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The semantic and lexical range of the ditransitive construction in the history of (North) Germanic

Jóhanna Barðdal
University of Bergen

Current analyses of the semantic structure of the ditransitive construction in English assume that the construction consists of approximately nine semantic subconstructions, namely those of actual, intended, retained and metaphorical transfer (and some corresponding subconstructions). An examination of the ditransitive construction in Icelandic reveals at least seventeen subconstructions in that language. In addition to most of the subconstructions found in English, the ones in Icelandic also denote transfer along a path, possession, utilizing, enabling, hindrance, constraining and mental activities. An investigation of the ditransitive construction in the most archaic Swedish and Norwegian dialects reveals a significant overlap with Icelandic, but also some overlap with English and German. This comparative evidence permits a reconstruction of the semantic structure of the ditransitive construction common to the Germanic language area.

1. Introduction

A semantic analysis of the ditransitive Dat–Acc construction in Modern Icelandic reveals that the lexical scope of the construction is much wider than in, for instance, Modern English.* In addition to verbs denoting actual, intended, retained and metaphorical transfer, verbs of transfer along a path, verbs of possession, utilizing, enabling, hindrance, constraining and verbs denoting mental activities are also instantiated by the ditransitive construction in Icelandic. At the same time, the Icelandic ditransitive construction can only to a limited degree be instantiated by verbs of creation and obtaining, as opposed to English and Mainland Scandinavian. Moreover, verbs of ballistic motion cannot occur at all in the ditransitive construction in the standard North Germanic languages, in contrast to English and German, only in some dialects. Hence, even though the ditransitive construction

in English is much lower in type frequency than the ditransitive construction in Icelandic, it is still not a proper subset of the ditransitive construction in Icelandic, as the overlap is only partial.

This raises the question of whether the lexical and the semantic range of the ditransitive construction has expanded in the history of Icelandic but contracted in the other Germanic and North Germanic languages, or whether the facts of the present-day languages reflect differences that already existed before the beginning of recorded history. A comparison between text corpora from two different periods of Icelandic reveals that there is a substantial reduction of 42 percent in the type frequency of the ditransitive construction from Old Norse-Icelandic to Modern Icelandic, and its text frequency has gone down correspondingly. This decrease in the use of the ditransitive construction in Icelandic is concomitant with an emerging restriction on the indirect object of verbs of creation and obtaining that it be reflexive. A similar decrease in the use and the frequency of the ditransitive construction has also been documented in Dutch. A comparison with the most archaic Swedish and Norwegian dialects reveals a large semantic overlap between the subconstructions of the ditransitive construction in these variants, except for the existence of the subconstruction of ballistic motion, found in Överkalix, one of Sweden's most archaic dialects. A comparison with other Germanic languages and dialects reveals that all the subconstructions in Icelandic are shared across some of the Germanic languages, so that a common semantic structure for the ditransitive Dat–Acc construction can be reconstructed for Germanic. This reconstruction excludes the subconstruction of ballistic motion, as facts of case marking support the hypothesis that it is a later development in English, German and Överkalix.

In Section 2 I present an analysis of the semantic and lexical range of the ditransitive Dat–Acc construction in Icelandic, discuss constraints on the construction found in language use, and compare its frequency in Modern Icelandic texts with Old Norse-Icelandic texts. In Section 3 I compare the Icelandic data with data from Swedish and Norwegian dialects. Finally, in Section 4 I reconstruct a semantic space for the ditransitive construction in Germanic, based on the semantic and lexical distribution of the construction in the daughter languages. Section 5 summarizes the content and the conclusions of this article.

2. The ditransitive construction in Icelandic

As is well known from the literature on case and ditransitives, there are five different case frames associated with the ditransitive construction in Icelandic, namely Dat–Acc, Dat–Dat, Acc–Dat, Acc–Gen and Dat–Gen (cf. Zaenen, Maling and Thráinsson 1985, Yip, Maling and Jackendoff 1987, Ottósson 1991, Holmberg and

Platzack 1995, Jónsson 2000, Maling 2002). Of these, the Dat–Acc is highest in type frequency with approximately 150 predicates, while the others are instantiated by 5–14 predicates each.¹ Due to space limitations, I will confine the present lexical and semantic analysis to the high type frequency Dat–Acc construction in Icelandic.

It has been assumed for English that the ditransitive construction is more or less associated with transfer, i.e. with verbs inherently denoting transfer, as well as intended, retained, metaphorical or future transfer (cf. Goldberg 1995, Croft 2003). In Icelandic, however, the lexical and semantic range of the ditransitive construction stretches far beyond the scope of transfer, although transfer verbs make up a substantial part of the verb classes instantiating the ditransitive construction. In addition to transfer verbs, verbs denoting possession, enabling, hindrance, utilizing, constraining, and mental activities are also found in the ditransitive construction in Icelandic. The following seventeen narrowly-defined verb classes can be discerned, of which only nine coincide with the ones assumed for English (Pinker 1989: 110–123, Goldberg 1995: 126, Croft 2003):²

