

CHAPTER 7

Control infinitives and case in Germanic**‘Performance error’ or marginally acceptable constructions?**

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An examination of German language use reveals that subject-like obliques of impersonal predicates and dative passives can be left unexpressed in control infinitives, exactly as in Icelandic and Faroese, contra claims in the literature that there are no oblique subjects in German. Native-speaker judgments on these attested examples are subject to some controversy, bringing to the fore the issue of how to evaluate marginally-accepted data. We argue that this must be addressed in relation to the fact that there are also examples of control infinitives in Faroese and Icelandic which are judged ill-formed or ungrammatical by native speakers, again contra the established view in the literature that Icelandic and Faroese have oblique subjects. The distribution of the acceptability judgments correlates with the fact that the control infinitives under investigation are low-frequency constructions in all the Modern Germanic languages, including Modern Icelandic. The scarcity of such control infinitives in the modern languages prognosticates that only very few such instantiations should be found in earlier stages of Germanic, as is indeed borne out.

1. Introduction

It is consistently argued in the existing literature on subject properties of subject-like obliques of impersonal predicates in Germanic that they cannot be left unexpressed in control infinitives in German, but only in Icelandic and Faroese (Zaenen, Maling and Thráinsson 1985, Sigurðsson 1989, 2002, Fischer and Blaszcak 2001, Fanselow 2002, Stepanov 2003, Wunderlich 2003, Bayer 2004, Haider 2005, amongst others). By ‘impersonal predicate’ we refer to predicates which select for a ‘logical subject’ in non-nominative case, i.e. compositional predicates as in (1) and dative passives as in (2).

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|-----|----|-----------------|------------------|-----------|
| (1) | a. | <i>Mér</i> | <i>er kalt.</i> | Icelandic |
| | b. | <i>Mir</i> | <i>ist kalt.</i> | German |
| | | me.DAT | is cold | |
| | | ‘I’m freezing.’ | | |

- | | | |
|--------|---|-----------|
| (2) a. | <i>Mér</i> var andmælt. | Icelandic |
| b. | <i>Mir</i> wurde widersprochen.
me.DAT was contradicted
'I was contradicted.' | German |

As the ability to be left unexpressed in control infinitives has been taken to be conclusive evidence of subjecthood, it is only in Icelandic and Faroese that subject-like obliques have been regarded as syntactic subjects, while in German they have been considered syntactic 'objects'. As a matter of fact, however, we have come upon a large number of examples of impersonal predicates embedded under control verbs in German language use. The question arises how such occurrences should be assessed, given their alleged ungrammaticality in German. Similar examples have also been documented in Old Norse-Icelandic, Old Swedish and Early Middle English (Cole et. al 1980, Seefranz-Montag 1983, 1984, Rögnvaldsson 1995, 1996, Falk 1997, Barðdal 2000a, 2000b, Barðdal and Eythórsson 2003a, Eythórsson and Barðdal 2005). In our ongoing work on Germanic we have, thus, been faced with the following two major problems:

1. For the bulk of the Old Germanic languages only very few examples of controlled infinitives involving impersonal predicates have been documented. How should the scarcity of the examples be interpreted?
2. How should attested German examples of control infinitives with impersonal predicates be evaluated, given their alleged ungrammaticality? Should they be regarded as plain 'performance errors' or must they be taken seriously in research on impersonal predicates and control?

In this paper we show, moreover, that the grammaticality judgments of impersonal predicates embedded under control verbs in Icelandic, Faroese and German vary according to speakers and specific example sentences. This contradicts the literature on subjecthood in Modern Icelandic, where impersonal predicates embedded under control verbs are always discussed as being perfectly grammatical, and the literature on Modern German, where such examples are always discussed as being completely ungrammatical. We argue, therefore, that the difference between Modern German, on the one hand, and Modern Icelandic and Faroese, on the other, is not categorical but gradient (cf. Barðdal 2002, 2006, Eythórsson and Barðdal 2005).

We point out that control infinitives containing impersonal predicates are exceedingly rare in written Modern Icelandic, the language which has always been taken as providing the ultimate proof for the existence of oblique subjects. Therefore, when searching for linguistic evidence for oblique subjects in a given language, one cannot demand documentation of a large amount of control infinitives, but only a few instantiations should suffice. Since examples of this type do not come in shoals, one would not expect to find them in large quantities in real language use either.

In order to explore the status of infrequent and marginally acceptable data, we compare:

1. Grammaticality judgments from native informants
2. Examples from literary texts
3. Examples from corpora (including the World Wide Web)

On the basis of this comparison we conclude that infrequent and marginally acceptable data cannot be categorically dismissed as unimportant and uninteresting for either empirical or theoretical research, but deserve to be taken seriously as representing a rare, but, at least for some speakers, a grammatical pattern in a language.

