1986 and Petersen 2020). This is shown in (6) (from Thráinsson et al. 2012:271):

- (6) *Bóndanum varð selt eina kúgv
 farmer.the.DAT became sold a cow.ACC
 ‘The farmer was sold a cow.’

Interestingly, this is in contrast to Eypórssson (2012), who reports that accusative is preferred to nominative in some recipient-passives in Faroese.⁴

- (7a) Gentuni bleiv givið eina teldu (36,3%)
 girl.the.DAT became given.NEUT a computer.ACC.FEM
 ‘The girl was given a computer.’
- (7b) Gentuni bleiv givin ein telda (28,2%)
 girl.the.DAT became given.FEM a computer.NOM.FEM
 ‘The girl was given a computer.’

As can be seen here, more speakers judged the accusative in (7a) acceptable than the nominative in (7b) even though the acceptance rate for the recipient-passive was rather low in both cases.⁵ On the other hand, Eypórssson (2012) also found that recipient-passives with a definite nominative object were judged to be much worse than with an indefinite nominative object, as in (7b), and this is consistent with the claims of Thráinsson et al. (2012), exemplified

⁴ Eypórssson (2012) tested passives with the auxiliary *blíva*, which is less formal than the passive auxiliary *verða*, and this may have effected the outcome of the study.

⁵ The participants in this study were asked to rate these examples as acceptable, dubious or ungrammatical. The percentages shown in the brackets in (7a-b) were calculated by including all those who chose the first option and half of those who found these examples dubious. The same applies to the acceptability rates from my own informant work reported here.

in (5b) and (5c). Be that as it may, I will have nothing further to say about passives like (7a) because I suspect that they are hardly ever used by native speakers. Presumably, they show up in judgment data because they sound more natural to some speakers than recipient-passives with nominative objects. The same may apply to non-standard passives where dative themes remain in situ (Sigurðsson 2017:78–81) but this requires further investigation.

My own informant work indicates that recipient-passives of DAT-ACC verbs are most acceptable in Faroese if the theme is neuter singular.⁶ In this case, neither the morphological form of the theme nor the passive participle distinguish between a nominative theme (triggering agreement with the passive participle, as in (7b)) and an accusative theme (not triggering agreement, as in (7a)). This means that native speakers can analyze such examples in two different ways. This is exemplified (8), where the acceptance rate for each example is shown in brackets:

- (8a) *Hetta navnið varð givið honum, tá hann kom til Babel*
 this name.the.NOM/ACC became given him.DAT when he came to Babel
 ‘This name was given to him when he came to Babel.’ (90,6%)
- (8b) *Honum varð givið hetta navnið, tá hann kom til Babel*
 him.DAT became given this name.the.NOM/ACC when he came to Babel
 ‘He was given this name when he came to Babel.’ (93,8%)

As can be seen here, both examples received a very high acceptance rate and this is rather surprising for the theme-passive in (8a). The most likely reason for this is the theme *hetta navnið*, which is morphologically ambiguous between nominative and accusative, even if the theme in (8b) is definite, in violation of the information-structural constraints on recipient-passives in Faroese that we have discussed. Thus, it appears that morphology outweighs information structure in recipient-passives.

It should be noted at this juncture that almost all the examples of DAT-ACC verbs that I tested with native speakers involved *geva* ‘give’, the most common ditransitive verb in Faroese. To compensate for that, I searched for ditransitive passives of the DAT-ACC verb *handa* ‘pass, award’ in the Faroese Text Corpus.⁷ The result was that I found 77 theme-passives but only one recipient-passive. By contrast, searching for ditransitive passives with *geva* with the participial forms *givin* (fem.sg.) and *givnir* (masc.pl.) yielded 48 theme-passives and 34 recipient-passives. This is a striking difference suggesting that the use of recipient-passives in Faroese is highly sensitive to verb frequency. This need not come as a surprise, though, since recipient-passives in Modern Faroese are remnants of an older grammatical system that is gradually disappearing and this means that verbs of high frequency are more likely to preserve these passives than less frequent verbs.