1. Verbs denoting (prolonged) possession/owning: *eiga sér e-ð* ‘have sth’, *geyma sér e-ð* ‘save sth for oneself’, *treina sér e-ð* ‘eke sth out for oneself’, *spara sér e-ð* ‘save sth for oneself’, etc.
2. Verbs inherently denoting giving or delivering: *afhenda e-m e-ð* ‘deliver sth to sby’, *ala e-m barn* ‘bear sby a child’, *byrta e-m eitur* ‘poison sby’, *eigna e-m e-ð* ‘attribute sth to sby’, *fá e-m e-ð* ‘give sth to sby’, *fela e-m e-ð* ‘entrust sby with sth’, *gefa e-m e-ð* ‘give sby sth (as a present)’, *láta e-m e-ð í té* ‘grant sby sth’, *leggja e-m e-ð til* ‘provide sby with sth’, *rétta e-m e-ð* ‘hand sby sth’, *selja e-m e-ð* ‘sell sth to sby’, *selja e-m e-ð í hendur* ‘hand sth over to sby’, *skammta e-m e-ð* ‘give a portion to sby’, *skenkja e-m e-ð* ‘pour sby sth’, *tileinka e-m e-ð* ‘dedicate sth to sby’, *veita e-m e-ð* ‘give sby sth’, etc.
3. Verbs of lending: *lána e-m e-ð* ‘lend sby sth’, *leigja e-m e-ð* ‘hire sth out to sby’, *ljá e-m e-ð* ‘lend sby sth’, etc.
4. Verbs of paying: *borga e-m e-ð* ‘pay sby for sth’, *bæta e-m e-ð* ‘compensate sby for sth’, *(endur)greiða e-m e-ð* ‘(re)pay sby sth’, *gjalda e-m e-ð* ‘pay sby sth’, *greiða e-m e-ð* ‘pay sby sth’, *launa e-m e-ð* ‘reward sby with sth’, etc.
5. Verbs of sending: *senda e-m e-ð* ‘send sby sth’, etc.
6. Verbs of bringing: *bera e-m e-ð* ‘bring sby sth’, *bera e-m e-ð á brýn* ‘bring sth into the face of sby, accuse sby of sth’, *flytja e-m kveðju* ‘bring sby a greeting’, *færa e-m e-ð* ‘bring sby sth’, *leiða e-m e-ð fyrir sjónir* ‘bring sth into sby’s field of vision, make sby understand sth’, etc.
7. Verbs of future transfer: *bjóða e-m e-ð* ‘offer sth to sby’, *dæma e-m e-ð* ‘award sth to sby by ruling’, *skulda e-m e-ð* ‘owe sby sth’, *tryggja e-m e-ð* ‘guarantee sby sth’, *ætla e-m e-ð* ‘intend sth for sby’, etc.

8. Verbs denoting transfer along a path: *brjóta sér leið* 'break oneself a passage', *opna e-m leið/dyr* 'open up a passage/door for sby', *stytta sér leið* 'take a short-cut', etc.
9. Verbs of enabling: *auðvelda e-m e-ð* 'facilitate sth for sby', *gera e-m greiða* 'do sby a favor', *heimila e-m e-ð* 'authorize sth to sby', *láta e-m e-ð eftir* 'give (sth) in to sby', *leggja e-m lið* 'provide sby with manpower, assist sby', *léttu e-m e-ð* 'make sth easier for sby', *leyfa e-m e-ð* 'permit sby sth', *sjá e-m farborða* 'provide for sby', *vinna e-m gagn* 'do service to sby', etc.
10. Verbs of communicated message: (*af*)*ráða e-m e-ð* 'advise sby (against) sth', *auðsýna e-m e-ð* 'show sby sth', *birta e-m stefnu* 'serve a summons on sby', *boða e-m trú* 'preach a belief to sby', *finna e-m e-ð til lasts* 'find/express sth negative about sby', *fyrirskipa e-m e-ð* 'order sby (to do) sth', *innprenta e-m e-ð* 'program sby with sth', *innræta e-m e-ð* 'indoctrinate sby in sth', *kenna e-m e-ð* 'teach sby sth', *lesa e-m pistilinn* 'read sby the epistle, tell sby off', *mæla e-u bót* 'give excuses for sth', *kunngera e-m e-ð* 'announce sth to sby', *kynna e-m e-ð* 'introduce sth to sby', *opinbera e-m e-ð* 'announce sth to sby', *ráða e-m e-ð* 'advise sth to sby', *ráðleggja e-m e-ð* 'advise sby (to do) sth', *rita e-m e-ð* 'write sby sth', *segja e-m e-ð* 'tell sby sth', *skipa e-m e-ð* 'order sby to do sth', *slá e-m gullhamra* 'give sby compliments', *syngja e-m ljóð* 'sing sby a song', *sýna e-m e-ð* 'show sby sth', *telja e-m trú um* 'convince sby about sth', *tilkynna e-m e-ð* 'inform sby of sth', *tjá e-m e-ð* 'express sth to sby', *uppáleggja e-m e-ð* 'enjoin sby to do sth', *vanda e-m ekki kveðjurnar* 'express critical words towards sby', *vísa e-m e-ð* 'show sby sth', *votta e-m samúð* 'express sympathy to sby', *yrkja e-m ljóð* 'write poetry for sby', *þakka e-m e-ð* 'thank sby for sth', etc.
11. Verbs of instrument of communicated message: (*e*)*meila e-m e-ð* '(e)mail sby sth', *faxa e-m e-ð* 'fax sby sth', *smsa e-m e-ð* 'text sby sth', etc.³
12. Verbs of creation: *baka e-m sorg/vandræði* 'cause sby grief/problems', *blanda sér drykk* 'mix a drink for oneself', *brugga e-m launráð* 'brew a plot against sby', *byggja sér e-ð* 'build oneself sth', *elda sér e-ð* 'cook sth for oneself', *halda e-m veislu* 'throw sby a party', *hekla sér e-ð* 'crochet sth for oneself', *hita sér e-ð* 'warm sth (food/coffee) for oneself', *höggva sér e-ð* 'cut, carve sth for oneself', *prjóna sér e-ð* 'knit sth for oneself', *reisa e-m e-ð* 'erect, build sth for sby', *rista sér e-ð* 'toast sth for oneself', *sauma sér e-ð* 'sew sth for oneself', *sjóða sér e-ð* 'boil, cook sth for oneself', *skapa sér e-ð* 'create sth for oneself', *smíða sér e-ð* 'build oneself sth', *smyrja sér e-ð* 'butter sth for oneself', *sníða sér stakk eftir vexti* 'cut one's coat according to one's cloth', *tálga sér e-ð* 'whittle sth for oneself', etc.
13. Verbs of obtaining: *áskilja sér rétt* 'reserve for oneself the right (to sth)', *ávinna sér e-ð* 'acquire sth for oneself', *biðja sér konu* 'propose to a woman', *bóka sér far* 'book a passage for oneself', *draga sér fé* 'embezzle sth', *fastna sér konu* 'take

a fiancée', *finna sér e-ð* 'find sth for oneself', *geta sér orðstír* 'create a reputation for oneself', *hasla sér völl* 'make a niche for oneself', *helga sér e-ð* 'make sth one's own', *kaupa sér e-ð* 'buy oneself sth', *kjósa sér forseta* 'elect a president (for oneself)', *merkja sér e-ð* 'mark sth (as one's own)', *panta sér e-ð* 'order sth for oneself', *reikna sér e-ð* 'calculate one's share', *skaffa e-m e-ð* 'get sby sth', *skera sér e-ð* 'slice sth for oneself', *snapa sér e-ð* 'beg for sth for oneself', *sníkja sér e-ð* 'scrounge sth for oneself', *taka sér e-ð* 'take sth (as one's own)', *temja sér e-ð* 'make a habit of sth', *tileinka sér e-ð* 'adopt sth for oneself', *útvega e-m e-ð* 'obtain sth for sby', *veiða sér e-ð* 'fish sth for oneself', *velja sér e-ð* 'choose sth for oneself', etc.