In the remainder of this paper we discuss control infinitives containing impersonal predicates and their occurrences and acceptability not only in Modern German (section 3) but also in Modern Faroese (section 4) and Modern Icelandic (section 5). Shifting our focus to earlier Germanic, in section 6 we discuss examples from Old Norse-Icelandic, Old Swedish and Early Middle English. In section 7 we argue that there is a correlation between frequency and acceptability, in that structures which are highly frequent in real language use are judged more grammatical by native speakers than low-frequency structures. On this approach it is expected that one person's performance errors equate other people's marginalia. First, however, a short explanatory note on the nature of the subject property of control infinitives is in place.

2. Control constructions

Behavioral properties of subjects include various syntactic phenomena such as the ability to control reflexivization, raising-to-subject, raising-to-object, and deletion in second conjuncts and controlled infinitives (Keenan 1976, Cole et al. 1980, Croft 2001: ch. 4, Haspelmath 2001). In our comparative work on subjecthood in the Germanic languages (Barðdal 1998, 2000a, 2000b, 2002, 2006, Barðdal and Eythórsson 2003a, 2003b, Eythórsson and Barðdal 2005), we have placed greatest emphasis on control constructions because of their uncontroversial status as one of the most conclusive evidence of subject behavior, not only in Germanic but also cross-linguistically.¹ Consider the following examples:

- (3) a. *He intends to _____ prove himself.* English
 b. *Hann ætlar að _____ sanna sig.* Icelandic
 he.NOM intends to PRO.NOM prove.INF self.REFL
 c. *Er beabsichtigt, _____ sich zu beweisen.* German
 he.NOM intends PRO.NOM self.REFL to prove.INF
 'He intends to prove himself.'

In these infinitives the subject of the lower verb 'prove' has been left unexpressed on identity with the subject of the matrix verb 'intend' in English, Icelandic and German.² This property has been shown to correlate with other subject properties and is not found with objects (Falk 1995, Rögnvaldsson 1996, Moore and Perlmutter 2000, Barðdal 2002,

2006, Barðdal and Eythórsson 2003a, Eythórsson and Barðdal 2005, amongst others):

- (4) a. *He intends *to* ____ *prove* ____ . English
 b. *Hann ætlar *að* ____ *sanna* ____ . Icelandic
 c. *Er beabsichtigt, ____ ____ zu beweisen. German

In (4) above, the reflexive object of the infinitive clause cannot be left unexpressed in spite of being coreferential with both the subject of the matrix clause and the omitted subject of the infinitive. Therefore, it is only the subject of a finite predicate and not its object that can be left unexpressed in corresponding control infinitives.

However, in our work on Germanic, we have been faced with the problem that controlled infinitives are statistically rare in language use and much less frequent than finite clauses, despite the fact that introspection confirms that such examples may be grammatical. With impersonal predicates, moreover, like the ones in (1–2) above, controlled infinitives are extremely rare in Modern Icelandic (Rögnvaldsson 1991: 372, 1996: 50, Barðdal 2000b: 102, Barðdal and Eythórsson 2003a: 461, Eythórsson and Barðdal 2005: 833, 837), which is otherwise known to have ‘oblique subjects’. In a corpus of written and spoken Modern Icelandic, containing approximately 40,000 running words (Barðdal 2001a), not one single example of a control construction involving impersonal predicates can be found. In other words, despite the acceptability of such examples, they are exceedingly rare in real language use. Two examples, found in naturally occurring language use, are given in (5) below (Eythórsson and Barðdal 2005: 834, 841):

- (5) (kaffi.blogspot.com/2002_11_01_kaffi_archive.html, 2002)
 a. *Hvað fær okkur til að* ____ *líka ekki fólkið*
 what makes us.ACC for to PRO.DAT like not people.the.NOM
í kringum okkur?
 in round us.ACC
 ‘What is it that makes us not like the people around us?’
 (lb.icemed.is/web/2001/6?ArticleID=905, 2001)
 b. ... *að maður þurfi að vera haldinn þrælslund til að*
 that one.NOM needs to be held severe-servility for to
 ____ *falla í geð slík fásinna.*
 PRO.DAT fall in liking such craziness.NOM
 ‘... that one needs to be equipped with severe servility to like such craziness.’

