

Grimm’s “floating” datives: Applicatives and NP/DP configurationality in Icelandic from a diachronic perspective

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‘Free’ dative benefactives, elements that do not clearly belong to the obligatory argument structure of the verb, have long been considered elusive by linguists, referred to by Grimm (1837), for instance, as datives *floating in-between*. Applicative Theory (e.g. Pylkkänen 2008, Marantz 2013) has made this notion more precise by identifying certain cross-linguistically attested readings with specific structural positions, High vs. Low. In this paper I attempt to combine this theory in the context of diachronic change in Icelandic with recent discussion about NP/DP configurationality and the absorption of benefactives and external dative possessors into the nominal domain (Van de Velde 2010, Van de Velde & Lamiroy 2017). It is shown that Old Norse allowed a wide range of dative benefactives and that High and Low structural positions of applicatives could both be filled simultaneously by a dative. Both these positions typically require prepositional marking in Modern Icelandic. Since Icelandic thus lost ‘free’ dative benefactives while retaining its morphological case system, deflection arguably cannot be invoked as an explanation. Based on the approach of Van de Velde & Lamiroy (2017) and data obtained mainly from the IcePaHC and MÍM corpus of Icelandic, it is argued that the rise of obligatory determiners in the history of Icelandic may at least go some way towards accounting for these (and perhaps other) changes.

1 Introduction

The means by which affectedness is marked cross-linguistically varies considerably (see e.g. Radetzky & Smith 2010, Zúñiga & Kittilä 2010).¹ The major ways of denoting benefactive or malefactive relations within Germanic are by case-marking and/or by adpositions. Other means attested cross-linguistically are, e.g., serial verb constructions and applicativisation (cf. Zúñiga & Kittilä 2010: 7-10). From a generative perspective, it could be suggested that these strategies are not fundamentally different but rather varying outcomes depending on where and how an Appl(icative) head, denoting affected (or ‘applied’) readings, is spelled out (see Marantz 1993, 2013, Pylkkänen 2008, Wood 2013, Wood & Sigurðsson 2014). In this paper I provide an account of the functional projection ApplP across time in Icelandic. The availability of bare dative applicatives has undergone drastic changes since Old Norse (including but not limited to Old Icelandic), an observation that has received little attention in the literature on historical developments in Icelandic. It will be argued that non-thematic or ‘free’ datives, present in Old Norse as exemplified in (1) below, were lost in the history of Icelandic:

1 Earlier versions of this paper were presented at the *25th Scandinavian Conference of Linguistics* at a workshop on *Morphosyntactic Variation and Change in Germanic* in Reykjavík 13-15 May 2013, the *16th Diachronic Generative Syntax Conference* at the Research Institute for Linguistics – Hungarian Academy of Sciences in Budapest on 3 July 2014, *29. Rask-ráðstefnan um íslenskt mál og almenna málfræði* in Reykjavík on 31 January 2015 and the *39th Penn Linguistics Conference* at the University of Pennsylvania on 22 March 2015. I would like thank the organisers and audiences for valuable questions and comments on parts of this paper. Furthermore, I thank the University of Amsterdam, the ACLC and the Meertens Institute in the Netherlands for their support in an earlier project (2010-2012), allowing me to carry out important foundational work relating to the syntax of the dative as well as the corpus study on ditransitives, briefly reported on in Section 5. The usual disclaimers apply.

- (1) a. þaa kleyiaði **honum** hinn minnzi fingr aa hinni hægri hendi framanverðr
 then itched him._D the._N smallest finger on the right hand anterior
 ‘Then the front of his right hand little finger itched.’ (MAR 153)
- b. allt bitu **honum** annan veg vápnin
 allt bit him._D different way weapons-the._N
 ‘The weapons bit completely differently for him (=his weapons)’ (EG 31)

In present-day Icelandic, the bare datives in these constructions have all been replaced by a different strategy, such as by (oblique subject) experiencer constructions, prepositional phrases and possessive pronouns. The same essentially carries over to dative benefactives in double object constructions, which have a limited distribution in Modern Icelandic (cf. also Holmberg & Platzack 1995, Maling 2003, Viðarsson [to appear]). Based on proposals recently advanced in the literature, I will argue that the observed changes from Old Norse to present-day Icelandic can be understood in terms of increasing NP/DP configurationality (cf. also Lander & Haegeman 2014, Van de Velde & Lamiroy 2017). In a nutshell, the proposal involves the grammaticalisation of determiners giving rise to tighter structures, whereby clause-level elements such as various kinds of non-thematic or ‘free’ datives get absorbed into the nominal domain (cf. Van de Velde & Lamiroy 2017). This particular process will be treated here as an instance of the Head Preference Principle (van Gelderen 2009).

The rise of a fully grammaticalised D head from a phrasal modifier led to tighter, more configurational and hierarchical structures in the extended NP projection. As a result, a number of displacement processes were lost, including Left Branch Extraction of nominal modifiers (see e.g. Platzack 2008, Lander & Haegeman 2014) and datives denoting possession both internal and external to PPs (see Skard 1952, Bjarnadóttir 2011). These changes led to an overall increasingly rigid word order along the lines argued for by Bošković (2009, 2012) cross-linguistically and Ledgeway (2012) for the development from Latin to the modern Romance languages. Interestingly, the loss of these phenomena in Icelandic occurred in the absence of any relevant morphological deflection in the nominal domain and must, therefore, be due to other factors.

The paper is structured as follows: Section 2 provides a theoretical background to dative applicatives where it will be emphasised that ‘free’ datives involve affectedness rather than possession, the latter arising from the context or by properties of the verb or the argument. In section 3 Old Norse and Modern Icelandic applicatives are contrasted, indicating that fundamental changes have occurred in the licensing of overtly marked morphological datives, especially those associated with high (=eventive) readings. Section 4 outlines a possible account of the changes observed based on increasing configurationality in the NP/DP domain. Both quantitative and qualitative evidence obtained from the Icelandic Parsed Historical Corpus (Wallenberg et al. 2011) will be used to argue that Icelandic has been moving from an emergent article or ‘hypodetermining’ system with a flexible word order towards a rigid system with a full-fledge definite article. Section 5 briefly considers a possible extension of this account to diachronic word order variation in canonical ditransitive constructions. The paper concludes with a brief summary.

2 Theoretical background

There is no general consensus in the literature as to how datives as in (1) above are to be analysed. These datives are usually considered to be benefactives (or malefactives), but scholars have also

assumed that they are experiencers or that they denote possession (see discussion below). Zúñiga & Kattilä (2010) point out that the definition is often circular, as the role or function of a benefactive is defined in terms of whether or not an action or a situation is to the benefit of a participant.² Grimm (1837) already observed that certain datives, which may or may not be directly associated with specific verbs, are notoriously difficult to analyse, appearing to hover somewhere in-between:

- (2) “Solcher dative, die zwischen dem von verbum abhängigen casus in der mitte schweben, gibt es in der alten und neuen sprache eine menge, und der verschiedensten abstufung.” (Grimm 1837: 705).