14. Verbs of utilizing: *(hag)nýta sér e-ð* 'make most of/use of sth', *nota sér eitthvað* 'use sth for oneself', *notfæra sér e-ð* 'take advantage of sth', etc.
15. Verbs of hindrance: *banna e-m e-ð* 'forbid sby to do sth', *byrgja e-m sýn* 'block the view for sby', *gera e-m e-ð* 'do sth (bad) to sby', *meina e-m e-ð* 'hinder sby from (doing) sth', *torvelda e-m e-ð* 'make sth difficult for sby', *villa e-m sýn* 'deceive sby', etc.
16. Verbs of constraining: *einsetja sér e-ð* 'resolve to do sth', *setja sér e-ð* 'determine to do sth', *setja e-m e-ð fyrir* 'give sby a task', *setja e-m úrslitakosti* 'give sby an ultimatum', *setja e-m stólinn fyrir dyrnar* 'put a chair for the door for sby, give sby an ultimatum', etc.
17. Verbs denoting mental activity: *fyrirgefja e-m e-ð* 'forgive sby sth', *gera sér e-ð ljóst* 'realize sth', *hugsa sér e-ð* 'think of sth', *ímynda sér e-ð* 'imagine sth', *kunna e-m þakkir fyrir* 'be grateful to sby for sth', *mynda sér skoðun* 'form an opinion', etc.

The classification above is fairly self-explanatory. The verbs and predicates have been grouped together depending on their meaning, so that verbs with similar lexical meanings fall into the same class, whereas verbs with different lexical meanings do not share a class. For instance, 'lend' and 'rent out' are both "verbs of lending," whereas 'lend' and 'teach' belong to "verbs of lending" and "verbs of communicated message", respectively. Several of the predicates above are lexicalized set phrases with a meaning not necessarily derivable from the meaning of the parts. One such example is *leiða e-m e-ð fyrir sjónir*, which literally means 'lead/take sth before sby's eyes', but has acquired the meaning 'make sby understand sth' in contemporary Icelandic. Several of the predicates can be used either concretely or metaphorically, like *brjóta sér leið* 'break oneself a passage' which can either be used in a concrete situation about someone breaking his/her way through a thicket, or metaphorically about someone working their way up the career ladder.

Even though classifying verbs into similarity clusters is not particularly arduous, it is much more problematic to draw the line between potential semantic verb

classes, especially if the number of predicates is as high as in this case (as opposed to 69 in Goldberg’s 1995: 126 analysis). For instance, verbs of creation also entail obtaining when the indirect object is reflexive. Consider the ditransitive reflexive *byggja* ‘build’:

- (1) *Fyrsti grísinn byggði sér hús úr stráum.*
 first piglet built himself house of straws
 ‘The first little pig built himself a house of straw.’

Clearly, the subject referent both creates the object and obtains it at the same time. This is why I have placed verbs of obtaining and verbs of creation next to each other on the semantic map of the Icelandic ditransitive Dat–Acc construction in Figure 1.

The verb classes in bold in Figure 1 are the ones that denote actual/intended transfer in the verbs’ concrete senses. Together these ten verb classes make up the most coherent class of ditransitives in Icelandic. Verbs of owning are related to transfer verbs as transfer typically entails changes in ownership or a change from one location to another. Verbs of owning/possession thus profile the end poles of that event chain (i.e. owning/possession before or after the transfer). Verbs of utilizing are contiguous with verbs of owning since utilizing something presupposes possession, either physical possession or being in control of something. Moreover, verbs of enabling, hindrance and constraining all entail power or authority; they are therefore located next to verbs of owning and utilizing. Verbs of instrument of communication are found between ordinary verbs of sending and verbs of communicated message, as they combine features from both these classes, namely the concrete sending of a message. Observe that verbs of communicated message do not entail direct transfer of an object, as is well known in the literature, but rather a metaphorical movement of the message from an initiator to an endpoint. Hence, I have placed this class contiguous to, but outside, the central and most entrenched subconstruction of transfer. Observe, moreover, that some verbs of communicated

transfer along a path		
giving lending sending instrument of sending paying		future transfer
		bringing
		obtaining
		creation
constraining		communicated message
		mental activity
enabling		owning
hindrance		utilizing

Figure 1. A semantic map of the ditransitive Dat–Acc construction in Icelandic

message can also be regarded as verbs of creation. Consider the following attested examples:

- (2) *Ég sem jú fyrir kærustuna, og syng henni öll mín ljóð.*
 I compose yeah for girlfriend.the and sing her all my poems
 ‘I of course compose for my girlfriend and sing her all my songs.’
- (3) ... *hvort hann orti henni ekki ljóð í eitt skiptið.*
 whether he wrote her not poem in one time
 ‘... whether he didn’t write her a poem at some point.’

In both these examples the communicated message is being created at the same time as it is being communicated/transferred. Hence, these two classes are adjacent to each other on the map. Verbs denoting mental activities, like *ímynda sér e-ð* ‘imagine sth’ and *mynda sér skoðun* ‘form an opinion’ involve a mental image or “product”. They differ from verbs of communicated message in that the product is processed internally, so the initiating point and the endpoint are the same.

The principles behind organizing conceptual space, laid out in for instance Croft (2001) and Haspelmath (2003), are based on the idea that items showing the same grammatical behavior are adjacent to each other in conceptual space, whereas items that are dissimilar in behavior are distant from each other. In the case of the ditransitive, all the predicates share the same grammatical property, namely that of instantiating the ditransitive construction. They can therefore not be arranged in conceptual space according to their grammatical behavior. My goal in the present article is rather to arrange the relevant vocabulary items on a semantic map according to the semantic similarities found across these items. The result is a network of subconstructions, based on verb classes and the similarities found between them (cf. also Barðdal 2004). Semantic maps of this kind are as easily falsifiable as conceptual spaces based on grammatical similarities, as a cross-linguistic comparison will either sustain or falsify the relative order of the subconstructions on the map. All that is needed to falsify the map is a language containing a subset of the subconstructions of the ditransitive which cannot be arranged contiguously on the semantic map presented here. A comparison of the Germanic languages, and in particular the North Germanic languages, does not reveal any inconsistencies in the arrangement of the present semantic map.