Dative recipients in Faroese always preserve their case in passives, irrespective of NP-movement (Thráinsson et al. 2012:269–274 and Sigurðsson 2017:81–82). In particular, dative cannot be replaced by nominative in recipient-passives. As discussed in 3.4 below, this

⁶ This work was carried out in the Faroes in October 2019 and included 16 native speakers.

⁷ I searched for all the nominative participial forms of this verb (*handaður*, *handað*, *handaðir*, *handaðar*) but the number 77 includes only the first 200 results for the most common participial form (*handað*).

suggests that recipients are assigned dative case in a way that is unaffected by passive morphology. The preservation of dative case with recipients in situ is not only seen in theme-passives but also in recipient-passives with a clausal theme. In such examples, themes cannot undergo NP-movement and NP-movement of dative recipients is optional.⁸ This is shown by examples where the dative recipient stays in situ and follows the passive participle:⁹

- (9a) tað varð álagt okkum at ganga í grønum búnum (Google)
 it became required us.DAT to walk in green uniforms
 ‘We were required to wear green uniforms.’
- (9b) tað varð bannað honum at brúka tað (Google)
 it became prohibited him.DAT to use it
 ‘He was prohibited from using it.’
- (9c) tað verður loyvt teimum at taka lut í vaksnamannadeildini (Google)
 it becomes allowed them.DAT to take part in adult.league.the
 ‘They will be allowed to participate in the adult league.’

The alternative, which is associated with a rather formal register, is to move the dative recipient to subject position, as in (10) below:

- (10a) Okkum varð álagt at ansa væl eftir (teldni.fo)
 us.DAT became ordered to look well after
 ‘We were ordered to pay close attention.’
- (10b) Jødum varð bannað at koma saman (teldni.fo)
 Jews.DAT became prohibited to come together
 ‘The Jews were not allowed to congregate.’
- (10c) og føroyskum skipum verður loyvt at gera keypsavtalu (teldni.fo)
 and Faroese ships.DAT becomes allowed to do contract
 ‘and Faroese ships will be allowed to sign a contract’

To summarize, the overall conclusion for DAT-ACC verbs is that theme-passives are the norm but recipient-passives are still used to some extent in formal registers.

3.2 DAT-DAT verbs

Since there are only a handful of DAT-DAT in Faroese, I have been unable to find any naturalistic examples of a passivized verb in this class that has both recipient and theme as DPs. However, I have found plenty of passives with *svara* ‘reply’ where the recipient is missing, as in (11a), and at least one recipient-passive with this verb and a clausal theme, as in (11b):

⁸ As far as I am aware, this is a novel observation.

⁹ These examples look like examples of the so called New Passive (or New Impersonal Construction) in Icelandic. However, as discussed by Eyþórsson (2008), Faroese only allows New Passives with dative arguments.

- (11a) Hesin spurningurin varð ikki svaraður tað kvøldið (teldni.fo)
 this question.the.NOM became not answered that evening.the
 ‘That question was not answered that evening.’
- (11b) Teimum varð svarað, at teir vóru vælkomnir (Google)
 them.DAT became answered that they were welcome
 ‘They got the reply that they were welcome.’

To test NP-movement in passives of DAT-DAT verbs, it is necessary to examine examples where both recipient and theme are DPs. Apparently, the only DAT-DAT verb that is possible in such passives is *svara* ‘reply’. This is shown in the following examples that I asked native speakers to evaluate:

- (12a) Hesin spurningur varð ikki svaraður henni (84,4%)
 this question.NOM became not answered her.DAT
 ‘She did not get an answer to this question.’
- (12b) Henni varð ikki svarað hesum spurningi (65,5%)
 her.DAT was not answered this question.DAT
 ‘She did not get an answer to this question.’
- (12c) Hon varð ikki svarað hesum spurningi (21,9%)
 she.NOM was not answered this question.DAT
 ‘She did not get an answer to this question.’

As the numbers show, the theme-passive in (12a) was accepted by a great majority of the speakers but the recipient-passive in (12b) with dative preserved on both arguments was accepted by roughly two-thirds of the participants. The worst option is clearly (12c), a recipient-passive where the recipient loses dative case and gets nominative instead. I did not test recipient-passives with DAT-NOM, as in (13) below, because dative themes in situ have a strong preference for case preservation in Faroese passives:¹⁰

- (13) *Henni varð ikki svaraður hesin spurningur
 her.DAT was not answered this question.NOM
 ‘She did not get an answer to this question.’