From a typological perspective, the formal realisation of beneficiaries varies both across and within languages, the major mechanisms being (i) case-marking, (ii) adpositions, (iii) serial verb constructions and (iv) applicativisation (Zúñiga & Kattilä 2010: 7-10). Van Valin & LaPolla (1997: 383) do not recognise the benefactive as a thematic relation, as it is not “part of a verb’s logical structure.” The benefactive sense is then either due to prepositions, e.g. for in English, or applied verb forms, e.g. in Chicheŵa (Van Valin & LaPolla 1997: 384). These authors distinguish at least three types of beneficiaries: (i) recipient beneficiaries, (ii) ‘plain’ beneficiaries and (iii) deputative/substitutive beneficiaries, as exemplified in (3) (based on Van Valin & LaPolla 1997: 383-384):

- (3) a. Robin baked **Sandy** a cake (recipient beneficiary)
 b. Robin baked a cake **for Sandy** (plain beneficiary)
 ‘[i.e. to show her she could do it, to amuse her, etc.]’
 c. Robin baked a cake **for Sandy** (deputative beneficiary)
 ‘[i.e. so that she wouldn’t have to]’

Languages may also vary with respect to the nature of beneficiary markers. Whereas some languages allow beneficiaries to mark only a specific type, others may employ more general beneficiary markers, e.g. benefactive vs. malefactive; plain benefactive, deputative-benefactive and/or benefactive-recipient (see e.g. Van Valin & LaPolla 1997, Zúñiga & Kattilä 2010, Coleman 2010).

In generative syntax, a unified theory of introducing arguments into the syntactic structure has been proposed under the heading of Applicative Theory (see e.g. Marantz 1993, 2013, Pylkkänen 2008, Wood 2013, Wood & Ármann Sigurðsson 2014, and many others). Arguments project into Appl(icative) phrases and are associated with an ‘applied’ (or affected) meaning, which depends mainly on the structural position of the Appl head. Syntactically these heads come in two guises, High and Low. High applicatives are typically elements negatively or positively affected by the action denoted by the verb, whereas low applicatives are in a relation with other arguments, often being possessors or recipients, e.g. of the theme in the traditional double object construction (cf. Pylkkänen 2008):

2 They propose the following working definition:

(i) “The beneficiary is a participant that is advantageously affected by an event without being its obligatory participant (either agent or primary target, i.e. patient). Since normally only animate participants are capable of making use of the benefit bestowed upon them, beneficiaries are typically animate.” (Zúñiga & Kattilä 2010:2)

- (4) a. High applicatives denote a relation between an event and an individual.
 b. Low applicatives denote a relation between two individuals.

Although two main configurations are usually distinguished depending on whether Appl relates an argument to an event or relates two arguments, more combinations are available (cf. Marantz 2013, Wood 2013):

(5)	Type	Complement Category	Syntactically	Semantically
a.	High	vP	High	High
b.	High-Low	DP	Low	High
c.	Low	DP	Low	High

The middle High-Low type refers to so-called eventive DPs, such as *trip* as opposed to *shirt*, which can be conceived of as events: *The trip only took 10 minutes* vs. *the shirt only took 10 minutes*. The eventive reading of *shirt* is only possible if it refers to an event (e.g. the making of the shirt), whereas a trip is naturally eventive as something that takes time (see e.g. Wood 2013, Marantz 2013). Thus, eventive DPs are generated in a syntactically Low Appl position but have High Appl semantics.

From this perspective, datives such as the ones exemplified in (31) and (3) above are all applicatives. However, the syntactic status of these elements, e.g. whether they behave like indirect objects or raise to subject, is subject to variation. At least traditionally, datives like (31) are often seen as indirect objects and are sometimes analysed as ‘external possessor’ constructions as opposed to NP-internal possessive pronouns (see e.g. Van de Velde & Lamiroy 2017). In the literature on Icelandic, however, they have been considered a part of a separate oblique subject construction involving a lexically case-marked dative which raises to subject position, selected in (31a) by the Old Norse verb *kleyja* (Icelandic *klæja*) ‘to itch’. In that case, the dative is usually treated as an ‘experiencer’, either solely or interchangeably with ‘benefactive’ (for discussion, see e.g. Jónsson 1997-1998, Eythórsson & Jónsson 2005; Holmberg & Platzack 1995: 196-200, 207-208 on the double object construction).

Among the modern Germanic languages, German stands out in its use of dative case to denote a wide variety of relations, similar to those above, whereas e.g. Dutch, English and the Scandinavian languages are much more restricted (cf. Hole 2005, McFadden 2006, Tungseth 2007, Coleman 2010). In German, a benefactive dative ditransitive construction can be formed productively with verbs to denote an affected meaning:

- (6) Ich repariere **ihm** das Auto (German)
 I repair him the car
 ‘I repair the car for him’

The dative can also be interpreted possessively (‘repaired his car’) but this is not necessarily the case (for extensive discussion, see Hole 2005, Boneh & Nash 2013).³ The affected dative can also

3 Boneh & Nash (2013) suggest that the possessive reading depends entirely on the nature of the theme. A native speaker of German confirms that the car in (6), indeed, does not have to be ‘his car’, as seen by the fact that it is still grammatical if *the car* is replaced by *the neighbour’s car*. Hole (2005:220) provides the following contrast indicating that what is sometimes claimed to be a possessor dative is actually more like a perceiver or experiencer:
 (i) [Paul died first.]

be used in contexts where there is no external (agentive) argument, where the unmarked order appears to be DAT > NOM (cf. Hole 2005: 226):

- (7) a. **Ihm** juckt die Kopfhaut (German)
 him._D itches the._N scalp
 ‘His scalp itches.’
 b. **Ihm** ist die Mutter gestorben
 him._D is the._N mother died
 ‘His mother died on him.’

The interpretation of these affected datives varies depending on the context, another reading being the ‘unintentional causer’ (cf. Wood 2013):

- (8) **dem Hans** zerbrach die Vase (German)
 The._DHans broke the._N vase
 ‘The vase broke on Hans (=affecting him)’

Affected datives in German are strictly speaking not ‘free’ because the presence of an argument embedded more deeply in the structure is required (cf. Hole 2005: 227):

- (9) a. Ed hat **ihr** die Wäsche gewaschen (German)
 Ed has her._D the laundry washed
 ‘Ed did her laundry for her.’
 b. Ed hat (***ihr**) gewaschen
 Ed has her._D washed.laundry
 ‘Ed did the laundry (*for her).’

Thus, the intransitive verb *waschen* ‘do/wash laundry’ does not licence an affected dative, whereas the corresponding transitive structure does. Hole (2005) develops an account in terms of variable binding to account for this contrast. As will be discussed below, there is some potential evidence that Old Norse affected datives could be completely free in this sense, raising the question whether the same held for Old Germanic in general.

Based on the discussion above, we should be careful when referring to affected datives as ‘possessives’ as is often done in the literature (see e.g. Hole 2005 and Boneh & Nash 2013 for a critical discussion). However, they clearly do participate in ‘external possessor constructions’ as an alternative means to NP-internal possessive pronouns. The possessive sense can arguably be mostly or wholly attributed to properties of the theme, as evidenced in the Old Germanic examples in (10–11) below, taken from Van de Velde & Lamiroy 2017):

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- a. Dann starb auch seine Mutter
 then died also his mother
 ‘Then his mother died, too.’
 b. # Dann starb **ihm** auch seine Mutter
 Then died him._D also his mother
 ‘Then his mother died on him, too.’

Despite the fact that Paul is dead, one can still refer to Paul’s mother using an internal possessor (*seine Mutter*), whereas this is not the case when the affected dative is used in (i-b). This an argument against treating ‘free datives’ as denoting possession.