The seventeen verb classes suggested above and the semantic map in Figure 1 are a first coarse-grained attempt to model the lexical and the semantic range of the ditransitive construction in Icelandic within a construction-based theory of grammar. On such an account each semantic subclass corresponds to a subconstruction of the ditransitive construction, motivated by its unique semantics. The subconstructions are thus verb-class-specific constructions, which may in turn be

divided into verb-subclass-specific constructions. These again consist of all the verb-specific constructions, which are the concrete lexically filled instantiations at the bottom of the schematicity–lexicality hierarchy (cf. Barðdal 2001a, 2004, 2006, Croft 2003). In Section 3 below, I will compare the semantics of the ditransitive construction in Icelandic with the semantics of the construction in the most archaic Modern Mainland Scandinavian dialects. Before that, however, a note on the use of the construction in Icelandic is warranted.

There are several things worthy of being pointed out with regard to the use of the ditransitive construction in Icelandic. First of all, as opposed to English, verbs of ballistic motion cannot be used ditransitively in Icelandic:

(4) **Ég kastaði honum boltanum.*
I threw him ball.the.DAT

(5) **Ég sparkaði honum boltanum.*
I kicked him ball.the.DAT

Observe that the majority of verbs of translational motion in Icelandic, including ballistic motion, select for a dative on the direct object (Barðdal 1993, 2001b: 151–156, forthcoming) and not accusative. They are thus excluded from the prototypical Dat–Acc ditransitive construction on formal grounds. They are, however, not excluded from the low type frequency Dat–Dat ditransitive construction, but as the examples in (4–5) above show, they cannot instantiate the Dat–Dat construction either in Icelandic.

Falk (1990: 72) discusses similar examples in Swedish (her acceptability marking):

(6) #*Han slängde henne en handske.*
he threw her a glove

She points out that Swedish speakers do not agree on the status of such examples in Swedish, and that there is either some speaker variation with regard to their acceptability or they are regarded as marginal. My Swedish informants reject this example.

Second, several of the verb-specific subconstructions of the ditransitive in Icelandic are only found with a reflexive indirect object. A large majority of creation verbs and verbs of obtaining, for instance, can only be used reflexively in Modern Icelandic (cf. Holmberg and Platzack 1995: 190, 202, Jónsson 2000: 78–80, Maling 2002: 51–52). The following attested examples illustrate this:

(7) *Margrét keypti sér skíði með 15% afslætti.*
Margaret bought herself skis with 15% rebate
'Margaret bought herself skis with 15% off the price.'

- (8) *Stefán saumaði sér litla pyngju.*
 Stephen sewed himself small pouch
 ‘Stephen sewed himself a small pouch.’

Corresponding non-reflexive examples are ill-formed in Modern Icelandic:

- (9) **Margrét keypti þeim/börnunum skíði með 15% afslætti.*
 Margaret bought them/children.the skis with 15% rebate
- (10) **Stefán saumaði þeim/krökkunum litla pyngju.*
 Stephen sewed them/kids.the small pouch

It also seems that verbs of obtaining are more restricted in Icelandic than in, for instance, English or Swedish, as illustrated by the difference in felicitousness of the following examples:

- (11) *I peeled him an orange.* English
- (12) *Jag skalade honom en apelsin.* Swedish
 I peeled him an orange
 ‘I peeled him an orange.’
- (13) **Ég afhýddi honum appelsínu.* Icelandic
 I peeled him orange

Observe, however, that the Icelandic example in (13) is perfectly natural if the object is reflexive, as shown in (14):

- (14) *Ég afhýddi mér appelsínu.*
 I peeled myself orange
 ‘I peeled myself an orange.’

The same pattern as in Icelandic is also found in some West-Norwegian dialects:

- (15)²/**Eg skrella han ein appelsin.* West-Norwegian
 I peeled him an orange
- (16) *Eg skrella meg ein appelsin.*
 I peeled myself an orange
 ‘I peeled myself an orange.’

A comparison between Modern Icelandic and Old Norse-Icelandic reveals that at least some verbs of obtaining and creation could select for a non-reflexive object in earlier stages of Icelandic (examples are given with Modern Icelandic spelling):

- (17) *Síðan mun ég kaupa þér hér land ...*
 then will I buy you here land
 ‘Then I will buy you land here ...’ (Valla-Ljóts saga 1987: 1832)

- (18) ... *ef þú skyldir skera Vésteini bróður mínum skyrtuna.*
 if you should cut Vésteinn brother my shirt.the
 ‘... if you were to make a shirt for my brother Vésteinn.’
 (Gísla saga Súrssonar 1987: 859)

Both these examples are unacceptable in Modern Icelandic.

I have encountered one example of a verb of ballistic motion occurring in the ditransitive construction in Old Norse-Icelandic, namely with the verb *kasta* ‘cast’:

- (19) ... *þá vendi hann og aftur kastaði þeim sínum úrskurði*
 then turned he and back cast them his.DAT decision.DAT
og orlofi.
 and permission.DAT
 ‘... then he turned and overturned his decision and permission for them.’
 (*Stjórn* 1862: 269)

It is, however, important to point out that the meaning of the predicate (*aftur*)*kasta* ‘cast back’ is not that of a ballistic motion here, as it is used metaphorically about reversing an earlier decision. Observe also that the direct object is in the dative case and not the accusative. Hence, this is not an example of the prototypical Dat–Acc construction but of the low type frequency Dat–Dat construction. This is the only ditransitive example I have encountered in Old Norse-Icelandic of a verb that denotes ballistic motion in its concrete sense. This example is, however, from a biblical translation and its status as ‘real’ Old Norse-Icelandic is thus dubious. In contrast, the fact that the examples in (17–18) are not from translated literature but are documented in the classic Saga literature clearly testifies to their acceptability in Old Norse-Icelandic. By the same token, these facts also show that the ditransitive construction has become grammatically more restricted over time. An investigation of the frequency of case constructions in Old Norse-Icelandic and Modern Icelandic texts seems to support that, since it reveals that both the type and the token frequency of the prototypical ditransitive construction, i.e. Dat–Acc, is lower in Modern Icelandic texts than in corresponding Old Norse-Icelandic texts.