The non-finite verbs in (5), *líka* ‘like’ and *falla í geð* ‘like, be to sb’s liking’, both select for a dative subject in Modern Icelandic.³ Consequently, it is the dative subject that is left unexpressed in control constructions: in (5a) on identity with the accusative object *okkur* ‘us’ and in (5b) on identity with the indefinite generic subject *maður* ‘one’. It is therefore the subject-like dative of impersonal predicates in Icelandic that behaves as a syntactic subject while the nominative stimulus behaves syntactically as an object (cf. Andrews 1976, Zaenen, Maling and Thráinsson 1985, Sigurðsson 1989, 2002,

Rögnvaldsson 1995, 1996, Jónsson 1996, Barðdal 2000a, 2001b, 2002, 2006, Barðdal and Eythórsson 2003a, Eythórsson and Barðdal 2005, amongst others).

We now proceed to a discussion of control constructions in the individual Germanic languages that still have impersonal predicates, namely German, Faroese and Icelandic.

3. German

Examples of impersonal predicates being embedded under control verbs are always discussed as ungrammatical in the literature on German, as far as we can gather (Reis 1982, Zaenen, Maling and Thráinsson 1985, Sigurðsson 1989, 2002, Fischer and Blaszczak 2001, Fanselow 2002, Stepanov 2003, Wunderlich 2003, Bayer 2004, Haider 2005, amongst others). This has led to the dichotomous view that Icelandic has oblique subjects whereas German does not. Yet, examples of impersonal predicates embedded under control verbs, however marginal they may be, are being produced by German speakers (cf. Barðdal 2002, 2006, Barðdal and Eythórsson 2003b, Eythórsson and Barðdal 2005). The following examples serve to illustrate this:

- (6) (www.noglobal.org/tutelalegalet.htm, 2001)
- a. *Vor der Durchsuchung hat man die Möglichkeit, von einer
before the search has one the opportunity by a
Anwaltsperson ____ geholfen zu werden.
lawyer PRO.DAT helped to become.INF*
'Before the search it is possible to get help from a lawyer.'
(www.skaichannel.de/diary/silverlake/2001/010630.html, 2001)
- b. *Er, der bezweifelt, dass ich es wert bin, ____ zum
he who doubts that I it worthy am PRO.DAT at
Geburtstag gratuliert zu werden, benutzt seine Luca
birthday congratulated to become.INF uses his Luca
Leidensstory, um mir in den Bauch zu hauen.
suffer-story to me in the belly to punch*
'He who doubts that I am worthy of being congratulated on my
birthday uses his Luca Leidensstory to punch me in the belly.'
(www2.igmetall.de/homepages/kiel/file_uploads/wie_bliev_streik_31.pdf,
2003)
- c. *Kündigungen sind nicht da, um ____ angenommen zu
notices are not there for PRO.NOM accepted to
werden. Kündigungen sind da, um ____ widersprochen
become.INF notices are there for PRO.DAT contradicted
zu werden.
to become.INF*
'Notices are not there to be accepted. Notices are there to be contradicted.'

- (www.visualbasic.at/forum/showtopic.php?threadid=531, 2004)
 d. *Ich brenne ja darauf _____ widersprochen zu werden.*
 I burn yes of PRO.DAT contradicted to become.INF
 ‘I simply cannot wait to be challenged.’

The predicates *helfen* ‘help’, *gratulieren* ‘congratulate’ and *widersprechen* ‘contradict’ all select for dative objects when used in ordinary transitive sentences, and this dative is maintained in passives, as shown in (2) above. In the examples in (6) the unexpressed argument of the control infinitives corresponds to the preserved dative and no nominative is involved at all.

Haider (2005:27–8) claims that the passive of *helfen* ‘help’ has been infelicitously used in a well-known advertisement slogan in Germany in recent years, in which the standard *mir ist geholfen* is replaced with the ‘incorrect’ *ich werde geholfen*. He argues that this has prompted German speakers to use the passive with a nominative and not a dative, and thus that our examples of *geholfen zu werden* have a nominative passive as an underlying form and not a dative passive. To this we can only say that our oldest example of *geholfen zu werden* dates back to 1949, long before the famous slogan ever was fabricated:

- (7) (www.martinus.at/info/sekten/brunogroeningfreundeskreis.html, 1949)
Wer den Herrgott verleumdet ist es nicht wert _____
 who the.ACC God slanders is it not worthy PRO.DAT
geholfen zu werden.
 helped to become.INF
 ‘He who slanders God is not worthy of being helped.’