On the basis of the evidence presented above, we can conclude that theme-passives are preferred over recipient-passives with DAT-DAT verbs, just as with DAT-ACC verbs. In both cases, this can be ascribed to the fact that the direct object is deprived of case in situ whereas the dative recipient retains its dative in passives (see further in section 4).

¹⁰ The ungrammaticality of (13) has been confirmed by native speakers I have consulted although they do not get much of a difference between (13) and (12b-c).

3.3 ACC-ACC verbs

There are at least two verbs that can be used to test ditransitive passives of ACC-ACC verbs in Faroese, *læra* ‘learn’ and *spyrja* ‘ask’. Passives with *læra* where the theme is clausal and the recipient undergoes NP-movement are quite common, as in (14a). The theme is NP-moved if there is no recipient, as in (14b), but examples of this kind seem to be rare:

(14a) Næmingarnir verða lærdir at busta tenn (teldni.fo)
 students.the.NOM become taught to brush teeth
 ‘The students will be taught to brush their teeth.’

(14b) í skúlanum verða einans høvuðsmálini lærd (teldni.fo)
 in school.the become only main.languages.the.NOM taught
 ‘in school, only the main languages are taught’

In both cases, the NP-moved argument loses its accusative case and gets nominative instead and this puts the recipient of *læra* in clear contrast to the recipients of DAT-ACC and DAT-DAT verbs, which retain their dative case marking in passives. The examples in (14a-b) do not involve passivization with two DP objects but this is shown in the following examples that were constructed to test this structure:

(15a) Rói varð lærdur góða siðmenning í skúlanum (87,5%)
 Rói.NOM became taught good manners.ACC in school.the
 ‘Rói was taught good manners in (the) school.’

(15b) Støddfrøði skal verða lærd hvønn næming (12,5%)
 mathematics.NOM shall become taught every student.ACC
 ‘Mathematics should be taught to every student.’

(15c) Støddfrøði skal verða lærd hvørjum næmingi (56,3%)
 mathematics.NOM shall become taught every student.DAT
 ‘Mathematics should be taught to every student.’

The results here show that the recipient-passive in (15a) has a much higher acceptance rate than the theme-passives in (15b-c). Interestingly, there is also a clear preference for a dative recipient in theme-passives, as shown by the contrast between (15b) and (15c). Presumably, this is because the NOM-DAT pattern of (15c) is known from the much more common theme-passives of DAT-ACC verbs.

The other ACC-ACC verb to consider here is *spyrja*. It is easy to find examples of this verb where the recipient undergoes passive NP-movement and the theme is either absent or clausal, as in (16a). Examples with a DP theme are much less frequent. Importantly, a DP theme is moved to subject position in the absence of a recipient, as in (16b), showing that it is not excluded in principle from undergoing NP-movement. However, when both recipient and theme are DPs, the recipient undergoes NP-movement and the theme stays in situ, preserving the accusative case of the corresponding active, just as with *læra*. This is shown in (16c):

- (16a) Eisini vórðu næmingarnir spurdir, um teir íðka ítrótt
 also became students.the.NOM asked if they do sports
 ‘The students were also asked if they do sports.’ (teldni.fo)
- (16b) hin seinni spurningurin varð spurður av einari bulmiklari kvinnu
 the later question.the.NOM became asked by a bulky woman
 ‘The later question was asked by a bulky woman.’ (teldni.fo)
- (16c) Um eg verði spurður spurningin, sum stendur í greinini
 if I.NOM become asked question.the.ACC which stands in article.the
 ‘if I will be asked the question that is in the article’ (teldni.fo)

The behavior of ACC-ACC verbs in Faroese passives is replicated in German where verbs of this class form recipient-passives and the unmoved theme preserves accusative (see Lee-Schoenfeld & Diewald 2017 for examples). The issue is more complicated in Icelandic due to the lack of undisputed ditransitive verbs where both accusative objects are true arguments (see Zaenen, Maling & Thráinsson 1985 and Jónsson 2000 for discussion). The best option is probably to examine the verb *spyrja* ‘ask’, traditionally an ACC-GEN verb, since it is sometimes used with two accusatives, as in (17a). In the corresponding passives, the theme object stays in situ and retains its accusative case, as in (17b). Using nominative instead, as in (17c), is excluded.

