"OBLIQUE SUBJECTS" IN ICELANDC AND GERMAN*

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ABSTRACT. This paper discusses the syntactic similarities and differences of the oblique in the Oblique experiencer first construction in Icelandic and German. Research on this construction so far has suggested that the oblique behaves as a syntactic subject in Icelandic, but as an object in German. Data from German are presented which show that the oblique of the Oblique first construction in fact passes almost all the subject tests, with some restrictions. The differences between Icelandic and German are therefore much smaller, and the similarities much greater, than predicted by analyzing them as subjects in Icelandic and objects in German. A comparison between Icelandic and German further reveals that the subject criteria cannot be applied across two as closely related languages as Icelandic and German, and they cannot be consistently applied even within the same language. Therefore, grammatical relations like 'subject' and 'object' should be regarded, not as universal, not as language-specific, but as CONSTRUCTION-SPECIFIC relations. It is shown that the difference between Icelandic and German is that oblique-first predicates are reluctant to occur in elliptic constructions in German, whereas their occurrences in such constructions in Icelandic are less restricted. This correlates with differences in the frequency of oblique-first predicates in the two languages, suggesting that the construction exists at different levels of schematicity in Icelandic and German. This is expected on a usage-based account where frequency is taken to be the main determinant of the language system.

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper focuses on the Oblique experiencer first construction in Icelandic (1a) and German (1b), highlighting some of the problems caused by the assumption that a uniform/universal category 'subject' exists. In contrast, this paper will argue for a Radical Construction Grammar approach (see Croft 2001) in which the concept of global grammatical relations is systematically

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abandoned. Instead, it is assumed that categories such as subjects and objects are not only language-specific, but even construction-specific categories.

(1)	a.	Mér er kalt. me.dat is cold 'I'm cold.'	*Icelandic*	b.	Mir ist kalt. me.dat is cold 'I'm cold.'	*German*

By Oblique experiencer first construction I refer to the constructions in Icelandic and German in which the first argument of an ordinary active declarative clause is not a nominative NP but is found in accusative, dative or genitive case. This oblique argument is prototypically an experiencer as in (1), but there are nevertheless many oblique-first predicates in Icelandic where this oblique is non-animate, and thus not an experiencer (see Jónsson 1997-98, Barðdal 2002). I include both intransitive predicates as in (1) and predicates which can select for PPs, subordinate clauses, nominative arguments, and so on. I will also discuss passives of verbs selecting for dative objects (henceforth dative passives).

For Icelandic (Zaenen, Maling & Thráinsson 1985, Sigurðsson 1989) and German (Reis 1982, Zaenen, Maling & Thráinsson 1985), the following subject criteria have been used: first position in declarative clauses, subject-verb inversion, first position in subordinate clauses, subject-to-object raising, subject-to-subject raising, long distance reflexivization, clause-bound reflexivization, control infinitives, conjunction reduction, nominative case, verb agreement, deletion in imperatives and deletion in telegraphic style (see Table 1 below). The first nine have been assumed for Icelandic, while the last seven have been used for German. Only three tests are common for both languages. Because of the difference in which constructions have been assigned the status of subject criteria in Icelandic and German, the dative experiencers above are analyzed as objects in German, while their Icelandic equivalents are analyzed as subjects.

These empirical facts give rise to three problems:

a) 'Subjects' do not exhibit the same syntactic behavior in closely related languages, a problem for theories that posit a universal category 'subject'.

b) A closer survey of the German Oblique first construction reveals that the oblique arguments actually pass most of the syntactic tests that have been assigned the status of subject criteria in German. Therefore,

the subject criteria cannot be consistently applied even within the same language.

c) Using different constructions in different languages to define subjects is theoretically inconsistent, and is an example of METHODOLOGICAL OPPORTUNISM (Croft 2001:30ff).

The best way to adequately account for the empirical facts presented here is to abandon the concept of universal grammatical relations. This is the approach taken by Radical Construction Grammar, where constructions are assumed to be the basic units of language, and the behavior of each argument is specified for the construction it is a part of. On such an account categories like subjects and objects are derived from the construction as a whole, and thus represent part-whole relations and not part-part relations (cf. Kay 1997 on the difference between the two). Following Kay, such part-whole relations will be referred to as SYNTACTIC ROLES in the remainder of this paper.

I begin by giving a systematic overview of the subject criteria in Icelandic and German, and explain why the same criteria have not been applied in both languages. I also provide examples of oblique-first predicates in Icelandic and German in order to illustrate how the oblique behaves with regard to the subject criteria. I will show that the difference between Icelandic and German is smaller than that assumed in the literature, and certainly smaller than predicted by the analysis that they are subjects in Icelandic and objects in German. After discussing the theoretical problems brought about by the empirical findings presented here I turn to an outline of a Radical Construction Grammar solution to the problem, and how it instigates different kinds of research questions, hitherto unexplored.

The findings of the present paper show that the main differences between Icelandic and German are found in elliptic constructions, in that oblique-first predicates show a reluctance to occur in ellipsis in German, whereas their Icelandic counterparts do not show this reluctance to the same degree. This is expected on a usage-based account, a model in which frequency is assumed to be one of the main determinants of the language system. Thus, I suggest that the status of the Oblique first construction in German is such that it takes an intermediate position between Icelandic, where the construction is still frequent and psychologically real in the mind of speakers, and English, where only a couple of lexicalized relics of the construction still exists.

2. THE SUBJECT CRITERIA

Table 1 gives an overview of the most widely used subject criteria in Icelandic and German.

TABLE 1: Subject criteria in Icelandic and German.

	Icelandic	*German*
1.	First position in declarative clauses	
2.	Subject-verb inversion	
3.	First position in subordinate clauses	
4.	Subject-to-object raising	
5.	Subject-to-subject raising	
6.	Long distance reflexivization	
7.	Clause-bound reflexivization	Clause-bound reflexivization
8.	Control infinitives	Control infinitives
9.	Conjunction reduction	Conjunction reduction
10.		Nominative case
11.		Verb agreement
12.		Deletion in imperatives
13.		Deletion in telegraphic style

The first four tests, first position in declarative clauses, subject-verb inversion, first position in subordinate clauses, and subject-to-object raising, have not been used as subject tests in German. The reason is that German word order is sensitive to information structure, allowing for various scrambling alternations (cf. Reis 1982:191). In addition OV word order in clauses containing an auxiliary or raising-to-object verbs obscures the picture even further:

(2) a. **Ég** hef keypt **bókina**. *Icelandic*
I.nom have bought book-the.acc
'I've bought the book.'
b. **Bókina** hef **ég** keypt.
book-the.acc have I.nom bought

(3) a. **Ich** habe **das Buch** gekauft. *German*
I.nom have the.acc book bought
b. **Das Buch** habe **ich** gekauft.
the.acc book have I.nom bought

(2a) shows that the nominative precedes the finite verb whereas the accusative follows the non-finite verb in an Icelandic active declarative clause containing an auxiliary. Example (3a) illustrates that the equivalent German active declarative clause has the accusative between the two verbs, and thus that it is impossible to distinguish between neutral word order constructions (3a) and the topicalization construction (3b) in German. This is not a problem in Icelandic since the topicalization construction has the accusative preceding the finite verb and the nominative between the two verbs (2b), while in the neutral word order construction the two arguments are placed on either side of the verbs (2a). This can be illustrated with the following schema:

(4) a. XAuxVX Icelandic Transitive Construction
b. XAuxXV Icelandic Topicalization Construction

(5) a. XAuxXV German Transitive Construction
b. XAuxXV German Topicalization Construction

Thus, on a positional approach, where 'subjects' and 'objects' are assumed to occupy a certain position in the structure, a comparison between the various word order constructions like the active declarative clause and the topicalization construction is not going to be fruitful for a language like German. However, it is possible to distinguish between the two constructions in German with other means than word order; Firstly, the function of the two constructions is not the same. One conveys neutral information whereas the other emphasizes the affected entity by placing it in first position. Secondly, the intonation structure of the two constructions is different. Therefore, given an analysis where constructions are recognized as independent linguistic objects it also becomes possible to identify the arguments as either being in their canonical 'subject' vs. 'object' positions, or being topicalized vs. inverted.

Subject-to-object raising is not considered a subject test by Reis (1982:192-193), presumably because of OV word order (see Wunderlich 2000 for more raising-to-object verbs and a discussion thereof). The raising verb *lassen* 'let' in German, and its Icelandic cognate *láta*, select for an infinitive clause, with the nominative selected by the lower verb showing up in the accusative case:

(6) Ich lasse **ihn** eine Tageszeitung essen. *German*
I.nom let him.acc a.acc newspaper eat
'I make him eat the newspaper.'

(7) Ég læt **hana** bor a dagbla . *Icelandic*
I.nom let her.acc eat newspaper.acc
'I'll have her eat the newspaper.'

A well-known fact of Icelandic is that the dative of the Dative first construction maintains its dative in this construction. This is shown in (8) for the oblique-first predicates *detta í hug* 'get an idea' and *lí a vel* 'feel good':

(8) a. ú lætur **ér** alltaf detta eitthva í hug. *Icelandic*
you.nom let yourself.dat always fall something in mind
'You always get new ideas.'
b. Láttu **ér** lí a vel!
let you.dat feel well
'Make sure to be okay!'