Table 1 shows that not only is the type and the text frequency of the ditransitive Dat–Acc construction lower in the Modern Icelandic texts, but the frequency is approximately half of what it is in the corresponding Old Norse-Icelandic texts.

Table 1. Type and text frequency of ditransitive Dat–Acc verbs in Icelandic texts

	Old Norse-Icelandic	Modern Icelandic	Total
Types	38	22	60
Tokens	92	39	131

This does not automatically entail that ditransitive predicates are lower in absolute type frequency in Modern Icelandic than Old Norse-Icelandic, or that the class of ditransitive verbs has shrunk by 42%, since the total number of texts is very small or only 20,000 running words for each period (see Barðdal 2001b for details on the corpus, its stratification, the four different genres and their comparability). However, these figures reveal that ditransitive verbs are used less in Modern Icelandic on a 20,000 word basis than in Old Norse-Icelandic.

The question now arises whether there is a difference in the lexical and semantic range of the ditransitive construction across these time periods. In order to address that issue, I have extracted the relevant predicates from both corpora. The following predicates instantiating the ditransitive Dat–Acc construction occur in the Modern Icelandic texts:

1. Verbs of possession: *eiga sér stað* ‘own him/herself a place, take place’
2. Verbs of giving: *gefa e-m eitthvað* ‘give sby sth’, *fá e-m e-ð* ‘hand sth over to sby’, *veita e-m athygli* ‘give sby attention’
4. Verbs of paying: *bæta e-m e-ð upp* ‘compensate sby for sth’
7. Verbs of future transfer: *bjóða e-m e-ð* ‘offer sby sth’
8. Verbs denoting transfer along a path: *gera sér ferð* ‘take on a trip’
9. Verbs of enabling: *gera e-m greiða* ‘do sby a favor’, *gera sér far um* ‘do one’s utmost’, *léttu e-m e-ð* ‘facilitate sth for sby’
10. Verbs of communicated message: *herma e-m e-ð* ‘tell sby sth’, *segja e-m e-ð* ‘tell sby sth’, *sýna e-m e-ð* ‘show sby sth’, *vísa e-m e-ð* ‘show sby sth’
12. Verbs of creation: *baka sér vandræði* ‘create problems for oneself’
13. Verbs of obtaining: *fá sér drykk* ‘have a drink’, *kaupa sér e-ð* ‘buy oneself sth’
15. Verbs of hindrance: *ráða e-m bana* ‘kill sby’, *villa e-m sýn* ‘deceive sby’
17. Verbs denoting mental activity: *hugsa sér e-ð* ‘think about sth’, *kynna sér e-ð* ‘acquaint oneself with sth’, *vilja e-m e-ð* ‘want sth for/from sby’

The predicates are distributed across eleven of the seventeen subconstructions, with those of giving, enabling, communicated message and mental activities being highest in type frequency. The verb *bjóða* ‘offer’ is by far the highest in text frequency with seven instances, *gefa* ‘give’ occurring six times, *segja* ‘tell’ three times, and *gera sér ferð* ‘take on a trip’, *veita eftirtekt* ‘give sby attention’, *kynna sér e-ð* ‘acquaint oneself with sth’ and *sýna e-u áhuga* ‘show interest in sth’ all occurring twice each.

From the Old Norse-Icelandic corpus the following predicates instantiating the ditransitive Dat–Acc construction were extracted:

2. Verbs of giving: *gefa e-m e-ð* ‘give sby sth’, *gifta e-m e-n* ‘marry off one’s daughter to sby’, *fá e-m e-ð* ‘give sby sth’, *rétta e-m e-ð* ‘hand sby sth’, *segja sér e-ð af*

- hendi* ‘renounce sth’, *selja e-m e-ð* ‘sell/deliver sth to sby’, *skipa e-m stað* ‘give sby a property (by official order)’, *veita e-m e-ð* ‘give sby sth’
4. Verbs of paying: *launa e-m e-ð* ‘pay sby sth’
 5. Verbs of sending: *gera e-m orð* ‘send sby a message’
 6. Verbs of bringing: *bera e-m e-ð* ‘carry sth to sby’, *færa e-m e-ð* ‘bring sby sth’
 7. Verbs of future transfer: *bjóða e-m e-ð* ‘offer sby sth’, *borga e-m e-ð* ‘guarantee sby sth’, *tryggja e-m e-ð* ‘guarantee sby sth’, *ætla e-m e-ð* ‘intend sth for sby’
 9. Verbs of enabling: *gera e-m gagn* ‘do sby a favor’, *gera e-m lotning* ‘obey sby on sth’
 10. Verbs of communicated message: *fasta e-m trú* ‘declare one’s loyalty to sby’, *gefa e-m sök* ‘accuse sby of sth’, *gera sér gabb og gaman* ‘make fun of sth’, *kunngera e-m e-ð* ‘make sth known to sby’, *segja e-m e-ð* ‘tell sby sth’, *sverja e-m e-ð* ‘swear sth to sby’, *þakka e-m e-ð* ‘thank sby for sth’
 12. Verbs of creation: *gera e-m kastala* ‘make sby a castle’, *skera e-m e-ð* ‘cut, sew sby sth’
 13. Verbs of obtaining: *frelsa e-m e-n* ‘free sby for sby’, *kaupa e-m e-ð* ‘buy sby sth’, *nefna sér votta* ‘point to sby as a witness (for oneself)’, *taka sér e-ð* ‘take something for oneself’
 15. Verbs of hindrance: *gera e-m mein* ‘hurt sby’, *gera e-m óspekt* ‘put sby in turmoil’, *varða e-m e-ð* ‘defend sth from sby’
 17. Verbs denoting mental activity: *fyrirgefa e-m e-ð* ‘forgive sby sth’, *huga sér ráð* ‘think up a solution (for oneself)’, *virða e-m e-ð til þunga* ‘regard sth as demeaning for sby’, *ætla sér hóf* ‘correctly estimate one’s abilities’

The predicates occurring in the Old Norse-Icelandic texts are also distributed across eleven of the seventeen subconstructions, although not the exact same ones as in Modern Icelandic. The subconstruction of owning/possession and transfer along a path are not represented in the Old Norse-Icelandic material, while those of sending and bringing do not occur in the Modern Icelandic texts. However, as the text corpora are so small, this cannot be regarded as a safe indication that there has been a change in the semantic structure of the construction. With such a small corpus, it is presumably a coincidence which verb-specific constructions are attested in the texts and which are not. This conclusion is supported by the fact that all the eleven subconstructions found in the Old Norse-Icelandic texts still exist in Modern Icelandic, as illustrated by the comprehensive list of ditransitives in Modern Icelandic at the beginning of this section.