- (17a) ?Eihver spurði mig eina spurningu
 someone asked me.ACC one question.ACC
 ‘Someone asked me one question.’
- (17b) ?Ég var spurður eina spurningu
 I.NOM was asked one question.ACC
 ‘I was asked one question.’
- (17c) *Ég var spurður ein spurning
 I.NOM was asked one question.NOM

Despite the similarities between Faroese and Icelandic with respect to passives of ACC-ACC verbs, the recipient-passive in (17b) is determined by locality restrictions on NP-movement rather than case (see further in section 4 below).

3.4 Case assignment in passives

In view of the data we have examined in previous sections, there are various facts about case assignment in regular ditransitive passives in Faroese that call for an explanation. The facts to be discussed here are summarized in (18) below:

- (18a) Dative recipients preserve their case in passives (cf. DAT-ACC verbs and DAT-DAT verbs).
- (18b) Accusative recipients lose their case in passives (cf. ACC-ACC verbs).
- (18c) Accusative themes preserve their case in the ACC-ACC class.
- (18d) Dative themes lose their case in passives (cf. DAT-DAT verbs).
- (18e) Accusative themes lose their case in passives in the DAT-ACC class.

The discussion here will be rather brief as I will sidestep various theoretical issues. Starting with dative recipients, a fairly straightforward way to explain their case preservation in passives is to assume that they occupy the specifier position of a designated projection for recipients where they are assigned dative case by the head of the projection, e.g. Appl (Sigurðsson 2017:81–82) or PPHAVE (Haddican & Holmberg 2019). For concreteness, I will assume that the relevant projection is ApplP, dominated by vP and taking VP as its complement. This structure is sketched in (19) above (where the dative recipient and the Appl head are boldfaced for emphasis):

- (19) [v-passP [V+v-pass [ApplP **DAT** [**Appl** [VP [<V> NOM]]]]]]

The dative recipient is unaffected by passive morphology in this configuration because passives are differentiated from active clauses through v-pass(ive), which takes ApplP as its complement. As a result, passives do not interfere with the assignment of dative to recipients. This means that case assignment is not conditioned by an Agree relation between a case assigner (probe) and a DP (goal), but may also occur in a spec-head configuration (Sigurðsson 2017).

As we have seen, regular passives of DAT-ACC verbs in Faroese require the theme to move to subject position because its accusative case is absorbed and nominative cannot be assigned by T to an object. This raises the question why NP-movement of the theme is not blocked by the intervening dative recipient. The answer is not straightforward because dative recipients do indeed block NP-movement of the theme in Icelandic ditransitive passives, as shown by DAT-DAT and DAT-GEN verbs (see examples in section 4 below). Presumably, the difference between the two languages lies in status of dative recipients. It is e.g. reasonable to assume that dative recipients are PPs in Faroese since they often stay in situ in ditransitive passives when the theme is clausal, as exemplified in (9a-c). Alternatively, dative case in Faroese may be inert in the sense of McGinnis (1998) and therefore irrelevant for NP-movement of the theme.

For accusative recipients in the ACC-ACC class, the null hypothesis is that they occupy Spec,Appl, just like dative recipients, because verbs like *læra* ‘teach’ and *spyrja* ‘ask’ seem to have the same basic semantics as ditransitive verbs in the DAT-ACC class. However, accusative recipients differ from their dative counterparts in that they get their case from a v head that takes ApplP as its complement; see the structure in (19). As a result, the accusative is absorbed in passives, just like all accusatives dependent on the properties of v, and the recipient must undergo NP-movement to get nominative case in Spec,T.