- (10) So riuzit **thir** thaz herza (Old High German)
 then mourns you._D the heart
 ‘Then your heart will mourn’ (Havers 1911: 285)
- (11) Thiu hlust uuarð **imu** farhauuan (Old Saxon)
 the ear was him._D hewn
 ‘His ear was cut off’ (Havers 1911: 293)
- (12) svát **þer** brotnar beina hvat (Old Norse)
 so-that you._D break bones._G each._N
 ‘So that all your bones will break.’ (Havers 1911: 268)

It is often suggested that the replacement of the case-marking strategy by adpositions is a direct consequence of the collapse of the morphological case systems in Dutch, English and Mainland Scandinavian, where most of these constructions are ungrammatical with a bare dative (see e.g. Tungseth 2007). In contrast, German still retains much of its case inflection. This generalisation is not without problems, however. Icelandic could be argued to have retained even more of its case morphology than German (e.g. Barðdal 2009), yet ‘free’ dative applicatives have, since the Old Norse period, become extremely restricted if not confined to idiomatic expressions and a limited set of verbs selecting specifically for oblique subjects (on which, see e.g. Jónsson 1997-98, Jónsson & Eythórsson 2005).

Van de Velde & Lamiroy (2017) proposes an alternative account of the loss of this family of constructions, focusing on the West-Germanic and Romance languages. As will be discussed in more detail below, they suggest that the loss of these constructions in many of the modern Indo-European languages is not due to changes in the morphological case systems. Rather, they propose that these languages have drifted from non-configurational NP structures towards tighter, hierarchically structured NPs, in which grammaticalised determiners have taken over the possessive uses of the dative. They suggest an account of these grammaticalisation patterns from a constructional view where grammaticalisation is seen as the rise of abstract, lexically underspecified constructions with specialised slots for determination and modification. From a generative view point, it appears that what is at issue here is basically that phrases (presumably adjuncts) have been reanalysed as heads of designated functional projections; this is basically what van Gelderen (2009) refers to as the Head Preference Principle. In an attempt to incorporate the basic insight of Van de Velde & Lamiroy’s account I will sketch an account based on the term ‘construction’ in a loose sense, built by what I take to be heads and phrases, and apply it to the history of Icelandic. However, before doing so, a brief overview of some the basic facts are in order.

3 Contrasting Old Norse and Modern Icelandic

While it is often observed that the case system of Old Norse is still preserved in Modern Icelandic in all the relevant respects, the same cannot be said about the licensing of dative case besides its canonical uses as the default case of indirect objects of ditransitives (see Section 5) or lexical thematic case on themes. In present-day Icelandic, ‘free’ dative applicatives now usually require some means of marking other than morphological case (but see Ingason 2016: ch. 3 on certain uses

of applicatives in the NP). In order to express a construction like (7) or (8) above, Modern Icelandic may sometimes make use of the oblique subject construction with an experiencer, as in (13a), but otherwise typically requires a possessive pronoun or a PP construction:

- (13) a. **Hann/honum** klæjar *(i) höfuðið (Modern Icelandic)
 Him._A/him._D itches in head-the._N
 ‘His head itches.’
- b. Móðir **hans** er látin
 Mother his._G is diseased
 ‘His mother is dead.’
- c. Vasinn brotnaði **hjá honum**
 Vase-the._N broke at him.
 ‘The vase broke on him.’

The dative found in (13a) is considered to be an instance of Dative Substitution, a phenomenon by which the accusative experiencer subject of psych verbs tends to become dative (see e.g. Viðarsson 2009 and Barðdal 2011 for discussion). I will return briefly to the issue of oblique subjects below. Note for now, however, that (13a) does not illustrate the productive use of the accusative/dative case to realise experiencers or applied arguments but rather exemplifies the idiosyncrasy of a limited class of verbs taking oblique subjects. Its use is, therefore, very different from the possessive pronoun in (13b) and the prepositional argument in (13c) which are not associated with any particular verb-dependent features in the lexicon.

With the exception of a handful of verbs, Modern Icelandic does not allow full-fledged benefactive dative ditransitives (see e.g. Holmberg & Platzack 1995, Maling 2001, 2003, Barðdal 2007, Radetzky & Smith 2010), in fact much like the situation in present-day Standard Dutch (cf. Coleman 2010). Thus, the only way to produce a ditransitive construction like (3) or (6) above is in the form of a prepositional ditransitive construction:

- (14) a. Páll bakaði (***Eiríki**) köku (Modern Icelandic)
 Paul._N baked Eric._D cake._A
- b. Páll bakaði köku *(**handa**) **Eiríki**
 Paul._N baked cake._A for Eric._D
 ‘Paul baked Eric a cake.’
- (15) a. *Páll lagaði **Eiríki** bílinn (Modern Icelandic)
 Paul._N repaired Eric._D car-the._A
- b. Páll lagaði bílinn **fyrir Eirík**
 Paul._N repaired car-the._A for Eric._A
 ‘Paul repaired the car for Eric.’

As already shown in (12) above, applicatives corresponding to (7) were grammatical in Old Norse, in stark contrast to Modern Icelandic. According to the possessive tradition (see e.g. Skard 1951), these datives are not of the ‘free’, non-thematic type found in German but rather datives licensed in PPs denoting (mostly inalienable) possession. Example (16) is a case in point:

- (16) ofarla bíta ek sá **einum hal** | orþ illrar konu (Old Norse, Poetic Edda)
 high bite I saw one._D man._D words._N evil._G woman._G
 ‘The evil words of the woman bit one man high, I saw’ (Havers 1911: 268)

Arguably, the dative in (16) is not an argument of the verb *bíta* ‘to bite’ as can be seen by the fact that the transitive verb *bíta* ‘to bite’ takes an object in the accusative case. Skard (1951: 10) suggests that a prepositional phrase has been understood here, e.g. *í höfuð* ‘in head’, corresponding roughly to ‘bites in one’s head’, as implied by *ofarla* ‘high’. Skard’s study clearly demonstrates that Old Norse had a robust system of datives usually occurring with (or dependent) on PPs (see also Bjarnadóttir 2011). So the question is whether a PP is really necessary to license these datives.

From the perspective of Applicative Theory, there is no particular reason to assume that these are any different from the sorts of Appls we find in the German-style system. However, it can be demonstrated that Old Norse datives truly are ‘free’ in the relevant sense, much as in German. The following Old Norse prose examples, again with *bíta* ‘bite’ as in (16), illustrate this point:

- (17) hvárt reiðið þér svá slæliga sverðin, er ek sé, at ekki bíta yðr?
 whether brandish you so poorly swords-the REL I see that not bite you._D
 ‘Do you brandish the swords so poorly, because I see they do not bite for you?’ (HKR 449)
- (18) allt bitu **honum** annan veg vápnin
 All bit him._D different way weapons-the._N
 ‘The weapons bit completely differently for him.’ (EG 31)

Note that the applicative *yðr* in (17) is formally ambiguous between an accusative patient and a dative benefactive, but the context implies that this is indeed the affected reading, not the patient one. The affected reading is also the only one possible in (18). It thus seems that these datives are similar to the ones we find in German.

We also find datives applicatives with unaccusative verbs such as *eyðask* ‘erode’, *fallask* ‘fall’, *hverfa* ‘vanish’, *koma* ‘come’ and *kleyja* ‘itch’:

- (19) a. Geirr fann af skynsemi sinni at **honum** eyddusk skotin
 Geirr felt of reason his that him._D eroded shots-the._N
 ‘Geir sensed that his shots were being wasted.’ (EB 222)
- b. **Skopta** hvarf skyrta
 Skopti._D vanished shirt._D
 ‘Skopti’s shirt vanished.’ (STU 469-470)
- c. blicnaði hann oc varð faulr sem nár oc felluz **honum** hendr (ÓH 173)
 paled he and became pale as corpse and fell him._D hands._N
 ‘He became pale as a corpse and his hands fell motionless.’
- d. litlv siðar com **diacnanvm** las-avr ... i brvnina
 little later came deacon-the._D arrow._N in edge-the._A
 ‘A little later, an arrow came for the deacon, hitting the edge.’ (STU 217)
- e. þaa kleyiaði **honum** hinn minnztí fingr aa hinni hægri hendi framanverðr
 then itched him._D the._N smallest._N finger._N on the right hand anterior
 ‘Then the front of his right hand little finger itched.’ (MAR 153)

Some such cases are still preserved in Modern Icelandic, usually in an idiomatic and/or figurative sense. The phrase *e-m fallast hendur* ‘sby is overwhelmed by sth’ survives as an idiomatic expression, unlike the obvious literal sense expressed in (19c). Naturally, the expression is not confined to *fallast hendur* ‘fall hands’ in Old Norse but combines with a variety of phrases, including *andsvör* ‘answers’, *kveðjur* ‘greetings’, *læknidómur* ‘healing’, *orðtök* ‘expressions’ and so on (see ONP: *falla*). The dative in Modern Icelandic is, therefore, a matter of learning an idiomatic expression, whereas in Old Norse the dative applicative is arguably a part of a productive system of expressing affectedness.