The subconstructions of giving and communicated message are by far the highest in type frequency in the Old Norse-Icelandic texts, with those of future transfer, obtaining and mental activities closely following. The verb *gefa* ‘give’ is definitely the most frequently occurring verb, as it occurs twenty-four times, the

verb *segja* ‘say’ occurs eleven times, *bjóða* ‘offer’ seven times, *fá* ‘get’ six times, *veita* ‘give’ and *þakka* ‘thank’ occur three times each, while *nefna* ‘appoint’, *skera* ‘cut, make’, *ætla* ‘intend’, *taka* ‘take’, *fasta* ‘fasten, declare’, *gera* ‘make’ and *selja í hendur* ‘sell, deliver’ occur twice each.

Although this comparison between the Modern Icelandic and the Old Norse-Icelandic texts does not suggest any major change in the semantic structure of the construction, it is clear that the ditransitive construction is used less in Modern Icelandic than in Old Norse-Icelandic and the difference between the type frequencies in the two corpora is highly significant (Pearson Chi-square, $p < .000$). A similar decrease in the use of the ditransitive construction has also been documented for Dutch by Coleman (2002), who found a significant reduction in the frequency of the subconstructions of creation and obtaining in contemporary Dutch as compared to 19th-century Dutch. Observe that these are exactly the same subconstructions as are mostly used with reflexive indirect objects in Modern Icelandic. In Dutch, moreover, it seems that there is a clear preference for a pronominal indirect object in the ditransitive construction as opposed to a lexical noun (Coleman and De Vogelaer 2003: 205–206).

In sum, the subconstructions of the ditransitive construction are not the same in English and Icelandic. In addition to the subconstructions of actual, intended, retained and metaphorical transfer, as in English, subconstructions of transfer along a path, possession, utilizing, enabling, hindrance, constraining and mental activities also exist in Icelandic. Verbs of ballistic motion cannot be used ditransitively in Modern Icelandic, and a large majority of verbs of creation and obtaining are only used felicitously with a reflexive indirect object. In Old Norse-Icelandic, in contrast, verbs of creation and obtaining do not seem to be restricted to reflexive use. It thus seems clear that the use of the ditransitive construction in Icelandic has become grammatically more restricted over time, although its lexical and semantic scope has been maintained. The ditransitive construction is also used less in Modern Icelandic texts than in corresponding Old Norse-Icelandic texts. Such a narrowing in the usage of the ditransitive construction is not unique for Icelandic, as the use of the ditransitive construction has also become more restricted in the history of Dutch. I now turn to a lexical and semantic analysis of the ditransitive construction in those Swedish and Norwegian dialects that have maintained dative case marking.

3. The ditransitive construction in Mainland Scandinavian dialects

Morphological case was lost in Swedish around 1400 (Delsing 1991) and later in Norwegian. The dative case has, however, been maintained in some central

Swedish and Norwegian dialects. In her work on dative case marking in these dialects, Reinhammar (1973: 78–97) lists 146 predicates as occurring in the ditransitive construction. Of these, 119 are presumably original Dat–Acc verbs whereas 27 predicates had a different case pattern, but have become assimilated to the Dat–Acc construction over time.⁴ Reinhammar’s original 119 Dat–Acc predicates can be divided into more or less the same subconstructions as found in Icelandic (here given with Reinhammar’s original spelling):

2. Verbs inherently denoting giving or delivering: *beskära* ‘assign, give’, *bevilja* ‘grant’, *fli* ‘give, hand over’, *förära* ‘honor sby with sth (as a gift)’, *få* ‘give’, *giva* ‘give’, *höva* ‘give sby sth according to the occasion’, *lever(er)a* ‘deliver’, *lämna* ‘give’, *rita* ‘hand’, *räcka* ‘hand’, *rätta* ‘hand’, *skänka* ‘give (as a present)’, *sticka* ‘hand’, *sälja* ‘sell’, etc.
3. Verbs of lending: *borga* ‘lend’, *leja* ‘rent out’, *låna* ‘lend’, etc.
4. Verbs of paying: *betala* ‘pay’, *forskottera* ‘pay in advance’, *gottgöra* ‘compensate’, etc.
5. Verbs of sending: *skicka* ‘send’, *sända* ‘send’, etc.
6. Verbs of bringing: *bringa* ‘bring’, *servera* ‘serve’, etc.
7. Verbs of future transfer: *akta* ‘intend’, *bjuda* ‘offer’, *försäkra* ‘guarantee’, *skulda* ‘owe’, *skilja* ‘award’, *testamentera* ‘bequeath’, *tillåta* ‘allow’, *traktera* ‘offer’, *äga* ‘owe’, *ätla* ‘intend’, etc.
9. Verbs of enabling: *göra ngn en tjänst* ‘do sby a favor’, etc.
10. Verbs of communicated message: *anbefalla* ‘advise’, *avhålla* ‘advise against’, *avlägga* ‘advise against’, *avråda* ‘advise against’, *befalla* ‘order’, *bevisa* ‘prove’, *dikttera* ‘order’, *draga ngn von* ‘threaten’, *föreslå* ‘suggest’, *föreställa* ‘suggest’, *förklara* ‘explain’, *fortelja* ‘tell’, *lägga ngn råd* ‘advise’, *lära* ‘teach’, *läsa* ‘read’, *meddela* ‘inform’, *pålägga* ‘order’, *röpa* ‘reveal’, *sjunga* ‘sing’, *syna* ‘show’, *säga* ‘say’, *tillråda* ‘advise’, *vörda* ‘show respect’, etc.
12. Verbs of creation: *binda* ‘knit’, *brodera* ‘embroider’, *bygga* ‘build’, *böja* ‘forge’, *hålla* ‘entertain sby with sth’, *koka* ‘boil’, *laga* ‘cook’, *skära* ‘cut, make’, *smida* ‘hammer’, *spela ngn ett spektakel* ‘play a trick on sby’, *steka* ‘fry’, *stricka* ‘knit’, *sy* ‘sew’, *sätta* ‘put up/make’, *sömna* ‘sew’, *väva* ‘weave’, etc.
13. Verbs of obtaining: *bläddja ut* ‘select’, *dricka sig ett rus* ‘drink oneself into oblivion’, *finna* ‘find’, *föreskriva* ‘attribute’, *förvärva* ‘acquire’, *hämta* ‘obtain’, *kanna* ‘adopt sth for oneself’, *köpa* ‘buy’, *ordna* ‘get, fix’, *plocka* ‘pick’, *röja ngn en plats* ‘make space for sby’, *skaffa* ‘obtain’, *skjuta* ‘shoot’, *taga* ‘take’, etc.
15. Verbs of hindrance: *förbjuda* ‘forbid’, *frändöma* ‘take sth from sby (by official order)’, *förhålla* ‘keep sth away from sby’, *formena* ‘hinder’, *meinka* ‘forbid’, *neka* ‘deny’, *nekta* ‘deny’, *vägra* ‘deny, refuse’, *ådraga* ‘put sby through sth’, *ålegga* ‘put sby through sth’, etc.