Accusative themes in the ACC-ACC class retain their case in passives and stay in situ, suggesting that the relevant case assigner is not v. This leaves us with two other possible case assigners, considering the structure in (19), Appl or V. The first option would make it possible to link accusative case assignment by Appl to the absence of dative case in Spec,Appl, on the

plausible assumption that Appl can only assign case to one argument per clause. On the other hand, there is nothing obviously wrong with the second option even though this would entail that V can only assign accusative case with a handful of verbs in the ACC-ACC class. Importantly, this type of case assignment is independent of passive even though V ends up moving to v-passive, as shown in (19).

As a general fact of Faroese, dative themes lose their case in passives and undergo NP-movement (Thráinsson et al. 2012:266–274), as we have already seen with the DAT-DAT class of ditransitive verbs. In fact, dative is typically absorbed in Faroese passives whatever theta-role the direct object may have (Sigurðsson 2017:78–81). One possible explanation is that dative case assignment to a direct object requires a case-active v even if this head assigns accusative. More specifically, a main verb selecting dative case on its complement must raise to such a v head for dative case assignment to be possible. This suggestion adds an extra layer of complexity to dative case assignment and thus might help explain the fact that dative direct objects have been losing ground in Faroese for quite some time, being replaced by accusative (Jónsson 2009b, Thráinsson et al. 2012:429–430 and Petersen 2017).

Finally, accusative themes in the DAT-ACC class get case from v in active clauses, even if it is structurally higher than the Appl assigning dative to the recipient in Spec,Appl. The accusative is absorbed in passives because v-passive does not assign case. Thus, the accusative is crucially dependent on the properties of v-passive rather than Appl or V as in the ACC-ACC class discussed above.

4 Ditransitive passives in Icelandic

Icelandic provides an interesting point of comparison to Faroese with respect to ditransitive passives. I have argued above that NP-movement in such passives is case-driven in Faroese, but as discussed in more detail below, the crucial factor in Icelandic is locality. The central facts about ditransitive passives in Icelandic have already been reviewed by Zaenen, Maling & Thráinsson (1985), but a few points will be added here to highlight important points in the discussion.

Icelandic has at least five different classes of ditransitive verbs. The biggest by far is DAT-ACC, as in Faroese, but the other classes are DAT-DAT, DAT-GEN, ACC-DAT and ACC-GEN. Thus, the most striking difference compared to Faroese is the existence of two classes in Icelandic with genitive direct objects.¹¹ Examples from the five classes are shown in (20) below:

(20a) Hann býður konunni þennan samning (DAT-ACC)
 he offers woman.the.DAT this contract.ACC
 ‘He will offer the woman this contract.’

(20b) Ég skilaði Jóni bókinni (DAT-DAT)
 I returned John.DAT book.the.DAT
 ‘I returned the book to John.’

¹¹ Genitive objects (of verbs) have been replaced by accusative (or dative) in Modern Faroese (Thráinsson et al. 2012:431–434).

- (20c) Allir óska henni góðs gengis (DAT-GEN)
 everybody wish her.DAT good luck.GEN
 ‘Everybody wishes her good luck.’
- (20d) Hún hafði leynt Eirík sannleikanum (ACC-DAT)
 she had hidden Eric.ACC truth.the.DAT
 ‘She had hidden the truth from Eric.’
- (20e) Lögreglan spurði hinn grunaða margra spurninga (ACC-GEN)
 police.the asked the suspected.ACC many questions.GEN
 ‘The police asked the suspect many questions.’

It is possible to form recipient-passives with all these classes, as in (21) below. In contrast to Faroese, dative is always preserved in Icelandic passives, whatever theta-role the object has and whether it moves by NP-movement, as in (21a), or stays in situ, as in (21b) and (21d).¹²

- (21a) Konunni verður boðinn þessi samningur
 woman.the.DAT will.be offered this contract.NOM
 ‘The woman will be offered this contract.’
- (21b) Jóni var skilað bókinni
 John.DAT was returned book.the.DAT
 ‘The book was returned to John.’
- (21c) Henni er óskað góðs gengis
 her.DAT is wished good luck.GEN
 ‘She is wished good luck.’
- (21d) Eiríkur hafði verið leyndur sannleikanum
 Eric.NOM had been hidden truth.the.DAT
 ‘The truth had been hidden from Eric.’
- (21e) Hinn grunaði var spurður margra spurninga
 the suspected.NOM was asked many questions.GEN
 ‘The suspect was asked many questions.’