We also find dative applicatives with the copula *vera* ‘to be’ and *verða* ‘become’:⁴

- (20) a. **Þér** er tungan long orðin
 you.D is tongue.N long become
 ‘Your tongue has become long.’ (POST 175)
- b. **Honum** varð þar eptir góltr ok hafr
 him became there after boar and buck
 ‘A boar and a buck of his were left behind.’ (ONP: *verða*; Hrafnkels saga)

Interestingly, the dative applicative can bind the reflexive possessive pronoun, showing not only that it c-commands the nominative phrase but that the applicative really denotes affectedness rather than possession, expressed explicitly by the possessive pronoun:

- (21) ‘Viti þat sá ungi maðr er sat næst kónginum, at eptir varð **honum**
 know that the young man REL sat next king-the that after became him.D
 yfirklaði sitt.’
 coat his.REFL
 ‘May the young man, sitting next to the king, know that his coat was left behind.’
 (ONP: *verða*; *Áfintýr* (Dómisögur): Exempla)

Although (21) is very suggestive and similar evidence is attested for applicative datives with possessive pronouns in PPs (cf. Kristín Bjarnadóttir 2011), one would like to subject these data to tests comparable to what has been done for German (see e.g. footnote 3 above). Since the discourse context is insufficiently clear and we cannot consult native speakers, there is no way to be certain that a dative applicative in the above contexts denotes possession, possession and affectedness or affectedness alone. However, there are arguably at least two ways to achieve this in other isolated cases: (i) in contexts where there is nothing to be possessed to begin with or (ii) in contexts where the possessee is distinct from the reference of the dative. These will now be dealt with in turn, focusing on ditransitive structures.

While there is no shortage of dative benefactive ditransitive constructions in Old Norse, they tend to involve beneficiaries, i.e. caused possession of something (see Viðarsson [to appear]). Possible candidates for relations other than possession include cases like the following:

4 The example in (20b), from Hrafnkels saga, was pointed out to me by Thórhallur Eythórsson.

- (22) a. Kona ein spurði hvat eldrinn skyldi. „Til Bæjar,“ segir hann, „at elda
 woman one asked what fire-the should to Bær says he to fire
Þorvaldi bað.“
 Thorvald.D bath.A
 ‘A woman asked what the fire was meant for. “To (the farm) Bær,” he says, “to warm a
 bath for Thorvald with fire.” (STU 395)
- b. ... er þar fyrir iarn hurð. oc ængi maðr er nu þar **honum** upp at luka.
 ... is there fore iron door and no man is now there him.D up to open
 ‘It was shut with an iron door and no one there to open (it) for him.’ (ÞIDR 315)

Recall that according to Applicative Theory, there are two distinct functional projections present in the syntax, High and Low ApplP, and these are responsible for the different semantics available to applicative constructions cross-linguistically. Presumably, the datives in (22) denote a sense of plain or deputative benefaction, associated above with High Appl. The split structure of ApplP into High and Low, respectively, gives rise to an interesting prediction. Since these two readings do not reside in the same functional projection, they ought in principle not to be mutually exclusive. This is stated in (23):

- (23) Applicative Theory predicts possible co-occurrence of High and Low applicatives.

Boneh & Nash (2013) demonstrate for French that only distinct types of datives can co-occur (or be accumulated), and consequently distinguish between core vs. non-core datives. This distinction largely coincides with the Low vs. High contrast above. Example (24) exemplifies this property:

- (24) Ce matin, j’ai juste à me repasser quelques chemises à ma femme.
 This morning, I’ve only to 1SE iron several shirts for my wife
 ‘This morning, I only have to iron some shirts for my wife.’

The non-core argument *à me* ‘to me’ does not interfere with the core argument *à ma femme*: the non-core argument establishes a relation between the event and the ironing, whereas the core argument establishes a relation between the shirt and the wife.

Co-occurring High and Low Appls corresponding to (24) are difficult to find in corpora that are not syntactically annotated. The Icelandic Parsed Historical Corpus (cf. Wallenberg et al. 2011) codes for co-occurrences of these sorts, analysing these applicatives as a third object (NP-OB3) or as coindexed with a direct object (NP-OB2). Instances found in IcePaHC turn out to be datives that are co-referential with the subject and these are confined to the Old Norse period (IcePaHC clause reference in brackets):

- (25) Vér skulum **oss** biðja **drottin** vörn miskunnar með tárur
 we shall us.D ask lord.A our.A mercy.G with tears
 ‘Let us ask our Lord for mercy for us with tears.’ (1150.HOMILIUBOK.REL-SER,.2066)
- (26) ... at þeir gleymdu at æsta **sér** **guð** undankvámu ...
 ... that they forgot to ask REFL.D god.A escape.G
 ‘... that they forgot to ask God for their escape.’ (1350.MARTA.REL-SAG,.896)

While interesting, co-referential datives are known in the Old Norse literature but have been dismissed/explained away as only involving two rather than three internal arguments, either by suggesting to amend them by adding a (supposedly understood) dative-assigning verb responsible for the ‘third’ argument, e.g. *fá* ‘give’ (Haugan 2000: 168) or by assuming that reflexives do not function as objects in some languages (Maling 2001: 432f., fn. 9). Despite the obvious fact that configurations of this sort are not very likely to be richly attested in any corpus, let alone a historical corpus of a limited size, it would be an embarrassment for the present account if all potential cases of a third argument were always amenable to either of the conditions mentioned by Haugan (2000) and Maling (2001). Indeed, they are not.

A closer scrutiny of Old Norse sources reveals that co-occurring or accumulated applicatives do not always involve either coreferential or reflexives arguments. A putative example of this sort is discussed by the IcePaHC parsing team on their forum, attested in *Gísla saga*, a late 13th-century text. However, the proper analysis in terms of the different applicative relations is not particularly clean-cut. (Note that this example is not found in the IcePaHC corpus but is provided by Eiríkur Rögnvaldsson to demonstrate that they did not always involve reflexives in Old Norse.)

- (27) En eigi mun eg biðja **Gísla ykkur** bjargar héðan af.
 but not will I ask Gísli.A you.D rescue.G here of
 ‘But I will not ask Gísli for rescue for you now.’