As the examples in (9) show, the dative of the Dative first construction in German also maintains its dative case with 'let', as in Icelandic. The German oblique-first predicates *einfallen* 'get an idea' and *gut gehen* 'be successful' serve as examples:

(9) a. Du lässt **dir** immer etwas Neues einfallen. *German*
you.nom let yourself.dat always something new come-in-mind
'You're always getting new ideas.'
b. Lass **dir** gut gehen!
let yourself.dat well go
'Make sure to be successful!'

However, dative objects of transitive verbs also occur in between the two verbs in subject-to-object raising constructions in German, as in (10), showing that the word order in this construction does not distinguish between 'subjects' and 'objects' in the same way as it does in Icelandic (11), where the object follows the non-finite verb:

(10) Lass **dir** nicht raten! *German*
let you.dat not advise
'Don't let anybody advise you.'

(11) Láttu rá leggja **ér** eitthva ! *Icelandic*
let advise you.dat something
'Get advise from somebody!'

The fifth test, subject-to-subject raising, is not considered a valid subject test in German because not only can the nominative occupy the first slot with such raising verbs, but also other material, such as a dummy *es* 'it, there', adverbials, such as *heute* 'today', and the dative in the Dative experiencer first constructions (Reis 1982:192):

(12) a. **Heute** scheint mal gearbetet zu werden. *German*
today seems really worked to be(come)
'People really seem to be busy today.'
b. **Es** scheint gearbeitet zu werden.
it seems worked to be(come)
'Some work is being done here.' (Reis 1982:192)
c. **Ihm** scheint kalt zu sein.
him.dat seems cold to be
'He seems to be freezing.'

However, as evident from (13) adverbials, a dummy *a* and the dative of the Dative first construction can also occur in this position, with raising verbs like *seem*, in Icelandic.

(13) a. **Í dag** vir ist vera miki unni . *Icelandic*
today seems be much worked
'Much work seems to be done today.'
b. **a** vir ist vera miki unni .
it seems be much worked
'A lot of work is being done here.'
c. **Honum** vir ist vera kalt.
him.dat seems be cold
'He seems to be freezing.'

Nevertheless, this has not discredited subject-to-subject raising as a subject criterion in Icelandic. The dative of the Dative experiencer first construction and ordinary nominative subjects can occur in the position preceding '*seem*' in Icelandic. This fact has been taken as evidence for the subject status of obliques in the Oblique first construction (Sigur sson 1989, Rögnvaldsson 1996, Bar dal 2001a, 2001b).

The sixth criterion, long distance reflexivization, is applicable in Icelandic, as shown in (14), but inapplicable in German since long distance reflexivization does not exist in that language. This is illustrated in the example in (15):

(14) Hans ba mig um a gefa **sér** kökuna. *Icelandic*
Hans asked me about to give self.dat cake-the
'Hans asked me to give him the cake.'

(15) Hans bat mich **ihm** die Torte zu geben. *German*
Hans asked me him.dat the cake to give
'Hans asked me to give him the cake.'

The reflexive pronoun *sér* in the embedded clause in (14) can only be coreferential with the nominative 'subject' of the main clause and not with the accusative 'object'. Thus, in Icelandic this process singles out the subject of the main clause and not the object. German, however, has an anaphoric pronoun in the embedded clause in (15). Therefore, since German does not use a reflexive pronoun here, there is no subject test either.

I now turn to the criteria that have been assigned the status of being subject properties in German and not in Icelandic; these are listed as 10-13 in Table 1 above. These criteria are nominative case, agreement, deletion in imperatives and deletion in telegraphic style. When investigating the subjecthood of the obliques in the Oblique first construction in Icelandic, the property of being case marked as nominative has been excluded, for obvious reasons (cf. Andrews 1976, Zaenen, Maling & Thráinsson 1985, Sigur sson 1989 and subsequent work). Furthermore, properties that can be shown to correlate with nominative, such as verb agreement (Sigur sson 1990-91), have not been regarded as subject properties since they, *a priori*, exclude everything but nominative.[1] Deletion in imperatives has not been considered a subject property either since many oblique-first verbs do not have the right semantics to occur as imperatives (cf. Rögnvaldsson 1996:48, also pointed out by Barnes 1986:25 for Faroese). Compare (16) below:

(16) a. #Have a divine vision!
b. #Feel good!

[1] There are, however, some differences in agreement between Icelandic and German (see Sigur sson 2002 and the work cited there).

Exclamations of this type involving oblique-first predicates are expressed with the conjunctive in Icelandic. Moreover, the Imperative construction in Icelandic "univerbates" the imperative form of the verb and a nominative deictic pronoun:

(17) a. Far **u**!
go-you.2p.sg.nom
'Leave!'

b. Fari **i**!
go-you.2p.pl.nom
'Leave!'

Therefore, the occurrence of oblique-first predicates selecting for accusative/dative arguments in the Imperative construction is excluded on formal grounds in Icelandic.

Regarding the last criterion, deletion in telegraphic style, I know of no discussion of it in the literature on syntactic subjecthood in Icelandic. However, the oblique of the Oblique experiencer first construction in Icelandic passes this test, whereas its German counterpart does not:

(18) Fór í gær... **leiddist** alveg hræ ilega... kem aftur á morgun. *Icelandic*
went in yesterday... was-bored quite horribly... come again to-morrow
'Left yesterday... was horribly bored... be back tomorrow.'

(19) *Muß morgen die Prüfung machen... **graut** schrecklich... *German*
must tomorrow the exam take... fear horribly...
Intended meaning: 'Have to take the exam tomorrow... am horribly nervous...'

These data show that the oblique of the Oblique first construction can be left unexpressed in telegraphic style in Icelandic without that resulting in ungrammaticality, whereas the same is not true for German.

I now turn to the three tests which have been assumed to be subject tests in both German and Icelandic. These are clause-bound reflexivization, control infinitives and conjunction reduction. Notice that in such closely related languages as Icelandic and German less than one third of the assumed universal subject properties are taken as valid tests for both languages.

These facts immediately falsify the idea of subjects existing as a universal category. One way of maintaining this idea would be by assuming that there is an abstract universal category with language-specific

representations. However, such an assumption entails that the original hypothesis that subjects are a universal category has been abandoned.

The second problem that arises is that different scholars have assumed different constructions to be criterial of subjecthood, partly because of language-specific differences but partly, it seems, to suit their own theoretical purposes: nominative case has been excluded as a subject criterion in Icelandic since the goal has been to investigate the syntactic behavior of subject-like non-nominatives, whereas nominative case and verb agreement have been defined as subject criteria in German, thus *a priori* excluding the oblique in the Oblique experiencer first construction. This is an example of both CROSS-LINGUISTIC METHODOLOGICAL OPPORTUNISM, and LANGUAGE-INTERNAL METHODOLOGICAL OPPORTUNISM (see Croft 2001:33ff). Cross-linguistic methodological opportunism is manifested as different criteria being used for subjects in different languages, and language-internal methodological opportunism manifests itself as some properties being assigned the status of being criterial without a principled way of making the choices. The choices are based on the theoretical preferences of the researcher in question (see also Bar dal 2000a for a survey of the methodological opportunism found in research on subjecthood in Old Scandinavian).

3. THE OBLIQUE EXPERIENCER FIRST CONSTRUCTION

Let us now review the data that have been discussed in the literature on the Oblique experiencer first construction in Icelandic and German. Zaenen, Maling & Thráinsson (1985:477) present the German examples in (20-22), following the analysis in Cole, Harbert, Hermon & Sridhar (1980). The examples in (20a) and (21a) illustrate that the preverbal dative of the passive *vera hjálpa* 'be helped' in Icelandic can occur as the unexpressed argument of an infinitive, whereas its counterpart in German cannot (20b, 21b):

(20) a. A ____ vera hjálpa er gott. *Icelandic*
to PRO.dat be.inf helped is good
'It is good to be helped.'

b. *Geholfen zu ____ werden ist angenehm.[2] *German*
helped to PRO.dat be.inf is agreeable
Intended meaning: 'It is nice to be helped.'

(21) a. Ég vonast til a ____ vera hjálpa . *Icelandic*
I.nom hope for to PRO.dat be.inf helped
'I hope to be helped.'

b. *Ihm/*Er hofft geholfen zu ____ werden. *German*
him.dat/he.nom hopes helped to PRO.dat be.inf

The examples in (22) show that the dative in Icelandic can be left unexpressed in conjunction reduction (22a), while the dative in German cannot (22b):

(22) a. Hann$_i$ kom og ____ $_i$ var hjálpa . *Icelandic*
he.nom came and Ø.dat was helped
'He came and was helped.'

b. *Er$_i$ kam und ____ $_i$ wurde geholfen. *German*
he.nom came and Ø.dat was helped

These examples should be compared with equivalent examples where a conjoined nominative is left unexpressed in conjunction reduction:

(23) a. Hann$_i$ kom í fl ti en ____ $_i$ urfti a fara strax aftur. *Icelandic*
he.nom came in hurry but Ø.nom needed to leave
immediately again

b. Er$_i$ kam schnell vorbei, aber ____ $_i$ mußte gleich zurück. *German*
he.nom came quickly to-here but Ø.nom had-to immediately back
'He came by in a hurry but had to leave again immediately.'