The sentence in (7) was composed by Bruno Gröning, an early 20th century German writer and a healer, and is taken from a section in his auto-biography. Moreover, all his examples of transitive *helfen* that we have come across occur with a dative object and not an accusative object (cf. Eythórsson and Barðdal 2005: 856). The following is a famous quote from Gröning:

- (8) (www.lichtpfad.net/start/groening.htm)
Es liegt hier immer an den Menschen. Wie ich gesagt habe: wer
 it lies here always on the people as I said have who
es wert ist, dass ihm geholfen wird, dem wird
 it worthy is that him.DAT helped becomes, him.DAT becomes
geholfen. Es geht hier nicht um Geld, es geht um den Glauben.
 helped it goes here not of money it goes of the faith
 ‘This always depends on the individuals. As I have said: he who is worthy of
 being helped will be helped. What matters here is not money, but faith.’

The example in (8) shows that in the language of this speaker, the dative is preserved in passive and is not replaced with a nominative. There is thus no doubt that the underly-

ing form in (7) is the standard dative passive in German and not a nominative passive. Native speakers do not agree on the grammaticality of the examples in (6–7) above. Our German discussants have judged them as everything from ungrammatical to perfectly acceptable. Some of our discussants have even disqualified them as ‘performance errors’. This brings to the fore the problem of how to distinguish between performance errors and marginally acceptable data, since obviously marginal data are bound to be interpreted as performance errors by some speakers exactly because of their marginal status. That is, if we assume that acceptability borders vary for speakers, marginal data may settle on either side of the border, yielding speaker-dependent variation in acceptability judgments of marginally acceptable constructions.

One way of attacking this problem is to investigate carefully the sources of the relevant examples. If the data are found in literary texts, it seems reasonable to assume that they are not performance errors, since texts of literary purposes are usually well elaborated stylistically. Several of our German examples stem from literary sources, biographies and texts composed by creative writers and academics. Consider the following examples, all given in their immediate context:

(9) (www.gutenberg2000.de/kant/krva/krva003.htm, 1781)

- a. *Denn ein Teil dieser Erkenntnisse, die mathematischen, ist im alten Besitze der Zuverlässigkeit, und gibt dadurch eine günstige Erwartung auch für andere, ob diese gleich von ganz verschiedener Natur sein mögen.*

Überdem, wenn man über den Kreis der Erfahrung hinaus

besides if one about the sphere the experience over

ist, so ist man sicher, _____ durch Erfahrung nicht

is so is one sure PRO.DAT through experience not

widersprochen zu werden.

contradicted to become.INF

‘Because a part of this knowledge, the mathematical one, has always possessed reliability, and by means of this it provides a favorable expectation for others, even though these may be of a quite different nature.

Besides, if one has left the sphere of experience, one can be certain not to be contradicted by experience.’

(www.qualitative-research.net/fqs-texte/3-02/3-02schneider-d.htm, 2002)

- b. Der folgende Ausschnitt aus dem Interview mit einem freien Drehbuchautor verweist auf diese “Einsamkeit des Respondenten”: Wie war das für dich, diese Fragen? (lange Pause) “Ja, ich meine, es ist interessant. Ich denke, ich werde selten so mal gefragt und hab die Möglichkeit, mich dazu zu äußern, unwidersprochen.”

_____ *Nicht unterbrochen und _____ nicht widersprochen*

PRO.NOM not interrupted and PRO.DAT not contradicted

zu werden bedeutet in diesem Falle auch, kaum eine
to become.INF means in this case also hardly a
Reaktion zu erhalten.
reaction to receive

‘The following section from an interview with a freelance scriptwriter points out this “solitude of the respondent”: How do you feel about getting questions of this sort? (a long silence) “Well, I guess it’s interesting. I’m thinking that I hardly ever get questions like these and have the opportunity to express myself about these issues, unchallenged.” Being neither interrupted nor challenged means in this case that one hardly gets any reactions at all.’

(www.freitag.de/2002/45/02450402.php, 2002)

- c. *Die Betroffenen bauen fast immer ein Vertrauensverhältnis zu ihren Betreuern auf. Potenzielle Täter nutzen das freundschaftliche Verhältnis häufig aus, um gezielt die Bedürfnisse des behinderten Menschen auszuforschen. Je größer die Abhängigkeit, umso größer ist die Gefährdung. Wie soll man Berührungen auch vermeiden, wenn auch die intimsten Handlungen nicht alleine bewerkstelligt werden können?*
Ein Recht für geistig wie körperlich behinderte
a right for mentally as physically disabled
Frauen, _____ nur von Frauen bei intimen Handlungen
women, PRO.DAT only by women at private activities
assistiert zu werden, gibt es in der Bundesrepublik [...] nicht.
assisted to become.INF is there in the Federal-Republic [...] not.
‘These people almost always build up a relationship of trust with their carers. Potential offenders often take advantage of this friendly relationship with the specific aim to learn about the needs of the disabled person. The greater the dependency, the greater the threat. How is one supposed to avoid contact, if even the most personal activities cannot be carried out in privacy? The right for mentally and physically disabled women to only be assisted by women when engaged in private activities does not exist in Germany.’