(<https://github.com/antonkarl/icecorpus/issues/351>)

The expression *biðja e-n e-s* ‘ask sby sth’ features the ACC-GEN verb *biðja* ‘ask, beg’. However, the verb can also occur with an indirect object in the dative (DAT-GEN), *biðja e-m e-s* ‘ask sth for sby’. Both uses are realised ‘simultaneously’ in (27) within a single clause. Although it seems that *Gísla* ‘Gísli’ is properly analysed as the indirect object, he is not affected in a straightforward beneficent (or maleficent) way in the sense that applicatives usually are. It is thus not necessarily obvious which argument counts as the ‘second’ and ‘third’ or High and Low in this configuration. For now, let us refer to *Gísli* using the ambiguous term ‘plain benefactive’.⁵

A putative example I found by coincidence in the same source as (26) appears to be more straightforward in terms of the High/Low readings and does not involve a reflexive pronoun—an example par excellence conforming to (23):

- (28) veittu mér þat, at þú sker mér skyrtu, Auðr, **Þorkeli bonda mínum**
 provide me that that you.N cut me.D shirt.A, Auðr.N Þorkell.D husband.D my.D
 ‘Please do this for me, Auður, that you cut me a shirt for my husband Þorkell.’ (GÍSL 11)

In (28) all Appl positions are filled: the High/eventive Appl is filled by a dative 3rd person pronoun, disjoint from the 2nd person subject, which is again disjoint from the Low/complement Appl 3rd person dative noun phrase, i.e., the canonical indirect object (recipient or beneficiary). It may be no coincidence that the ‘third’ argument, the High applicative, is a pronoun rather than a full NP. It is known cross-linguistically that non-thematic datives tend to be pronouns, often restricted only to 1st

5 The dative *ykkur* ‘you’ also poses a problem since it is not obvious whether that phrase is (positively) affected by the asking (the High, eventive reading) or whether it is the recipient/beneficiary of the help (the Low, complement-complement reading), or both. Accumulating two identical applicatives ought not to be possible as they would be competing for the same structural position.

and 2nd person pronouns. Ethical datives, for instance, generally only allow 1st and 2nd person in French, usually having the pragmatic effect of addressing or reflecting the views of the speaker or hearer (see e.g. Boneh & Nash 2013). Nonetheless, the High Appl in (28) really does appear to be a full-fledge participant, as witnessed by the fact that it is not coreferential with the subject.

What (25)-(28) all show beyond reasonable doubt is that merging a High Appl argument was a possibility in Old Norse, suggesting in turn that Old Norse patterns more with German, perhaps with Old Germanic in general (cf. Van de Velde & Lamiroy 2017), than with Modern Icelandic. These observations also lend support to the view that the Old Norse case system is different from the one found in Modern Icelandic in a fundamental way (see also Viðarsson 2009, Viðarsson [to appear]).

An important question that remains is what may have triggered these changes. In the following section I would like to explore a proposal made by Van de Velde & Lamiroy (2017) that the loss of these dative constructions correlates with changes at the level of the NP.

4 Towards an explanation

The fuzzy borders between affected datives, experiencers and possessors have already figured a number of times in the discussion above. Van de Velde & Lamiroy (2017) make extensive use of this in their account which can roughly be summarised as follows. Ancient Indo-European languages had an extremely flexible word order and seem to lack the extended NP structure typically found in the modern European varieties (see also e.g. Ledgeway 2011). Over time, ‘clause-level elements’ such as adjectives, quantifiers and pronouns modifying the noun grammaticalised into determiners, giving rise to a hierarchically structured NP constituent with designated determiner slots. This move towards greater configurationality resulted in NP-external material getting absorbed in the NP, whereby the dative external possessors were replaced with NP-internal possessors. The rise of a grammaticalised determiner system is also seen as having led to the loss of discontinuous structures where elements could be separated from the phrases they modified, citing cases such as (29) from Latin:

- (29) a. magno cum dolore
 great.ABL with grief.ABL
 ‘with great grief’ (Ledgeway 2011: 393)
- b. nostrum ridebant inuidiam
 our.A they.laughed unpopularity.A
 ‘They mocked at our unpopularity’ (Ledgeway 2011: 394)

Discontinuous structures used to be features of both the Germanic and Romance languages but were gradually lost (cf. e.g. Faarlund 1990, 2004, Platzack 2008, Lander & Haegeman 2014 on Old Norse). As discussed at length by Van de Velde & Lamiroy (2017), there appears to be an inverse correlation between the extent of the grammaticalisation of the article and the retention of the external possessor. Thus, the external possessor is least retained in languages where the definite article has progressed the most, i.e. NP configurationality follows an English > Dutch > German cline in West-Germanic and a French > Italian > Spanish cline in Romance. This is demonstrated on the basis of a number of properties, one of which being the ability for possessives to co-occur with the article (cf. also Van de Velde 2010 on the rise of the article in Dutch):

- (30) a. (*le) mon livre (French)
 the my book
 ‘my book’
- b. il mio libro (Italian)
 the my book
 ‘my book’
- c. el libro mio (Spanish)
 the book my
 ‘my book’

Similar claims concerning the status of determiners and co-occurrence of demonstratives, (alleged) definite articles and possessives in Old Norse are made by Lander & Haegeman (2014: 291-292). They argue that Old Norse lacked a fully grammaticalised definite article, being an ‘NP language’ rather than ‘DP language’ (see e.g. Bošković 2009, 2012), correlating with its having a very flexible word order e.g. in terms of discontinuous phrases as in (29). Some of these are exemplified below from the Old Norse MÍM corpus (see also Platzack 2008 for further discussion and analysis):⁶

(31) *Discontinuous phrases in Old Norse*

- a. **Hversu marga**_i munum vér [_{NP} _____i **menn**] þurfa [...]?
 how many_A will we_N men_A need
 ‘How many men will we need?’ (MÍM: Brennu-Njáls saga)
- b. **Tvö**_i hafði hann [_{NP} _____i **lög**] ok mörg sár önnur ok stór
 two_A had he_N stabs_A and many_A wounds_A other_A and large_A
 ‘He had two stab wounds and many other big wounds.’ (MÍM: Sturlunga sga)
- c. **Góða**_i áttu þeir [_{NP} _____i **ferð**] um heiðina ...
 good_A had they_N trip_A over heath-the_A
 ‘They had a good trip over the heath.’ (MÍM: Sturlunga saga)
- d. **Vinur**_i var hann [_{NP} _____i **Eiríks jarls**]
 friend_N was he_N Eric_A earl_G
 ‘He was a friend of earl Eiríkr.’ (MÍM: Bjarnar saga Hítðlakappa)
- e. **Þann**_i vissi ek [_{NP} _____i **mann**] bestan í heimi
 that_A knew I_N man_A best_A in world
 ‘That man was the best one I knew in this world.’ (MÍM: Heimskringla)

With regard to most of the features discussed by Van de Velde & Lamiroy (2017), scrutinised in more detail below, Old Norse patterns with the languages which have least NP configurationality and most productive use of dative applicatives (or dative external possessors). Conversely, Modern Icelandic shares most of its features with languages with most NP configurationality and least productive use of dative applicatives.

I take the grammaticalisation of the definite article, demonstratives and possessive pronouns in (30) as mutually excluding determiners to be an instance of the Head Preference Principle (e.g. van Gelderen 2009: 232):

⁶ The examples in this section are cited from the tagged, historical corpus of Old Norse, *Mörkuð íslensk málheild* (MÍM, <<http://mim.hi.is/index.php?corpus=for>>). The corpus mostly consists of the Icelandic sagas, thus typically representing 13th-14th century Old Norse.