On the basis of these examples, Zaenen, Maling & Thráinsson conclude that the dative in the Dative first construction is a syntactic subject in Icelandic, but a syntactic object in German (1985:479). This position is generally held by the contemporary linguistic community (see, for instance, Cole et al. 1980, Sigur sson 1989, Smith 1994 and 1996, Faarlund 1990 and 2001, Askedal 2001, and many more).

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[2] I have categorically marked the slot for the unexpressed subject of control infinitives in German as being between *zu* and the infinitive. Its exact location does not bear upon the issues discussed in this paper.

The problem with such an analysis is that the oblique of the Oblique first construction in German does not behave particularly like an object. This has been pointed out by Seefranz-Montag (1983:166-167), Wunderlich (2000) and Bar dal (2000b:46). Seefranz-Montag presents examples showing that the dative of *grauen* 'fear' can function as the antecedent of a reflexive (24a) and I have found examples from language use with the verbs *grausen* 'fear' and *ekeln* 'feel disgusted' (24b-c). Seefranz-Montag also shows that the accusative of *ekeln* 'feel disgusted' can occur as the unexpressed argument in conjunction reduction, but only if it is omitted on identity with another accusative (25). As discussed in section 2 above, both of these properties are taken to be subject properties by Reis (1982).

(24) a. Ihm$_i$ graute vor sich selbst$_i$. *German*
him.dat felt-horrified for self self
'He was horrified by himself.'

b. ... und was man für Angst hat und wie es einem$_i$ graust vor sich selber$_i$ ...
and what one for fear has and how it one.dat fears for self self
'... and what fears one has, and how terrified one is by oneself...'
(http://www.andrip.de/kind/gutacht/2423gean.rtf)

c. Ihn$_i$ ekelt vor sich selbst$_i$.
him.acc feels-disgusted for self self
'He feels disgusted by himself.'
(http://www.herzattacke.de/dateien/hat/hat4-89.pdf)

(25) Mich$_i$ schauderte und ____ $_i$ ekelte.
me.acc felt-horrified and Ø.acc felt-disgusted
'I felt horrified and disgusted.'

Moreover, the dative of *schlecht werden* 'feel sick' can function as an antecedent for an unexpressed subject of an infinitive (26), a property also confined to subjects.

(26) Ihm wurde schlecht, ohne etwas getrunken zu ____ haben. *German*
him.dat was sick without something drunk to PRO.nom have.inf
'He felt sick without having had anything to drink.'

Let us now compare (25-26) above with corresponding examples where an object should be an antecedent for an unexpressed subject in conjunction reduction (27) and control constructions (28):

(27) *Ich sah ihn$_i$ aber ____ $_i$ sah mich nicht.
I saw him.acc but Ø.nom saw me not
Intended meaning: 'I saw him but he did not see me.'

(28) *Hans, mit seinem Problem, sah mich$_i$ ohne ihm zu ____ $_i$ helfen.
Hans, with his problems, saw me.acc without him to PRO.nom help.inf
Intended meaning: 'Hans, with his problems, saw me without me helping him.'

These examples clearly show that a nominative subject cannot be left unexpressed in either conjunction reduction or control constructions on identity with an object, and thereby that the oblique of the Oblique first construction in German patterns with unambiguous subjects and not with unambiguous objects. This is unexpected on the object analysis but expected on a subject analysis.

Moreover, according to my German informants, the following examples of conjunction reduction, where the unexpressed argument is an accusative as in (29a), and dative as in (29b), are perfectly grammatical in German:

(29) a. Mich$_i$ hungert nach Brot und ___ $_i$ dürstet nach Wasser. *German*
me.acc longs for bread and Ø.acc thirsts for water
'I long for bread and water.'

b. Mir$_i$ wird's schlecht und ____ $_i$ graut's vor der Zukunft.
me.dat is-it bad and Ø.dat fear-it for the future
'I feel sick and worry about the future.'

Examples like these, and (23b) above, seem to suggest that conjunction reduction is not a subject test but rather a case test in German. The oblique of the Oblique first construction in a second conjunct can be left unexpressed on identity with an argument bearing the same morphological case. This hypothesis is further corroborated by examples like the following:

(30) *Ihm$_i$ war kalt und ___ $_i$ ging ins Bett.
him.dat was cold and Ø.nom went in bed
Intended meaning: 'He was freezing and went to bed.'

In (30) a nominative 'subject' of a second conjunct cannot be reduced even though it is both nominative and 'subject'. It could now be argued that a conjoined nominative 'subject' can only be reduced on identity with another nominative 'subject', and not on identity with a subject-like dative 'non-subject'. Notice, however, that such an argumentation *presupposes* that preverbal nominatives are in fact subjects, which in turn raises the question which subject criteria should be regarded as 'real' subject criteria and on which bases such a decision should be made.

The hypothesis that conjunction reduction is a case test and not a subject test makes the prediction that a dative of the Dative first construction cannot be left unexpressed on identity with an accusative of the Accusative first construction, and vice versa. That prediction is borne out:

(31) *Ihn$_i$ hungert und ____ $_i$ dürstet aber ____ $_i$ graut davor, daß diese Hungersnot nie zu Ende geht.
him.acc hungers and Ø.acc thirsts but Ø.dat fears for that this famine never to end goes
Intended meaning: 'He is both hungry and thirsty but fears that this famine will never end.'

In this example, the dative of *grauen* 'fear' cannot be omitted on identity with the accusative of *hungern* 'hunger' and *dürsten* 'thirst'. On the basis of this example, and examples like (23b), (25) and (29), where a first argument of a second conjunct can only be omitted on identity with an argument bearing the same morphological case, it may seem as if the relevant conclusion to draw is that conjunction reduction is first and foremost sensitive to morphological case and not to syntactic roles. If conjunction reduction were sensitive to syntactic roles alone and not morphological case, then (31) should be judged grammatical by German speakers since the syntactic role of the accusative and the dative is presumably the same, irrespective of whether we argue that they are syntactic subjects or objects.

However, a closer inspection of German facts reveals that conjunction reduction is not sensitive to morphological case alone. Consider the examples below, of which (32) illustrates my point for datives and (33) for accusatives:

(32) *Er verzieh mir$_i$ und ____ $_i$ graute davor, sein Vertrauen zu mißbrauchen.
he forgave me.dat and Ø.dat fear for his trust to misuse
Intended meaning: 'He forgave me and I am scared of misusing his trust.' (Seefranz-Montag 1983:167)

(33) *Ich sah ihn$_i$ und ___ $_i$ hungert.
I.nom saw him.acc and Ø.acc hungers
Intended meaning: 'I saw him and he was hungry.'

If conjunction reduction were only sensitive to morphological case irrespective of syntactic roles, then obviously the accusative and dative of *hungern* and *grauen*, respectively, should have the ability to be left unexpressed on identity with an accusative and a dative object in a preceding clause. However, omission of an oblique of the Oblique first construction is ungrammatical in German on identity with an object bearing the same morphological case. These examples therefore show that conjunction reduction is not only sensitive to morphological case but also to syntactic roles, with the obliques of the Oblique first construction patterning with unambiguous subjects but not with unambiguous objects.

Consider now the following examples of control infinitives in German where the unexpressed argument of the infinitive is in dative case. These examples are invented but the first three were judged grammatical by 6-7 out of 10 of my German informants, whereas the last two were judged grammatical by two informants:

(34) a. Mir gefällt es, **geholfen zu ____ werden**. *German*
me.dat likes it helped to PRO.dat be.inf
'I like to be helped.'

b. Ihm wurde geholfen, ohne richtig **geholfen zu ____ werden**.
him.dat was helped without really helped to PRO.dat be.inf
'He was helped without being really helped.'

c. Statt **warm zu ____ sein**, war ihm jetzt plötzlich kalt.
instead warm to PRO.dat be.inf was him.dat all-of-a-sudden cold
'Instead of feeling warm, he all of a sudden felt cold.'

d. Mir ist übel ohne **kalt zu ____ werden**.
me.dat is nauseated without cold to PRO.dat be.inf
'I feel nauseated without feeling cold.'

e. Mir ist es peinlich **schlecht zu ____ werden**.
me.dat is it embarressing sick to PRO.dat be.inf
'It is embarrassing to me to feel sick.'