16. Verbs of constraining: *sätta* 'set a task for sby', *sätta ngn stolen för dörren* 'give sby an ultimatum', etc.
17. Verbs denoting mental activity: *avundas* 'envy', *avunna* 'envy', *förlåta* 'forgive', *hugsa* 'think', *inbilla* 'imagine', *offra ngt en tanke* 'think about sth', *tillgiva* 'forgive', *tänka* 'think, imagine', *vilja* 'want', *verdiga* 'feel that sby is worthy of sth', etc.
18. Verbs of motion: *kasta* 'throw', *lyfta opp* 'lift up', *slunga* 'throw', *ösa* 'scoop', *slå* 'hit', *smicka* 'hit', *sno ngn ryggen* 'turn one's back on sby', *venda ngn ryggen* 'turn one's back on sby', etc.

Observe that the subconstructions missing in the Mainland Scandinavian dialect material are those of owning, transfer along a path, instrument of communication and utilizing, all of which are extremely low in type frequency in Modern Icelandic. It is also noteworthy that the Norwegian and Swedish ditransitives are either cognates or synonymous with the Icelandic ditransitives. In a few cases where this is not so, the verb still belongs to one of the common semantic fields of the ditransitive. The Scandinavian *förklara* 'explain', which is a verb of communicated message, is one such example.

A major difference between Icelandic and Mainland Scandinavian is that motion verbs can instantiate the ditransitive in the Mainland Scandinavian material (subconstruction nr. 18 above), whereas they cannot in Icelandic. Some of the relevant predicates denote ballistic motion (*kasta* 'throw') whereas others denote non-translational motion (*sno* 'turn'). However, all the predicates in this class stem from one and the same dialect area, namely the Överkalix dialect in northern Sweden, which is known to be one of the most conservative and archaic Swedish dialects. This raises the question of whether this particular subconstruction is inherited from Proto-Germanic or whether it is a later West-Germanic development. I will address this issue in the next section.

The remaining 27 ditransitive predicates in the Scandinavian dialect material are either cognates or synonymous with the low type frequency Acc-Gen, Acc-Dat, Dat-Dat and Dat-Gen constructions in Icelandic (which have not been discussed here due to space limitations). I list the Scandinavian predicates here to give the reader an insight into the semantics of the greater ditransitive construction which subsumes the five different case constructions and various semantic subconstructions of each case construction:

bedja 'ask', *beröva* 'rob sth from sby', *betro* 'confide in sby about sth', *dölja* 'hide', *fråga* 'ask', *förtaga* 'take away from sby', *förtro* 'confide in sby', *förevälla* 'cause', *frånråda* 'advise sby against sth', *forunna* 'not begrudge', *leta* 'search', *lova* 'promise', *missunna* 'begrudge, envy', *påminna* 'remind', *påvälla* 'cause', *skulda* 'accuse', *spå* 'predict', *spörja* 'ask', *stjäla* 'steal', *svara* 'answer', *tilldela*

I have also come across verbs of owning used ditransitively in both English and earlier Norwegian:

(23) *If I owned me a car, I would ...* Owning

(24) *Det var engang fem kjerringer som gikk på en åker og skar. Alle var it was once five old-women who walked on a field and reaped all were de barnløse, og alle ønsket de at de hadde seg et barn. they childless and all wished they that they had themselves a child 'Once there were five little women reaping a field. None of them had children but they all wished that they had one.'*

The English example in (23) is not accepted by all my informants, but it is still an attested example uttered by a real native speaker. The Norwegian example in (24) is from an old folk tale, presumably representing an older layer of the language.

The subconstructions of enabling and utilizing are also found in German:

(25) *Ermögliche ihm soviel freien Auslauf ...* Enabling
facilitate him so-much free running
'Make as much free running possible for him ...'

(26) *Ausserdem nutze ich mir den Y-Wert ...* Utilizing
apart-from-that use I me the Y-value
'Apart from that I make use of the Y-value ...'

As all the initial seventeen subconstructions of the ditransitive construction in Modern Icelandic also exist in some other Germanic language or dialect, it does not seem reasonable to assume that any of them is an innovation in Icelandic. Therefore, the Icelandic situation can be regarded as representative of the original Germanic situation.

The question arises whether the subconstruction denoting movement or ballistic motion is original for Germanic. It exists in Modern English, Modern German and Överkalix. This distribution may be taken as an argument for the existence of the subconstruction in Proto-Germanic, as it seems unlikely that it is an innovation in Överkalix. However, this subconstruction does not exist in Icelandic, in spite of the fact that Icelandic is the only Germanic language that has maintained the five original ditransitive case constructions. Also, most of the Old Norse-Icelandic vocabulary has been maintained in the modern language, including verbs and their argument structure constructions. Modern Icelandic is known to be the most archaic North Germanic language of today. Given that, it would seem anomalous to assume that this particular subconstruction had gone lost in the (pre-)history of Icelandic.