(32) **Head Preference Principle (HPP)**

Be a head, rather than a phrase

By the HPP, a phrasal modifier in a ‘non-configurational’ NP is reanalysed as a functional head, in this case a D(eterminer). Before the reanalysis takes place, these modifying elements can co-occur e.g. as in Italian, cf. (30b). Once a modifier has been reanalysed as a D head, it will be blocked by any other existing D head in the same phrase, thus ruling out the co-occurrence of a definite article and a possessive pronoun. The status of these elements is definitely not a matter of setting an NP/DP parameter globally for the whole language. As Van de Velde (2010) discusses in detail, each element (or construction) becomes gradually more configurational, as the determiner diachronically emerges through lexical diffusion. The same point is also argued extensively by Ledgeway (2012) with regard to developments from Latin to the Romance languages. Thus, these languages as a whole did not develop from ‘non-configurational’ to ‘configurational’ but rather individual constructions did. This is, therefore, a much weaker claim than the sort of system-wide non-configurationality originally argued for by Hale (1983) on languages like Warlpiri, which Faarlund (1990) adopted originally in his analysis of Old Norse, rightly criticised by Rögnvaldsson (1995) in certain important respects (see e.g. Platzack 2008 and Stroh-Wollin 2015 for formulations in strictly configurational terms).

By the criteria discussed by Van de Velde & Lamiroy (2017), Old Norse arguably did not have a fully grammaticalised article system (cf. also Lander & Haegeman 2014, Stroh-Wollin 2015, 2016). What later develops into an article could co-occur at least with demonstratives and possessive pronouns, indicating furthermore that the latter two elements, too, had not become D heads themselves (see Van de Velde 2010: 268-269). Before turning to these properties in more detail, observe first that the definite adnominal article is a late innovation in Old Norse, lacking in Runic and Eddic Old Norse, save the pre-adjectival one (cf. Stroh-Wollin 2009, Nygaard 1867: 47-48, 1905: 33-34):

(33) ÞioðrikR hinn þurmoði
Theoderic the bold

(Runic, 9th century; cf. Stroh-Wollin 2009: 6)

The first instances of *hinn* ‘the’ without an adjectival attribute, the precursor of the bound definite marker, are considered to stem from the 11th century (see Stroh-Wollin 2009: 6, 2015: 13). Nygaard (1905: 35) furthermore points out that even in the attested prose (12th century onwards), the definite article is not yet systematically found (“ikke ... gennemført”) where one expects to find definite forms (see Nygaard 1905: 35-47, Lander & Haegeman 2014: 287-291). I am not aware of any study documenting the grammaticalisation of *hinn* as a definite determiner in the history of Icelandic but the following results obtained from IcePaHC of the major definiteness patterns are suggestive of fundamental changes in this domain diachronically:⁷

7 The data shown in Figure 1 were obtained by extracting NPs immediately dominating a D- and an ADJ-element, where the D-element immediately dominates the lemma *hinn* ‘the’ and ADJ (weak/strong) either precedes or follows N. The results were manually checked for consistency and coding errors. The determiner *sá* ‘that/the’ was left out of consideration (see Figure 2), meaning that the ‘double definiteness’ pattern, labelled D A N-D, always featured *hinn* as a free article and as a definite noun with the bound *-inn* form, i.e. both simultaneously. These cases did not include demonstrative uses of *hinn* that select the bound form (meaning ‘the other’). Double definiteness in the N D A and N-D A patterns (i.e. N-D DA) was conflated with N D A. The N-D A pattern was often difficult to distinguish from N-Ds occurring with depictives, ‘afterthoughts’ and various other NP-external elements.

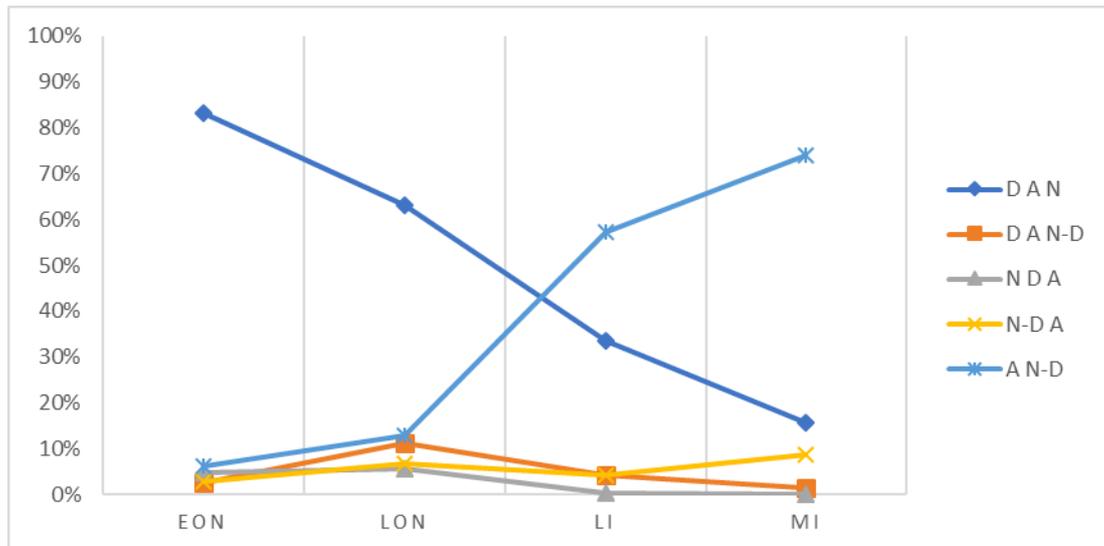


Figure 1. Proportion of each definiteness pattern found within each period. Periods: Early Old Norse-Icelandic 1150-1350 (N=443), Late Old Norse-Icelandic 1350-1550 (N=177), Later Icelandic 1550-1800 (N=274), Modern Icelandic 1800-2008 (N=850). Notation: D ‘definite article *hinn* (free form)’, A ‘adjective’, N ‘noun’, N-D ‘definite noun (-*inn*, bound form)’.

What Figure 1 reveals is that, in the presence of both an adjective and a noun, the suffixed article (A N-D) gradually replaces the free-standing article (D A N) as the dominant strategy for marking definiteness. As no attempt was made to distinguish between weakly and strongly inflected adjectives, A N-D (as well as N-D A, cf. footnote 7) conflates two distinct patterns, viz. the weak NP-internal and the strong NP-external one (see Pfaff 2015 on this distinction in Modern Icelandic).⁸ The existence in Early and Late Old Norse of the post-nominal adjectival article pattern (N D A), cf. (33) above, albeit not strictly confined to epithets or name-like designations, indicates that the free-standing article modifies the adjective rather than the noun. The fact that the post-nominal adjective with a suffixed article pattern (N-D A) survives into the modern period suggests that it was reanalysed on par with the A N-D pattern as involving a true adnominal definite determiner.

These results largely confirm the above claims according to which the adnominal article is an emergent property in Early Old Norse. They do not show quantitatively, however, how Old Norse changed from a hypodetermining language, i.e. “expressions which are inherently definite are not marked by an article” (cf. Leiss 2007: 88, see also Stroh-Wollin 2009, Lander & Haegeman 2014), to a language with a full-fledged, obligatory definite article. According to Leiss (2007: 88-89), systematically marked thematic arguments as definite but not rhematic arguments even when they were semantically definite. To address quantitatively the overall rise of an obligatory determiner, regardless of whether nouns are modified by adjectives, we can study its raw frequency of occurrence. Since definiteness was not only marked by the emergent definite article *hinn/-inn* ‘the’ but could alternatively be realised with the demonstrative pronoun *sá* ‘that’, Figure 2 includes both *hinn/-inn* and *sá* for comparison, normalised per 100,000 words.⁹

⁸ I would like to thank Alexander Pfaff for valuable discussions about this/these pattern(s). The weak vs. strong contrast is clearly an important distinction to make, although it does not change the fact that the D A N pattern gave way to a pattern featuring the bound form of the article. Interestingly, A N-D in both Old Norse periods feature the strong form of the adjective, whereas the N-D A pattern occurs with strongly and weakly inflected adjectives.