The examples in (34) contain the passive *geholfen werden* 'be helped', and the oblique-first predicates *warm sein* 'feel warm', *kalt sein* 'feel cold' and *schlecht sein* 'feel sick', all in the infinitive form, in which its dative is left unexpressed on identity with the dative in the preceding clause. Moreover, attested examples of both oblique-first predicates and dative passives can be found in control infinitives in German:

(35) a. er kam nicht un [sic] **gedient zu ___ werden**, sondern sich zu demütigen und anderen zu dienen.
he came not in-order served to PRO.dat be.inf, rather himself to humble.inf and others to serve.inf
'He didn't come to be served but to be humble and serve others.' (http://www.greifswald-online.de/vv/bfp-elim/predigt/german/gesinn.htm)

b. Also rief ich bei der Teac Hotline an, um **geholfen zu ___ werden**.
thus phone I at the Teac Hotline to, in-order helped to PRO.dat be.inf
'Thus, I call the Teac Hotline to get some help.'
(http://www.ciao.com/testberichte/2311101.html)

c. ... beten wir vermutlich zu wenig, lehrt uns doch die Gottesmutter: "Betet mit dem Herzen, um verzeihen zu können und um **verziehen zu ___ werden**...
pray we presumably to little, teaches us nevertheless Mother-of-God: pray with the heart, in-order forgive to be-able and in-order forgiven to PRO.dat be.inf
'... presumably, we pray too little, however, the Mother of God has taught us: "Pray with the heart, in order to be able to forgive and be forgiven...'
(http://www.medjugorje.org/echo/e137ge.pdf)

d. ... das ist so verächtlich, daß man das Auge davon abwenden muß, um nicht **übel zu ___ werden**.
... this is so disgusting, that one the eye from-it turn must, in order not sick to PRO.dat be.inf
'... this is so disgusting that one has to turn away in order not to feel sick.'
(home.t-online.de/home/dr.erich. mertens/STILLIN2.htm, 1789)

e. Auch wieder angezogen muss man vermeiden, **kalt zu ___ werden**, Kalte Hände, allgemeines Frösteln oder gar ein Erkältungsinfekt könnten Folgen eines falschen Verhaltens sein.
also again dressed must one avoid cold to PRO.dat be.inf, cold hands, general freezing or just a chill could consequence a false behavior be
'Dressed again, one must avoid freezing. Cold hands, a general freezing effect or just a chill can be the consequence of wrong conduct.' (http://www.sauna-bund.de/aktuell/faq1199.html)

The examples in (35a-c) contain the infinitive form of *gedient werden* 'be served', *geholfen werden* 'be helped' and *verziehen werden* 'be forgiven', all of which are dative passives. In (35d-e) the oblique-first predicates, *übel sein* 'feel sick' and *kalt sein* 'feel cold', occur in the infinitive form. The examples in (34-35) show beyond doubt that the obliques in the Oblique first construction and dative passives in German share this particular property with nominative subjects, i.e. the ability to be omitted in control infinitives, despite claims to the contrary in the literature. Moreover, I have searched for control infinitives of approximately 100 types of either oblique-first predicates or dative passives on the World Wide Web and found examples of at least 12 types, of which the oldest one is from 1789 (35d above). Some of those examples are listed in the Appendix.[3] A similar search on Icelandic web pages also revealed that only a fraction of all oblique-first predicates in

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[3] Not included in this count are control infinitives of dative object verbs which can nowadays occur as accusative object verbs, such as *kündigen* 'sack', *schmeicheln* 'flatter' and *huldigen* 'embrace'. Consider the following examples:

i) Vor vielen Jahren arbeitete ich für einen Meister der Schmeichelei. Anfänglich tat es gut, bei jeder neuen Vorstellung **geschmeichelt zu ___ werden**.
'For many years I worked for a "Master of flattering". To begin with it felt good to be flattered for every new idea.'

ii) Haben wir Deutschen etwa keine weggeworfenen Serien, die es wert wären, wiederverwertet und nostalgisch **gehuldigt zu ___ werden**?
'Don't we Germans have any comic series down the drain which are worthy of being put to good use again and embraced nostalgically?'

In such examples it is difficult to know whether the unexpressed argument is a nominative of a nominative passive or the dative of the dative passive. In either case, it is not a given that the ability of these predicates to occur as infinitives with an omitted argument should be regarded as a consequence of the syntactic status of the oblique or of its morphological case marking. That is, if a change can be detected here it may as well be a consequence of the change in morphological status as in syntactic status.

Icelandic are found as being embedded under control verbs in texts on the World Wide Web.

Now the question arises whether objects can also be left unexpressed in control infinitives. Consider the following examples:

(36) *Er$_i$ verzieh mir$_j$ statt ____ $_j$ zu ____ $_i$ helfen.
he.nom forgave me.dat instead-of Ø.dat to PRO.nom help.inf
Intended meaning: 'He forgave me instead of helping me.'

(37) *Ihm$_i$ gefällt es ____ $_i$ zu ____ $_i$ helfen.
him.dat likes it Ø.dat to PRO.nom help.inf
Intended meaning: 'He likes to help himself.'

Examples (36-37) illustrate that an unambiguous dative object cannot be left unexpressed in a control infinitive on identity with a dative object of a preceding clause (36), nor on identity with a dative of the Dative first construction (37). This is not only true for the German language in general but also for those of my German informants who accepted the control infinitives in (34) above. Consequently, the datives of the Dative first construction pattern with unambiguous subjects and not with unambiguous objects.

However, I do not question the grammaticality judgements of the examples containing the control infinitives in (20b) and (21b) above. Thus, the claim made be Cole et al. (1980) and Zaenen, Maling & Thráinsson (1985) that the oblique of the Oblique first construction cannot be omitted in control infinitives in German is certainly not taken out of the blue. Nevertheless, the examples presented here show that oblique-first verbs may well occur in the infinitive form with the oblique omitted, and that facts of German are therefore more nuanced than hitherto believed. In three of the examples above (35a, b and e), the oblique is omitted on identity with a nominative subject of the matrix verb, in (35c) the referent denoted by the oblique is retrievable from the context, and in (35d) the oblique is omitted on identity with an indefinite subject *man* 'one'. In all the examples in (34), the oblique is left unexpressed on identity with the oblique in the matrix clause. At the moment, the restrictions and non-restrictions of occurrences in control construction in German are not clear to me (see, however, section 5 below), and I believe that this topic is worthy of a paper of its own.

In sum, my conclusion is that the behavior of the dative in the Dative first construction in Icelandic and German is very similar. In fact it is more similar than expected on the analysis that it is a subject in Icelandic and an

object in German. There are only three eminent differences between Icelandic and German: First, Conjunction reduction is sensitive to both syntactic roles and morphological case in German, whereas in Icelandic it is only sensitive to syntactic roles. Secondly, there are some restrictions on the occurrence of the Oblique first construction in control constructions in German, restrictions which do not seem to exist in Icelandic. However, as I will discuss in section 5 below, it is more difficult to embed oblique-first predicates under control constructions in Icelandic than nominative-first predicates. Thirdly, the Oblique first construction cannot occur in telegraphic style in German, whereas such examples are grammatical in Icelandic. It seems, therefore, that the object analysis of the oblique in the Oblique first construction in German is problematic in, at least, four respects:

a) The "object analysis" is not based on enough research on the syntactic behavior of the oblique in the Oblique first construction in German.

b) The "object analysis" is based on a selective choice of subject criteria, and not founded on principle.

c) The "object analysis" is not based on a comparison of the actual behavior of syntactic objects; thus syntactic objecthood is treated as a dustbin category.

d) The "object analysis" makes wrong predictions about the syntactic behavior of the oblique in the Oblique first construction since it does not behave as a canonical object.

The problem that arises is that irrespective of whether the oblique of the Oblique first construction in German is analyzed as a subject or an object, as the terms are defined within mainstream syntactic theories, it will make false predictions about its behavior. Arguing that the oblique is a subject predicts that it can freely occur in control infinitives and conjunction reduction, as is the case with the ordinary nominative subject. However, analyzing it as an object predicts that it should not occur at all in these constructions. Thus, the data presented here show that the subject tests cannot be consistently applied within the same language.

At this juncture, it should be mentioned that it has recently been suggested that the oblique of the Oblique first construction in Russian and other languages that display similar constructions is neither a syntactic object nor an oblique subject, but rather a so-called *I-nominal,* which is taken to

equate an *indirect object* (Moore & Perlmutter 2000: 375). Sigur sson in his work (2002:695) also says that 'German subject-like non-nominatives seem to be best analyzed as I-nominals.' The problem I have with this analysis is that the oblique of the Oblique first construction is assigned a status similar to that of indirect objects without it being established that it behaves as an indirect object. In fact, there are examples in Moore & Perlmutter's paper which show that their I-nominals do *not* behave as indirect objects at all (2000:379-380), thus their analysis is ad-hoc, not even warranted by the data they present themselves. Also, on this account, the category of I-nominals is no more appropriate than that of objects since it is not independently defined either, but is a dustbin category.

Returning now to the Icelandic and German facts discussed above, they can easily be accounted for in a non-reductionist construction grammar, i.e. in a theory of grammar which does not reduce syntactic structure to primitive atomic units, but takes the clausal construction to be the basic unit in a grammatical description. Such an approach aims at giving a description of language which captures generalizations, not only at the most abstract schematic level of description, but also lower-level generalizations. In that way, we are not forced to either make broad generalizations, which abstract away from irregularity, or to only generalize about a small subset of the data. Radical Construction Grammar, together with the network model of grammar, provides us with the tool to capture generalizations at all levels. I now turn to a RCG solution to this problem.