The case marking of motion verbs is also problematic, as they usually select for dative case on their direct objects and not accusative, at least in Old Norse-Icelandic, the Mainland Scandinavian dialects (Reinhammar 1972: 175–183), Old English, and several classic Indo-European languages (cf. Holland 1993).⁵ As such, motion verbs do not fit the case pattern of the Dat–Acc subconstruction as the direct object is in the dative case and not the accusative. Hence, motion verbs are not prime candidates for occurring in the Dat–Acc ditransitive construction, at least not in these languages. They would, however, formally qualify for occurrence in the ditransitive Dat–Dat construction, as discussed in Section 2 above, but no motion verbs are instantiated by this subconstruction in, for instance, Icelandic. This is not surprising since the ditransitive Dat–Dat construction is a non-productive low type frequency construction.

In Visser's (1963) discussion of the ditransitive in Old English, no examples of verbs of ballistic motion are given. Visser (1963: 629) points out that the construction became extraordinarily productive during the Middle English period, being extended to all kinds of verbs that were not used ditransitively in Old English. At that point in time, English had in fact lost its morphological case (Allen 1995: 211–220). As a result, case marking did not constitute a hindrance for the occurrence of motion verbs in the ditransitive construction. Also, in some Old High German texts, for instance Tatian, there are extremely few examples of motion verbs assigning dative case to their objects (cf. Fink 1898), suggesting that dative case on objects of motion verbs was already retreating in Old High German. All the Scandinavian dialects, including Överkalix, have lost morphological case, except for the dative.

Överkalix, however, seems to be the only Swedish dialect, maintaining the dative case, in which ordinary transitive motion verbs assign accusative to their objects (cf. the list of transitive verbs in Reinhammar 1972: 175–183). Another very archaic Swedish dialect, Älvdalsmälet, has all its motion verbs assigning dative case to their objects, exactly as in Modern Icelandic, and none of these verbs is attested in the ditransitive construction. In other words, all the ditransitive uses of motion verbs in Reinhammar's material are from Överkalix (i.e. from Norrbotten) and none from Älvdalsmälet. Therefore, Överkalix is exactly like German and English in that verbs of motion select for accusative objects and not dative objects. This may be the reason why motion verbs in Överkalix, German and English are a better fit for the ditransitive Dat–Acc construction than corresponding dative-assigning motion verbs in Icelandic and Scandinavian. The assignment of accusative case to the object of motion verbs seems to be a prerequisite for the occurrence of verbs of ballistic motion in the Dat–Acc construction. Hence, the occurrence of verbs of ballistic motion in the ditransitive construction must be an innovation in English, German and Överkalix, as the assignment of accusative case to

		transfer along a path		
		giving	future transfer	
			bringing	
		lending	obtaining	
			creation	
		sending	communicated message	mental activity
		paying		
constraining	enabling	owning		
	hindrance	utilizing		

Figure 2. A reconstruction of the semantic space of the Dat–Acc ditransitive construction in Germanic

these verbs is most likely secondary in Germanic. This development need not have taken place independently in these languages/dialects, as there was a clear increase in the extensibility of the ditransitive construction to new verb classes during medieval times (cf. Visser 1963: 629). This wave swept over the West-Germanic language area and presumably reached Scandinavia as well, including the area of Överkalix.

On the basis of this comparative evidence it seems most reasonable to assume that Proto-Germanic had sixteen subconstructions of the Dat–Acc ditransitive construction, i.e. the same subconstructions as in Modern Icelandic, except of course for the subconstruction of instrument of communication (nr. 11 in the list in Section 2). The semantic structure of the ditransitive construction in Proto-Germanic can thus be represented as in Figure 2.

To summarize, all the subconstructions of the ditransitive Dat–Acc construction in Icelandic are also found in some other Germanic language or dialect. They are thus presumably original for the whole Germanic language area. The subconstruction of ballistic motion is only found in those languages/dialects where motion verbs assign accusative case to their objects, and not the dative case. The change whereby the ditransitive construction started attracting verbs denoting ballistic motion to itself therefore probably took place after the change from dative to accusative of objects of motion verbs in English, German and Överkalix, and must thus be considered an innovation in these languages/dialects.

5. Summary

An analysis of the semantic structure of the ditransitive Dat–Acc construction in Icelandic reveals at least seventeen subconstructions of the construction, namely those denoting actual, intended, retained and metaphorical transfer, as well

as transfer along a path, possession, utilizing, enabling, hindrance, constraining and mental activities. These are significantly more subconstructions than those assumed in the literature for Modern English. A comparison with Scandinavian dialects, English, Dutch and German reveals that the subconstructions found in Icelandic seem to have been common for the Germanic language area. The subconstruction denoting ballistic motion is, however, not included in the reconstruction of the semantic structure of the ditransitive Dat–Acc construction, as it is only found in those languages/dialects where motion verbs select for accusative objects as opposed to dative objects. Since dative case on objects of motion verbs seems to be primary in Germanic, and the assignment of accusative to the objects of these verbs is thus a secondary development, it was not until after that change that verbs of ballistic motion fulfilled the formal requirements of occurring in the ditransitive Dat–Acc construction, a development which seems to have been confined to English, German and Överkalix.

Notes

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1. The ditransitive predicates which form the basis for the present analysis were extracted from a relatively recent bilingual Icelandic-English dictionary (Hólmarsson, Sanders and Tucker 1989). The list was complemented with approximately 20 Dat–Acc predicates from the appendix in Jónsson (2000), and a few more that I have come to remember in the process. The type frequencies given above stem from this list.
2. See Jónsson (2000) and Maling (2002) for different semantic classifications.
3. For the acceptability of these new verbs of instrument of communication in the ditransitive construction in Icelandic, and their alternation with the caused-motion and the transfer constructions, see Barðdal (2003, forthcoming).
4. I have left out some of the predicates discussed by Reinhammar, which are clearly impersonal, possessive or predicative in nature and not ditransitive.
5. These verbs originally marked their objects/complements with the instrumental case but due to the merging of the instrumental and dative in Proto-Germanic/early Germanic, these objects/complements came to be marked with the dative case.

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Author's address

Jóhanna Barðdal
 University of Bergen
 Department of Linguistics and Comparative Literature, Linguistics Division
 PO Box 7805
 NO-5020 Bergen
 Norway
 johanna.barddal@uib.no