⁹ The data shown in Figure 2 were automatically extracted based on the co-occurrence of NPs and the relevant lemmata (*sá*, *hinn*). Unlike Figure 1, these data have not yet been verified by hand for consistency and coding errors.

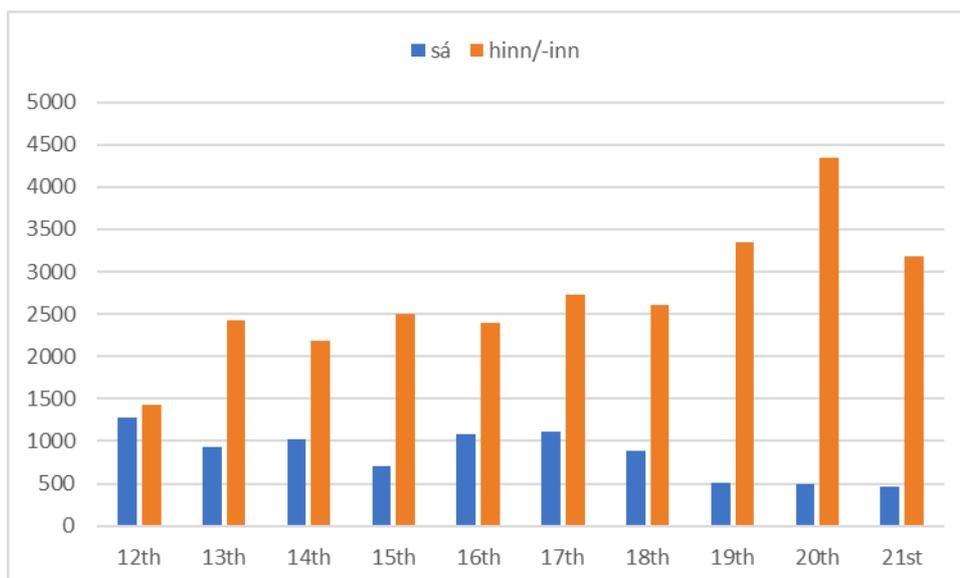


Figure 2. Frequency of use normalised per 100,000 words. Demonstrative/article *sá* ‘that’ vs. demonstrative/article *hinn* ‘the (free)’ and *-inn* ‘the (bound)’.

The results in Figure 2 imply that the definite article in the oldest prose was used much less frequently than in later periods. The near identical frequency of *sá* and *hinn* could also be taken as evidence that the definite article fails Van de Velde’s (2010: 268) exclusiveness criterion, indicating that the demonstrative *sá* denotes a similar function. Further developments indicate that *sá* and *hinn/-inn* become more divergent and that the latter is increasing in frequency, again, in line with the above claims that it changes from being optional to being obligatory.

Turning more closely now to Van de Velde’s (2010: 268-269) criteria, the dominant definiteness pattern in Early and Late Old Norse (D A N), as opposed to the generalised suffixed article system of Late and Modern Icelandic (A N-D), fails a wide array of definite determiner tests. Examples (34)–(38) below from the Old Norse MÍM corpus (see above) serve to illustrate this point; note that the structures are all ungrammatical in Modern Icelandic.

First of all, Old Norse possessives and the supposed article were not yet in complementary distribution:

- (34) a. **þín hin** mesta gæfa (MÍM: Brennu-Njáls saga)
 your the greatest fortune
 b. **sína hina** ágæstu menn (MÍM: Heimskringla)
 their the greatest men

Second, an adjective could precede the possessive pronoun:

- (35) þessir hinir **góðu mínir** félagar ok fóstbræður (MÍM: Sturlunga saga)
 these the good my fellows and foster-brothers

Third, possessives could occur to the right of modifiers:

- (36) a. **þrjá sína** menn (MÍM: Grænlandinga saga)
 three his men

- b. **fjórir mínir** félagar (MÍM: Þórðar saga hreðu)
four my fellows
- c. **það eitt sitt** efni (MÍM: Sturlunga saga)
that one his solution

Fourth, the demonstrative did not entail definiteness (dem > poss):

- (37) a. **þessa sína** dóttir, Droplaugu (MÍM: Fljótsdæla saga)
this her daughter Droplaug
- b. **þessi mín** andsvör (MÍM: Heimskringla)
these my answers
- c. **sá þinn** bóndi (MÍM: Laxdæla saga)
that your husband

Fifth and finally, the possessive did not entail definiteness (poss > dem):

- (38) a. **sína þá** heimanferð (MÍM: Egils saga)
His that departure
- b. skaða **sínum þessum** (MÍM: Brandkrossa þáttur)
harm his this

Van de Velde & Lamiroy (2017) suggest that the rise in configurationality in the NP resulted in an increasingly rigid word order so that the datives which had had ‘floating’ properties became an integral part of the NP. As early as Havers (1911), in fact, changes in the use of the *dativus (in)commodi* or *dativus sympatheticus* constructions have been associated with pronouns and nominal possessive genitives. Thus, Havers (1911: 273-274) claims that pronominal sympathetic datives are usually preposed in the Poetic Edda, which generally predates the oldest Old Norse prose by a couple of centuries, whereas the dative tends to occur in a post-nominal position in the prose (*var hann senn ór augliti mér* ‘he was soon out of my sight’). Havers suggests that this is due to the possessive pronouns which also follow the noun. The postposing of nominal sympathetic datives is similarly considered to be related to the postposing of nominal possessive genitives (*sneiþk af haufuþ húna þinna* ‘I cut off the head of your sons’). These observations thus arguably point in the same direction, viz. that elements outside the NP get absorbed into the nominal domain on the model of NP-internal possessives.

Havers’ (1911) claims regarding the Old Norse prose are more or less confirmed by Bjarnadóttir’s (2011) study. When datives are used possessively with a prepositional phrase, the dative is usually found following the noun it modifies in much the same way as possessive pronouns do. However, 22% of dative pronouns are separated from the noun by movement out of the PP. Of the datives that undergo movement, 86% are personal pronouns and reflexives (Bjarnadóttir 2011: 27).

- (39) a. þá seldi hann í **hendur Eiríki syni sínum ríki** (PP>DAT, Old Norse)
then sold he_N in hands Eric_D son_D his_{REFL-D} state_A (Bjarnadóttir 2011: 33)
- b. seldi hún **sonum sínum í hendur** bú sitt (DAT>PP, Old Norse)
sold she_N sons_D her_{REFL-D} in hands farm_A her_{REFL-A} (Bjarnadóttir 2011: 33)

The system of PP dative possessives is in competition with the possessive pronoun already in Old Norse. However, inalienable possession with a PP as in (39) is denoted by a dative in over 90% of the cases (Bjarnadóttir 2011: 27). These dative possessives are moribund in Modern Icelandic, at best, surviving only in certain (often archaic) fixed expressions. It appears that the dative possessive with inalienable possessions in a PP begins its decline as early as the 16th century (see Bjarnadóttir 2011: 9-10, with references). Hence, the loss of the dative applicatives is presumably a gradual process where the morphological datives are reanalysed as NP-internal elements, taking the guise of possessive pronouns or possessive PPs as in Modern Icelandic:

- (40) *María greiðir hárið á sér / hárið sitt* (Modern Icelandic)
 Mary combs hair on her._{REFI} hair-(the) her._{REFL}

More research is clearly needed to fully establish a link between the rise of the article in Old Norse and the loss of non-thematic datives. However, what I hope to have shown is that these aspects of Old Norse really are fundamentally different from the system we find in Modern Icelandic. Old Norse appears to provide empirical support for two separate Appl projections, a High and a Low Appl, each with different semantics, which can spell out morphological case, with no recourse to prepositional marking being necessary. Modern Icelandic, in contrast, typically spells out these relations as prepositions or resorts to an alternative possessive pronoun strategy. Increasing NP configurationality might be a potential trigger for this change. Although much is still unclear regarding the timing of the reanalysis argued to have taken place within the NP, this approach clearly fares better and is superior to the common alternative to relate the changes in question (in other related languages) to deflection.