4. RADICAL CONSTRUCTION GRAMMAR

Within Construction Grammar the basic unit of language is the CONSTRUCTION, i.e. a form-meaning (or a form-function) pairing (cf. Fillmore, Kay & O'Connor 1988, Kay & Fillmore 1999, Goldberg 1995, Michaelis & Ruppenhofer 2001, and many more). More specifically, Construction Grammar assumes that all form-meaning pairings are constructions of their own, and that a grammar of language consists of constructions and a network defining the relations between them. Constructions can be divided into two subtypes (cf. Tomasello 1998, Cruse & Croft, in prep: ch. 10): (1) more GENERAL constructions, of which the meaning of the whole is derivable from the meaning of the parts, for example the Ditransitive construction; and (2) more SPECIFIC constructions, in which case the meaning of the whole is not a sum of the meaning of the

parts, and thus idiosyncratic, like the "*What is* X *doing* Y?" construction, as discussed by Kay & Fillmore (1999). The difference between Radical Construction Grammar and mainstream Construction Grammar is that RCG is a non-reductionist theory which takes the clausal construction as a whole to be the primitive of language and thus that all other categories, such as syntactic roles and parts of speech, are derived from the whole.

Radical Construction Grammar does away with syntactic relations, and posits instead syntactic roles, semantic relations and symbolic relations. More generally, semantic relations correspond grossly to argument linking rules in other current theories, symbolic relations correspond grossly to general semantic interpretation rules, whereas syntactic roles correspond to syntactic relations. There is, however, a fundamental difference between syntactic roles and syntactic relations. Syntactic relations entail that there is a direct relation between two syntactic elements of an utterance (part-part relation), whereas syntactic roles entail that there is a relation between one part of an utterance to the utterance as a whole (part-whole relation) (cf. Kay 1997). This is illustrated in Figure 1 below:

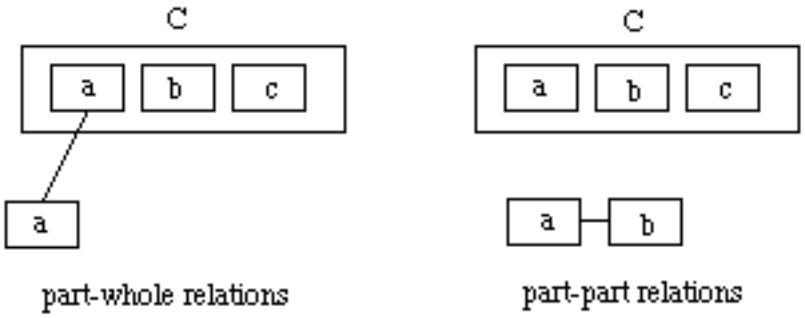

FIGURE 1: Part-whole relations vs. part-part relations.

The larger boxes are basic-level sentence-type constructions, labeled C, whereas the smaller boxes are the parts. The leftmost figure illustrates that a part *a* has a certain role or function in the construction C as a whole, whereas the rightmost figure illustrates that there is a relation between the parts *a* and *b*, irrespective of the construction C which the parts instantiate.

Constructions are formally accounted for by specifying a semantic/functional level (SEM-part) and a syntactic/formal level (SYN-part). The semantic relations, assumed within RCG, hold between the components of the SEM-part. The symbolic relations (cf. Langacker 1987, 1991) hold between the SYN-part and the SEM-part of a construction, and between the individual elements of the SYN-part and the individual components of the SEM-part. This can be illustrated as in Figure 2 below.

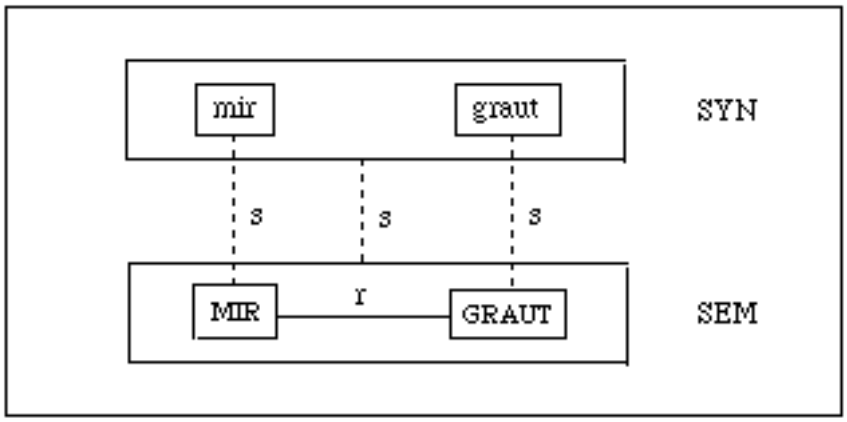

FIGURE 2: The semantic and symbolic relations between the parts of a construction.

The dashed lines, labeled *s*, stand for the symbolic relations between the individual elements and components of the SYN and the SEM-parts and between the SYN- and the SEM-parts as a whole. The black line, labeled *r*, stands for the semantic relation holding between the components of the SEM-part.

Radical Construction Grammar assumes that the behavior of the parts of a construction is specific to, and thus, specified for, each construction. This is a consequence of the fact that the parts of constructions only occur in constructions and not in isolation. Thus, grammatical relations like the subject and the object relation cannot be defined irrespective of constructions. They are construction-specific and thus best accounted for as syntactic roles. An argument in favor of this is that the so-called subject tests only measure a certain syntactic argument's occurrences and behavior in constructions. In mainstream linguistic theories, a label like 'subject' entails a relation between the so-called subject and the predicate, a label like 'object' entails a relation between the predicate and the object. However, since Radical Construction Grammar only employs part-whole relations and not part-part relations the syntactic representation within RCG differs drastically from that of other (mainstream) theories. Subjects and objects, within Radical Construction Grammar, are syntactic roles and thus different kinds of relations which emphasize the language-specific and construction-specific properties of utterances.

This entails that an ordinary Intransitive active declarative clause construction has a verb and a subject, and in languages like German and Icelandic the subject precedes the verb in the linear order. For the Inversion construction (found, for instance, in topicalizations and questions in Icelandic

and German), it is specified how the parts of the Intransitive active declarative clause construction behave when they occur in the Inversion construction. This can be illustrated as in Figure 3 below.

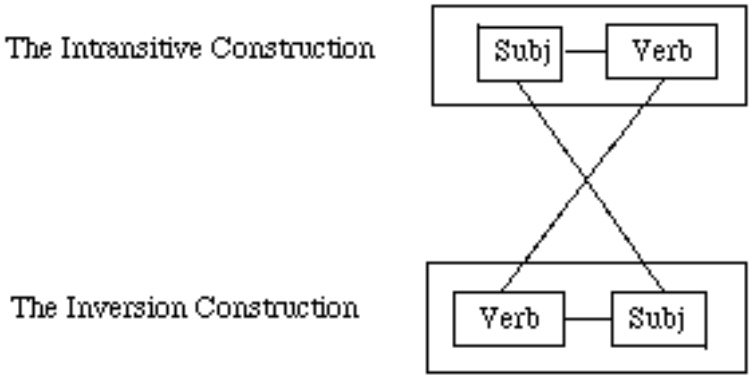

FIGURE 3: The behavior of the parts in different constructions.

Therefore, if a speaker knows his/her language, s/he also knows the inventory of constructions in that language, and how the constructions are related to each other, including how the various parts can be identified across constructions.

Thus, in a grammar consisting of an inventory of constructions, together with specifications on how the constructions are related to each other and how the various parts behave in these constructions, the behavior of the accusative/dative of the Accusative/Dative first construction in German can easily be accounted for. Such an account would contain a link from the relevant verbs to the Accusative/Dative argument linking construction and then a link from that argument linking construction to the various word order and sentence type constructions they can instantiate. The same holds for the Nominative first construction. The verbs occurring in that construction are linked to it, with a subsequent link to the various word order and sentence type constructions. The difference between the two, i.e. the Accusative/Dative vs. the Nominative first construction, is that their distribution in certain coordinating, infinitive and telegraphic style constructions (henceforth elliptic constructions) is not the same. In this way, Radical Construction Grammar can accurately account for the linguistic knowledge of German speakers, without postulating either universal grammatical relations, or even language-specific grammatical relations, which wrongly predict that the behavior of the oblique in the Oblique first construction should either be identical to the nominative of the Nominative

first construction, or be like that of objects. Such a model is illustrated in Figure 4 for German:

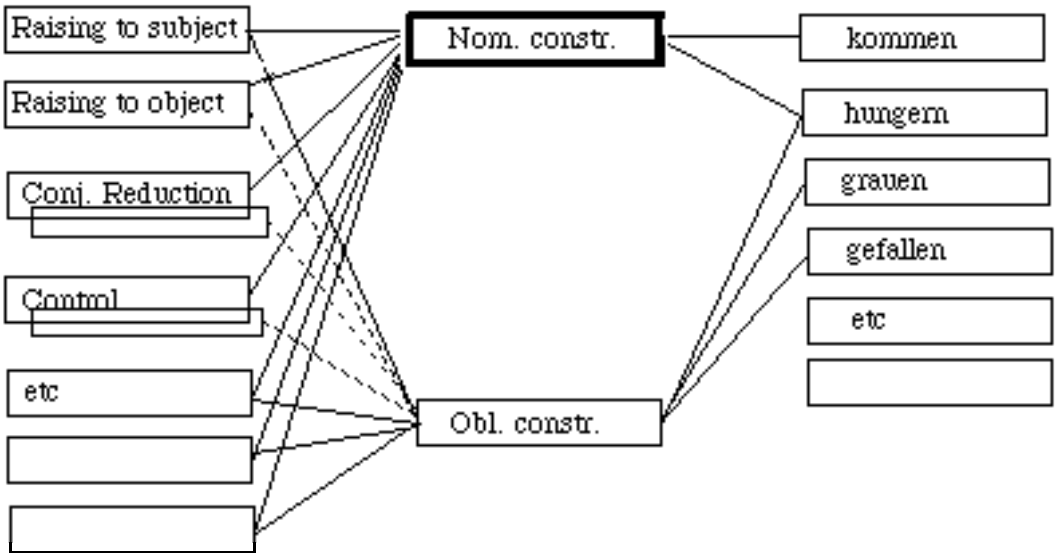

FIGURE 4: The distribution pattern of a network representation.