By contrast, theme-passives are only acceptable with the DAT-ACC class, as illustrated in (22) below:

- (22a) Þessi samningur verður boðinn konunni
 this contract.NOM becomes offered woman.the.DAT
 ‘The woman will be offered this contract.’

¹² This is true for standard passives in Icelandic but the dative may be absorbed in non-standard passives (Benediktsdóttir 2023).

- (22b) ??Bókinni var skilað Jóni
book.the.DAT was returned John.DAT
'The book was returned to John.'
- (22c) *Góðs gengis er óskað henni
good luck.GEN is wished her.DAT
'She is wished good luck.'
- (22d) *Sannleikanum hafði verið leyndur Eiríkur
truth.the.DAT had been hidden Eric.NOM
'The truth had been hidden from Eric.'
- (22e) *Margra spurninga var spurt hinn grunaða
many questions.GEN was asked the suspected.ACC
'The suspect was asked many questions.'

Importantly, there is no impediment to moving the theme to Spec,T in passives if there is no intervening recipient (Zaenen, Maling & Thráinsson 1985).¹³ This is shown in (23):

- (23a) Bókinni var skilað
book.the.DAT was returned
'The book was returned.'
- (23b) Sannleikanum hafði verið leynt
truth.the.DAT had been hidden
'The truth had been hidden.'
- (23c) Margra spurninga var spurt
many questions.GEN was asked
'Many questions were asked.'

The possibility of theme-passives with DAT-ACC verbs is often explained by the fact that these verbs allow inversion of the two objects in active clauses, unlike other ditransitive verbs in Icelandic (Collins & Thráinsson 1996, Maling 2002:58–59, Thráinsson 2007:136).¹⁴ Inversion with the DAT-ACC class is exemplified in (24):

- (24a) Ég gaf Hjálvari það
I gave Hjalmar.DAT it.ACC
'I gave it to Hjalmar.'
- (24b) Ég gaf það Hjálvari
I gave it.ACC Hjalmar.DAT
'I gave it to Hjalmar.'

¹³ Admittedly, it sounds rather strange to say *Góðs gengis er óskað* 'Good luck is wished' with NP-movement of the theme in the absence of a recipient, but it is still better than (22c).

¹⁴ Note, however, that Harðarson (2023) argues that DAT-DAT are not very different from DAT-ACC verbs with respect to inversion of the two objects in active clauses..

I have chosen an example of inversion where the theme is an unstressed pronoun and the recipient is a full DP because examples of this kind sound the most natural to me. As discussed by Jónsson (2020), the theme is phonologically lighter than the recipient in approximately 90% of all cases of inversion in the Risamálheild Corpus. There are also restrictions on inversion relating to information structure (Jónsson 2020) but they will not concern us here.¹⁵

In view of examples like (24b), it can be argued that theme-passives like (22a) are derived from an order where the theme precedes the recipient (and is structurally higher), in which case the recipient cannot block NP-movement of the theme. By contrast, theme-passives with verbs outside the DAT-ACC class will inevitably violate locality restrictions on NP-movement because the recipient is structurally closer than the theme to the subject position.

5 Conclusions

I have argued in this paper that NP-movement in ditransitive passives in Faroese is determined by case and this becomes apparent when the three classes of ditransitive verbs in Faroese (DAT-ACC, DAT-DAT and ACC-ACC) are examined. Thus, theme-passives are the regular passives when the theme loses its case due to passive morphology (with DAT-ACC and DAT-DAT verbs) but recipient-passives are used when the recipient has its case absorbed (with ACC-ACC verbs). In contrast to Faroese, NP-movement in ditransitive passives in Icelandic is determined by locality. This means that the object that is structurally closer to the subject position will undergo NP-movement. This is the recipient object unless the two objects are inverted, which is only possible with DAT-ACC verbs.

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¹⁵ We will also ignore the issue whether inversion is base-generated or derived by leftward movement of the theme; see Jónsson (2022) for arguments for the latter analysis.

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