Another potentially important issue which I have not touched upon here is the status of the oblique subject construction in Icelandic. It has been suggested in the literature that a case system like the German one which licenses ‘free datives’ may be expected to lack oblique subjects (see Wood 2013). The differences may then depend on where in the structure Appl is merged: Voice licensing in German vs. *v* licensing in Icelandic (see Alexiadou et al. 2013, Wood 2013). However, the claim that ‘free datives’ of the German kind and oblique subjects should be mutually exclusive runs counter to the literature on oblique subjects in Old Norse. This raises a very intriguing question, viz. whether or not obliques that pass subjecthood tests in Modern Icelandic generally all do so in Old Norse as well. Or was the phenomenon more restricted in Old Norse, perhaps excluding the sorts of non-thematic datives which could (by hypothesis) be used productively (as shown in (16)-(21))?

Although there is an interesting overlap, the claim that Icelandic has become ‘more configurational’ should not be equated with Faarlund’s (1990) stronger claim that Old Norse was non-configurational or that oblique subjects are purely a modern phenomenon (Faarlund 1990, 2001, 2004). The way I see it, the partial fusion of a productive system of applied datives and the oblique subject construction may have been facilitated, or made possible, by the fact that oblique subjects already existed as a construction in Old Norse (cf. e.g. Rögnvaldsson 1995, Eythórsson & Barðdal 2005). The structural ambiguity often observed between experiencers, benefactives and possessives makes a reanalysis in these contexts a rather likely scenario in language change in my view.

5 Beyond ‘free’ datives

The rise of NP/DP configurationality should arguably not be considered in isolation, being a part of a change towards a rigid word order more generally from Old Norse to Icelandic. The loss of a flexible OV/VO system in favour of rigid VO in the early modern period is a well-known case, documented in most detail by Hróarsdóttir (2000, 2008). As Hróarsdóttir (2008) shows, the choice between OV and VO was highly sensitive to information structure and it is likely that this carries over to variation in internal/external possessors to some extent as well. Bjarnadóttir (2011) points to a decline in dative possessives in the 16th century (cf. above) and Hróarsdóttir’s studies indicate that OV was losing ground in the 17th century.

What has not been mentioned in this context, however, is that the relative position of internal arguments to one another has also become more rigid. Nowhere is this as clear as with double objects in Modern Icelandic where the order *indirect object – direct object* (IO-DO) is basically the only one allowed, the reverse DO-IO typically being acceptable only in the (rare) case of *animate* direct objects with ditransitives observing the canonical dative-accusative pattern (see e.g. Collins & Thráinsson 1996). Old Norse, in contrast, allowed the DO-IO order in a variety of contexts, including inanimate direct objects and case patterns other than DAT-ACC (examples from the IcePaHC corpus, cf. Wallenberg et al. 2011):

- (41) a. þótt hann gæfi sýn ánni (DAT-ACC, Old Norse)
 although he gave.SUB vision.A sheep.D
 ‘(The bishop performed even greater miracles) even if he would give vision to this (blind) sheep.’ (1210.JARTEIN.REL-SAG,.30)
- b. Fyrst kvenna hét hún því heiti Guði að halda hreinlífi (DAT-DAT)
 First women.G promised she that commitment God.D to keep chastity
 ‘First among women, she made the commitment to God to keep chastity.’
 (1150.HOMILIUBOK.REL-SER.17)
- c. þá biður Sigvatur skáld leyfis nökkverju síðar konung að ... (GEN-DAT)
 then asks Sigvatur poet permit.G some(time)later king.A to
 ‘Then Sigvatur the poet sometime later asks permission to the king to ...’
 (1275.MORKIN.NAR-HIS,.298)

The fact that an adverb could occur in-between the two objects as in (41c) suggests that DO-IO is due to a scrambling operation similar to that Hróarsdóttir (2000) takes to underlie the OV pattern, rather than base generation as Collins & Thráinsson (1996) propose for the much more restricted DO-IO order in Modern Icelandic.

The gradual loss of the DO-IO order in the history of Icelandic has not yet been documented in detail. As Table 1 shows,¹⁰ based on my study of the IcePaHC corpus, there is a sharp decline in the ‘scrambled’ order observable already in Late Old Norse: from 44% in the period 1150-1300 to 26% in 1350-1550. This rather small dataset of 814 cases includes all case frames and no distinction is made between different environments (main/embedded, basic V2, OV, VO and mixed OV/VO configurations). Importantly, the same overall trend is observed even if we focus only on typical *give*-type DAT-ACC verbs and also when cases were confined to basic main verb V2 contexts as in

10 The data in Table 1 were collected based on a query where the clause level (IP*) immediately dominates NP-OB1 and NP-OB2 in either order, subsequently verified for consistency and coding errors.

(41), to avoid interference from the loss of OV. (The animacy constraint was not applicable since direct objects were rarely animate.)

Table 1. Proportion IO-DO vs. DO-IO order with ditransitives in Icelandic (1150-2008), based on IcePaHC (Wallenberg et al. 2011).

Time period	IO-DO	DO-IO	Total
1150-1350	56% (122)	44% (97)	219
1350-1550	74% (183)	26% (65)	248
1550-1800	76% (142)	24% (44)	186
1800-2008	93% (150)	7% (11)	161

I take these changes to be largely consistent with the overall view outlined above. The relevant structures become successively more rigid and ‘tighter’, although the NP/DP distinction as formulated by Bošković (2009, 2012) does not extend to (clause-internal) scrambling of the type discussed here. How these pieces ultimately all fit together must be left for future research, as well as the question of whether the loss of DO-IO contributed further to the demise of close interaction between word order and information structure, which ultimately resulted in the loss of OV altogether (rather than the other way round).

6 Concluding remarks

Icelandic is standardly regarded as a potential counterexample to morphologically-triggered syntactic change because of its relative conservatism in the morphological case system (but not its syntax more generally). If the loss of ‘free’ datives is related to the loss or simplification of the morphological case system, as has been proposed in the literature, how can this development be adequately accounted for in a language like Icelandic with an ‘intact’ case system? Inspired by Van de Velde (2010), Van de Velde & Lamiroy (2017) and Lander & Haegeman (2014), among others, a potential answer to this question has been sought in fundamental changes that have occurred in the NP/DP domain. In the oldest attested period, Icelandic and various related languages seem to lack a fully grammaticalised definite article. As determiners successively take on the role of establishing discourse status, word order is neither crucial nor sufficient to single out given vs. new referents. As a result, the close interaction we find in Old Norse, and various related languages, between information structure and linearisation is easily compromised.

If this proposal is on the right track, these tighter, hierarchically integrated DP structures with specialised slots for determination and modification led to the absorption of clause-level datives into the nominal domain. Whereas Old Norse allowed for a variety of datives to denote affectedness and/or possession, which could even be realised simultaneously in two separate projections, HighApplP and LowApplP, Modern Icelandic typically requires alternative strategies. While it has been suggested here that there is a link between the rise in configurationality within the NP/DP and rigid word order, perhaps even more generally beyond ‘free’ datives, more research into the intermediate levels is clearly needed to be able to develop this account further.

Texts

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