In a network model the general property of the Nominative first construction, to occur in all kinds of sentence type constructions, is captured by a link between the Nominative construction and these constructions. Thus, this broad generalization is captured by links in the model. The lower-level generalization, that a certain subgroup of predicates in German occurs with an oblique subject, is captured by a link between these predicates and the Accusative and the Dative first constructions (here subsumed under the Oblique construction for the sake of simplicity). Moreover, the 'subject-like' behaviors of the oblique argument, such as the property to invert with the verb, to control reflexivization, etc. are captured with relevant links. Conversely, the lack of 'subject-like' behaviors is captured by not positing a link between the Oblique first construction and the ordinary control constructions and conjunction reduction construction. The fact that conjunction reduction seems to be sensitive to both syntactic roles and morphological case is captured by a weak link (dashed lines) from the Oblique first construction to, not the conjunction reduction construction itself, but to a subconstruction of it involving an oblique. Figure 5 below is a detail of Figure 4, showing the two subconstructions of the conjunction reduction construction, i.e. the Nominative first construction and the Oblique first construction, which are instantiated by different verbs in German:

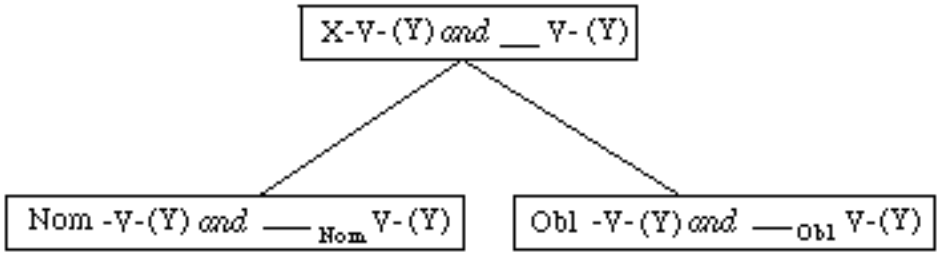

FIGURE 5: The conjunction reduction construction and its subconstructions.

Verbs occurring in the Nominative first argument structure construction occur in the leftmost subconstruction whereas verbs selecting for the Oblique first argument structure construction occur in the rightmost subconstruction of the conjunction reduction construction.

Returning to Figure 4, the thick box around the Nominative first construction shows that this construction is more entrenched (cf. Bybee 1985, 1995, Bybee & Thompson 1997, Langacker 1988) in the mind of speakers than the Oblique first construction, since more verbs occur in the Nominative than in the Oblique construction. Thus, generalizations across constructions, both general and lower level, are captured by the network model and links between constructions.

A model of the grammar of Icelandic speakers would be similar to the one illustrated in the figures above for German speakers except that the links that are weak or missing in German are present in Icelandic. To exemplify, consider the following figure:

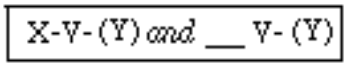

FIGURE 6: The conjunction reduction construction in Icelandic.

Since second conjuncts in Icelandic are not restricted to predicates having the same morphological case on the subject, no subconstructions need to be modeled. Instead, the highest schematic construction, with no restrictions on the case of the subject, captures the facts of conjunction reduction in Icelandic.

5. THE MORE EXTENSIVE QUESTION

One of the main empirical results of the research presented in this paper is that the difference in the distribution/behavior of the oblique in the Oblique first construction in Icelandic and German is much smaller than predicted by

theories that posit universal categories of subjects and objects. In fact, my comparison has revealed that the similarities are greater than the differences: Obliques in both languages occur in first position in ordinary active declarative clause constructions and in subordinate clause constructions, and both invert with the verb in the topicalization construction, assuming that function and intonation can be used to differentiate between the two in German (see section 2 above). Obliques in both languages are "raised" to subject in Subject-to-subject raising, both can be embedded under subject-to-object raising verbs, and both can control clause-bound reflexivization. In neither language does the oblique carry nominative case, nor does it control verb agreement, nor can oblique-first predicates occur in the Imperative construction.

The differences found between the Oblique first construction in Icelandic and German, thus only involve conjunction reduction, certain control infinitives, and occurrences in telegraphic style. I have, furthermore, illustrated that conjunction reduction is sensitive to both morphological case and syntactic roles, and thus that the oblique subject of an oblique-first predicate can be omitted in second conjuncts on identity with the first subject if it has the same morphological case. I have also presented examples of oblique-first predicates occurring in control constructions, examples which demonstrate beyond doubt that the oblique can be left unexpressed on identity with a nominative subject, an oblique subject, an indefinite *man* 'one', or when the referent is retrievable from the context. Thus, there is no motivation for analyzing the relevant Icelandic obliques as subjects and the German obliques as objects. Having established that, a more extensive question which arises is why the distribution of oblique-first predicates across sentence types should be more restricted in German than in Icelandic, given the structural and lexical similarities of the two languages?

To the best of my knowledge, the only answer to this question found in the literature so far, has been that one is a subject and the other is an object. This answer has been put forth only at the cost of the similarities between the nominative subject and the oblique subject in German. Therefore, a Radical Construction Grammar solution, in which the similarities, as well as the differences, of the behavior of the oblique in the Oblique first construction in Icelandic and German are acknowledged, generates different kind of research questions and different answers. I now turn to those questions.

The first question is what the constructions have in common, i.e. the constructions in which the behavior of the obliques in Icelandic and German

differ. In Table 2, I give an overview of the behavior of the oblique in the two languages. I mark with a Yes the rows for the constructions in which the oblique occurs in both languages, but with a line ---- the rows for the constructions in which oblique-first predicates are reluctant to occur.

TABLE 2: Syntactic similarities and differences in the behavior of the oblique in Icelandic and German.

		Icelandic	*German*
1.	Position in declarative clauses	Yes	Yes
2.	Subject-verb inversion	Yes	Yes
3.	Position in subordinate clauses	Yes	Yes
4.	Subject-to-object raising	Yes	Yes
5.	Subject-to-subject raising	Yes	Yes
6.	Reflexivization	Yes	Yes
7.	Control infinitives	Yes	----
8.	Conjunction reduction	Yes	----
9.	Deletion in telegraphic style	Yes	----
10.	Deletion in imperatives	----	----

The difference between the constructions numbered 1-6 and the ones numbered 7-10 is that the last four are all elliptical. The generalization to be made here, thus, is that oblique-first predicates and dative passives in German differ from their Icelandic counterparts in being reluctant to occur in elliptic constructions, such as conjunction reduction, control infinitives, telegraphic style and imperatives. Oblique-first predicates and dative passives in Icelandic do not share this reluctance, at least not to the same degree. In Icelandic, oblique-first predicates cannot occur in all control constructions (see 39 below), and they cannot occur in the Imperative construction, for different reasons, however (see section 2 above). This is the main difference between the behavior of the oblique in the Oblique first construction in Icelandic and German.

The second question is why the oblique should be more reluctant to be elliptic in German than in Icelandic. One possible answer is that when the oblique is left unexpressed important morphological/semantic information is lost. This has been suggested by Thráinsson (1979:470) in a discussion on Icelandic and the fact that many Icelandic speakers prefer oblique-first predicates embedded in subordinate clauses than in control constructions. Thus, many speakers prefer (38a) to (38b):

(38) a. Ég vonast til a mér ver i hjálpa . *Icelandic*
I hope to that me.dat will-be helped
'I hope that I'll be helped.'
b. Ég vonast til a ____ ver a hjálpa .
I hope to that PRO.dat will-be.inf helped
'I hope to be helped.'

This preference of Icelandic speakers is certainly unexpected given the fact that control constructions like (38b) are always discussed as being grammatical in Icelandic. There are, however, control constructions which are incompatible with oblique-first predicates in Icelandic:

(39) a. *Ég hyggst ____ ver a hjálpa . *Icelandic*
I intend PRO.dat be.inf helped
Intended meaning: 'I intend to be helped.'
b. *Ég hyggst ____ líka bókin.
I intend PRO.dat like.inf the book
Intended meaning: 'I intend to like the book.'
c. *Ég hyggst ____ vera etta ómögulegt.
I intend PRO.dat be.inf this impossible
Intended meaning: 'I intend to have problems with this.'

Compare these with the following attested examples in which a Nominative-first predicate is embedded under the same control verb *hyggjast* 'intend':

(40) a. ... ég hyggst ____ halda á vit ævint ranna ... *Icelandic*
I.nom intend PRO.nom take.inf off on meeting adventures
'I intend to go for the adventures ...'
b. ... sem ég hyggst ____ leggja áherslu á í kennslunni.
which I.nom intend PRO.nom put emphasis on in class
'... which I intend to emphasize in class.'

In the examples in (39) the control predicate is purposive, thus it is incompatible in meaning with the Oblique first construction in Icelandic since the predicates instantiating it are low on the agentivity scale (see Jónsson 1997-98, Bar dal 2001a, 2001b:36-38, 2002). Also, many oblique-first predicates do not seem to have the ability to be construed as conveying intentionality of the referent denoted by the oblique argument, even though the lexical meaning of the predicate may be more agentive-like, as with various verbs of saying (see Bar dal 2001b:36-38, 2002, Bar dal & Eythórsson, to appear). Moreover, an informal investigation on the World

Wide Web of attested PRO-infinitives of oblique-first predicates in Icelandic revealed that a majority of these are in fact not embedded under traditional control verbs:

(41) a. Af hverju er a ekki e lileg tilfinning a ___ lí a vel?
why is it not natural feeling to PRO.dat feel.inf good
'Why isn't it natural to feel good?'

b. ... en a a ___ vera kalt vi vinnu hefur áhrif á starfshæfni ...
but it to PRO.dat be.inf cold with work has effect on work-ability
'... but to freeze at work affects the ability to work ...'

c. Hvenær á a ___ gruna eitrun?
when should to PRO.acc suspect.inf poison
'When should we start suspecting that poison is involved?'

In these examples the unexpressed oblique of the oblique-first predicates *lí a vel* 'feel good', *vera kalt* 'freeze' and *gruna* 'suspect' is retreavable from the context, and not controlled at all by an argument of the matrix clause.

In sum, the differences between Icelandic and German regarding the behavior of the oblique in control constructions are not as gross as suggested in the literature: In German the oblique can be left unexpressed in certain control constructions, though not in all. In Icelandic the oblique cannot be embedded under purposive control verbs, and is often not controlled by an antecedent argument at all. It is, therefore, clear that research on the distribution of Oblique first constructions in a language cannot be confined to purposive control verbs, as for instance in Moore & Perlmutter in their investigation of certain Oblique first constructions in Russian (2000:398), but has to take other, less agentive, control verbs into consideration. In fact, the findings of this paper call for a thorough research on control predicates in both Icelandic and German, on why oblique-first predicates can only be embedded under certain control verbs in German, and what the relevant restrictions are. Such extensive research is, however, outside the scope of the present paper.

Let us return to the hypothesis that oblique subjects resist being left unexpressed in elliptic constructions in German because of the morphological/semantic information encoded by the oblique. This hypothesis is sustained by the fact that the oblique subject can only be left unexpressed on identity with another oblique subject in German conjunction reduction constructions:

(29) b. Mir$_i$ wird's schlecht und ____ $_i$ graut's vor der Zukunft. *German*
me.dat is-it bad and Ø.dat fear-it for the future
'I feel sick and fear for the future.'

Thus, the morphological/semantic information is maintained in the oblique in the first conjunct. With regards to control constructions, many of my German informants judged the invented examples in (34a-c) generally as better than the examples in (35) inspite of the fact that the latter are attested German examples. The examples in (34) all have dative-first predicates as a matrix verb, and thus the dative of the lower verb has been left unexpressed on identity with the dative of the matrix verb. This seems to suggest that control constructions in German may also be sensitive to morphological case.

Why, then, are Icelandic obliques not as hesitant to be elliptic as their German counterparts? This may be due to the fact that the Oblique first construction in Icelandic is much more entrenched in the mind of speakers than the German Oblique first construction. Both its type and its token frequency is higher in Icelandic than in German. The types occurring in the Dative first construction in Icelandic are approximately 700 and the types instantiating the Accusative first construction are ca. 200 (Barðdal 2001:136, based on a list of oblique-first predicates in Icelandic compiled by Jónsson 1998). However, oblique-first predicates in contemporary German are relatively few in number, perhaps between 80-100 in total (Barðdal 2002). This count includes both Dat-Nom verbs and complex predicates, such as those with *sein* 'be' together with adjectives or nouns. Verbs selecting for dative objects are also higher in type frequency in Icelandic than in German: According to Maling (this volume:2), dative object assigning verbs are at least 750 in Icelandic, whereas they are only approximately 140 in German. This count of German, however, includes oblique-first verbs since such datives have been considered to be objects. Therefore, the amount of true dative object verbs is somewhat lower.

Moreover, certain oblique-first predicates are high in token frequency in Icelandic. At least in Icelandic texts oblique subjects have been measured as 5.5% of subjects in some written genres, and their token frequency is even higher in spoken genres, i.e. 7% (Barðdal 2001b:89). About their type and token frequency in German, Seefranz-Montag states (1984:541):

(34) Only a few relics of 'subjectless' constructions (with *es*-variants) are still unrestrictedly acceptable in contemporary standard German: *mich friert, mir graut, mich ekelt, mir schwindelt*. However, even these relics are in the process of being contextually restricted. They are increasingly confined to written elevated style, they are used mainly by elder speakers and only in some regional varieties of German. In colloquial spoken German, on the other hand, and especially in substandard varieties of the language, 'subjectless' expressions are almost completely eliminated: Younger speakers prefer *ich friere, ich hab kalt* to *mich friert* and even to *mich friert es*, they would hardly use *mir graut*, but *ich hab'n Horror vor*, not *mich gelüstet* (arch.) but *ich hab Lust auf*, not *mir schwindelt* but *ich bin schwindlig/ich hab'n Drehwurm*, not *mir gefällt das* but *ich finde das gut/da fahr ich drauf ab* and similar (slang) expressions ...

The fact that it is easier for Icelandic speakers to leave the oblique subject unexpressed in elliptic constructions than for German speakers falls directly from the assumption that the Oblique first construction is more deeply entrenched in Icelandic than in German. This is a natural conclusion within grammatical models based on language use, in which frequency is assumed to be one of the main determinant of the structure of the language system (Bybee 1985, 1995, 2001, Bybee & Thompson 1997, Bybee & Hopper 2001, Barlow & Kemmer 2000, Langacker 1987, 1988, 1991, 1999). On a usage-based account the language system is an emerging and dynamic system, based on non-linguistic experience, sensitive to and shaped by the frequency of the input. This language system can change and evolve during the life span of a speaker. On a usage-based account the Oblique first construction is much more integrated into the Icelandic system, due to its higher frequency, than into the German language system, where it is low in frequency; thus it can also occur in a wider range of elliptic constructions in Icelandic. The differences in the behavior of the Oblique first construction in Icelandic and German are, therefore, expected on a usage-based account.

This analysis raises the question whether the Oblique first construction in German only exists as a VERB-SPECIFIC construction (in Croft's 2000 terminology), similar to the English *me-thinks*. Certainly, given that *me-thinks* is a lexicalized relic no-one would expect it to occur in elliptic constructions. In fact, if *me-thinks* only exists as a verb-specific construction its occurrences in elliptic constructions where the subject is left unexpressed is ruled out, simply because the *me*-part is a lexicalized, and thus an obligatory, part of the expression. However, the Oblique first construction in

German differs from *me-thinks* in English in that *me-thinks* can only occur in 1p.sg., whereas in German the oblique can occur in all person/number forms. This difference between *me-thinks* and the Oblique first construction in German can, therefore, be analyzed as a difference in degree of schematicity:

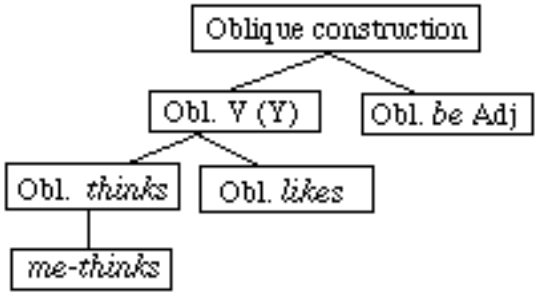

FIGURE 7: Different levels of schematicity of the Oblique first construction.

In Modern English only the lowest-level lexically-filled instantiation of the oblique-first predicate *think* still exists as a part of speakers' passive knowledge of English. In Modern High German the construction one level above exists, since there are more than only one oblique-first predicate in Modern High German, and since they can occur in all person/number forms. However, in Icelandic it is possible that the three lowest levels exist. There is psycholinguistic evidence supporting the analysis that the Oblique first construction in Icelandic exists not only as a verb-specific construction but that it may exist as a VERB-CLASS-SPECIFIC construction as well, since it can be extended to nonce verbs with similar meanings (see Bar dal 2000c).

Notice that the vertical axis of Figure 7 represents the lexicality vs. the schematicity of the construction. That is, lower-level constructions exist in the network as lexically-filled instantiations, whereas the higher-level constructions are more abstract and schematic, and thus less filled with lexical material.

To summarize, it seems that the status of the Oblique first construction in German is at an intermediate level between Icelandic and English. In Icelandic, the construction is relatively high in both type and token frequency compared to German; thus it exists as a fairly schematic construction, maintaining the ability to occur in various elliptic constructions. In German, the Oblique first construction seems to be falling into disuse; thus it only exists as lexically-filled, or low-level, instantiations of the construction, which in turn restricts its occurrence in elliptic constructions. Finally, in English, the construction is only found in a couple of frozen

expressions, thus it is expected that it is incompatible at all with elliptic constructions. These data show that there is a correlation between the amount of predicates instantiating the Oblique first construction and the occurrences of these predicates in elliptic constructions in a language. Such a correlation is predicted on a usage-based approach to language and grammar.

6. SUMMARY

In this paper I have compared the Oblique first construction in Icelandic and German to the Nominative first construction in these languages, and I have compared the Oblique first construction across Icelandic and German. I started by giving a survey of the conventional subject tests used in these languages, a survey which revealed great inconsistencies, exemplifying both cross-linguistic methodological opportunism and language-internal methodological opportunism. Cross-linguistic methodological opportunism is manifested as different criteria being used for defining subjects in different languages, whereas language-internal methodological opportunism manifests itself as some properties being assigned the status of being criterial in a particular language without a principled way of making the choices.

I have also shown that the difference between the Oblique first construction in Icelandic and German is much smaller than assumed in the literature, and lesser than predicted by the analysis that the subject-like oblique is a subject in Icelandic but an object in German. Moreover, analyzing the oblique in German as a subject will also yield wrong predictions about its behavior, since it is not identical to the behavior of the nominative of the Nominative first construction in German. I have suggested a Radical Construction Grammar solution to this problem, in which universal grammatical relations of subjects and objects are systematically abandoned. The behavior of the oblique in the Oblique first construction can be captured by assuming that constructions are language-specific and that syntactic roles are construction-specific. Radical Construction Grammar accounts for the grammatical knowledge of speakers by assuming that constructions form a network in which both broad generalizations and lower-level generalizations are captured with links in the network model.

Finally, the main difference in the syntactic behavior of the oblique in the Oblique first construction in Icelandic and German is that they freely occur in elliptic constructions in Icelandic but not in German. There are

some restrictions on their occurrence in Icelandic but to a much lesser degree than in German. The difference between German and Icelandic correlates with the frequency of the Oblique first construction in the two languages, a fact predicted by theoretical models based on language use, i.e. models which take frequency to be the main determinant of the language system. The status of the Oblique first construction in German takes an intermediate position between the status of the construction in Icelandic, where it still has high enough type and token frequency to be recognized as an integrated part of the system, and English, where the construction is a relic only found in a couple of frozen expressions.

APPENDIX:

This Appendix lists some more German examples of PRO-infinitives of oblique-first predicates and dative passives which I have encountered during my search on the internet:

(1) *geholfen zu werden* 'be helped':

a. Natürlich kann man nicht gleich die ganze Welt ändern, aber wir finden, dass jedes Tierleben es wert is [sic], **geholfen ___ zu werden**.
'It is of course impossible to change the whole world, but in our opinion every animal life is worthy of being helped.' (http://www.paros-online.de/streuner.htm)

b. ... halten und durchsuchen. Vor der Durchsuchung hat man die Möglichkeit, von einer Anwaltsperson **geholfen ___ zu werden**. Wenn du eine ...
'... stop and search. Before the search it is possible to get help from a lawyer. If you ...' (www.noglobal.org/tutelalegalet.htm)

c. "Ich bin nichts, der Herrgott ist alles. Ich will weder Geld noch Gold, was ich will und kann allen Menschen helfen und heilen. Wer den Herrgott verleumdet ist es nicht wert **geholfen ___ zu werden.**"(3) Das schrieb Bruno Gröning 1949 über sich selbst.
'"I am nothing, God is everything. I neither want money nor Gold, all I want is to help and cure people. He who calumniates God is not worthy of being helped." Bruno Gröning 1949 wrote this about himself.' (datenbank.spinnenwerk.de/gangwaycms/old_site/sekten/sekten_teil741.htm)

(2) *unwohl zu werden* 'to feel sick':

a. Wer denkt, auf einem Katamaran könne man wegen der fehlenden Kränkungen und den viel geringeren Schiffsbewegungen nicht seekrank werden, der irrt sich. Allerdings liegt die "Kotzschwelle" höher. Es braucht meistens einen harten Amwindkurs gegen hohe Wellen, **um unwohl ___ zu werden**.
'Everybody, who thinks that it is impossible to get see sick on a catamaran because of less weaknesses and because of how little the ship moves, is wrong. The "puke thresh hold" is definitely higher than that. At most, a close-hauled course against the high waves is needed in order to feel sick.
(http://www.doublemagic.ch/fahrten.asp)

b. Schade, daß man nicht unendlich viel davon essen kann, **ohne unwohl ___ zu werden**.". [sic] "Ja, 's ist wirklich traurig", stimmte Charlotte zu.
'"What a shame that one cannot eat as much as one wants without feeling sick." "Yes, that is really sad", Charlotte agreed.'
(www.gutenberg2000.de/dickens/oliver/twist27.htm)

(3) *gefolgt zu werden* 'be followed':

a. ... der Herr Jesus Christus selber, der einzige Chef, der würdig ist, geliebt und **gefolgt ___ zu werden**.
'... Jesus Christ himself, the only leader who is worthy of being loved and followed.' (www.autre.net/samen/d766.html)

b. Er schwimmt nun nochmals 5 Meter tiefer nur um wieder von dem anderen ohne Ausrüstung **gefolgt ___ zu werden**.
'He swims 5 meters further down only to be followed again by the others, without equipment.' (www.karthago.de/witze/intelli.html)

(4) *gedient zu werden* 'to be served':
David hat gelernt nur Gott allein ist würdig **gedient ___ zu werden**.
'David realized that only God is worthy of being served.'
(http://www.stover.de/godsrech.htm)

(5) *vergeben zu werden* 'to be forgiven':
... Daß wir die Notwendigkeit erkennen, **vergeben ___ zu werden** und den Mut aufbringen, auch um Vergebung zu bitten.
'... that we admit to the necessity to be forgiven, and that we have the courage to ask for forgiveness.' (members.eunet.at/grcath/liebet.html)

(6) *gratuliert zu werden* 'to be gratutalated:
Er, der bezweifelt, dass ich es wert bin, zum Geburtstag **gratuliert ___ zu werden**, benutzt seine Luca Leidensstory, um mir in den Bauch zu hauen.
'He, who doubts that I am worthy of being congratulated on my birthday, uses his Luca Leidensstory to punch me in the belly.'
(www.skaichannel.de/diary/silverlake/2001/010630.html)

(7) *begegnet zu werden* 'to be met with':
... das tut mir sehr gut von euch mit so viel freundlichkeit und herzlichkeit **begegnet ___ zu werden**.
'... it feels so good to be met with such friendliness and warmth from you.'
(2037.rapidforum.com/topic=102187182104&startid=2)

(8) *zugejubelt zu werden* 'to be cheered':
Schon ein irres Gefühl dann so **zugejubelt ___ zu werden**. Wer noch nie auf ner [sic] CSD war, der kann das gar nicht mitfühlen.
'What a crazy feeling to be cheered in that way. Anybody that has not been at the CSD cannot know how this feels.' (www.csd-stuttgart.de/archiv/CSD_2001/gastebuch_2001/hauptteil_gastebuch_2001.html)

(9) *kalt zu werden* 'to freeze':
Shermer deutete auf die Rohre in einem Brause-Raum im Mauthausen Lager hin, das Touristen als eine Hinrichtungs-"Gaskammer" vorgeführt wird. Indem er behauptete, daß durch diese Rohre Dampf geleitet wurde, um den Raum zu heizen, warf er die Frage auf: "Was kann es anderes (anderes als Tötungsabsichten) bedeuten? Warum würden Sie ein Brausebad wärmen wollen?" Nun, wie wäre es damit, um vielleicht jemanden, der sich duschen wollte, davor zu bewahren, **kalt zu ___ werden** oder weil derjenige, der die Installationen anbrachte, sich nicht um Ästhetik kümmerte und die Rohre sichtbar ließ oder unzählige andere vernünftige Gründe.
'Shermer pointed at the pipe in a shower room in the Mauthausen camp, which is presented to tourists as an execution 'gas chamber'. Claiming that steam was lead through this pipe in order to heat up the room, he raised the question: 'What else can it mean (than an intention to kill)? Why would you want to warm up a shower cabin?' Well, how about maybe in order to prevent somebody who would like to take a shower from freezing, or because the person who fitted the installation did not care about aesthetics and let the pipeline be visible, or countless other sensible reasons.' (http://www.zundelsite.org/german/artikel/RevDeb.html)

(10) *warm zu werden* 'to feel warm':
Wenn Sie einmal anfangen zu frieren, dann ist es ohne eine externe Wärmequelle sehr schwierig wieder **warm ___ zu werden**.
'If you start freezing at all, then it is impossible to feel warm again without an external source of heat.' (www.avg-ev.de/astro/Teil01/warm.html)

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