As discussed above, the verb *widersprechen* ‘contradict, challenge’ selects for a dative object, which is preserved in passives, and the same is true for *assistieren* ‘assist’.

The sentence in (9a) is from the introductory section of Immanuel Kant’s earlier edition of *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* ‘Critique of pure reason’. We have examined a large randomly selected portion of Kant’s texts and found that all transitive non-reflexive examples of *widersprechen* occur with a dative object in his texts, and all examples of this verb used in the passive construction maintain the dative. One such example is the following:

- (10) (gutenberg.spiegel.de/kant/kuk/Druckversion_kukp421.htm, 1790)
Ihnen ist aber nicht ohne Grund von anderen widersprochen
 they.DAT is but not without reason by others contradicted
worden, ...
 be(come).INF ...
 'They are not being contradicted by others without a reason ...'

It therefore seems clear that Kant consistently used the verb *widersprechen* with a dative, and thus that it is this dative which has been left unexpressed in the infinitive in (9a). The example in (9b) is from a recent research article in social science on discourse and communication, published on the Web. Likewise, the sentence in (9c) is from a debate article in the weekly journal Freitag 'Friday', written by an academic and researcher in gender studies in Berlin. These examples are formulated by speakers belonging to the literate section of the German society, and were found in texts that have gone through the scrutiny accompanying advanced writing and text composition. This fact, in turn, heavily undermines the hypothesis that examples of this kind can be viewed and dismissed as performance errors.

Yet another method to investigate the acceptability of our documented control infinitives, and thus to answer the question whether such examples are caused by errors in speech performance, is to carry out a systematic questionnaire survey among native speakers. Table 1 below gives the results of such a survey, conducted among German-speaking students at four different universities: Bochum, Jena, Saarbrücken and Vienna (cf. Eythórsson and Barðdal 2005, Barðdal 2006).⁴

The questionnaire survey included twelve examples of eight different verbs, of which three are discussed here: one example with *assistiert* and *geholfen werden*, respectively, and four with *widersprochen werden*. For further examples, detailed description and a more elaborated discussion, we refer the reader to Eythórsson and Barðdal (2005) and Barðdal (2006: 68–72, 84–6).

When all eight verbs, and their twelve examples, are taken into consideration, the judgments range from 7–86% of the examples being regarded as acceptable ($p < .000$).

Table 1. Native-speaker judgments of attested German control infinitives

	Good/OK		Strange		Bad/wrong		Total
	N	%	N	%	N	%	
6c <i>widersprochen zu werden</i>	5	16.7	8	26.7	17	56.6	30
6d <i>widersprochen zu werden</i>	2	6.7	3	10.0	25	83.3	30
7 <i>geholfen zu werden</i>	9	36.0	5	20.0	11	44.0	25
9a <i>widersprochen zu werden</i>	6	21.4	5	17.9	17	60.7	28
9b <i>widersprochen zu werden</i>	4	14.3	4	14.3	20	71.4	28
9c <i>assistiert zu werden</i>	1	34.4	5	15.6	16	50.0	32
Total	37	21.4	30	17.3	106	61.3	173

However, for the subset of these examples discussed in the present paper, Table 1 shows that there is also considerable variation in the acceptability rates, not only between the three verbs, but also between the four different examples of *widersprochen werden*. The differences between the three verbs are statistically significant ($p < .034$) and the variation suggests that there may be some lexical, semantic and/or pragmatic restrictions on the occurrence of impersonal predicates in control constructions in German. This variation certainly shows that there is need for a further study; however this is beyond the scope of the present paper (although, see Barðdal 2006: 68–72, 84–6 for a further discussion).⁵

It is nevertheless clear from the statistics in Table 1 that impersonal predicates embedded under control verbs are accepted by a subset of the German population, as 7 to 36% of the judgments fall at the positive side of the acceptability border, in spite of the fact that such examples are assumed to be ungrammatical in German. In other words, no example is judged ungrammatical by all of the participants of our survey. Instead, they are all judged acceptable by some of the participants. This fact, again, undermines the hypothesis that our documented examples are caused by error in speech performance. The least we can expect is that native speakers recognize speech errors in their own language. Moreover, as long as no plausible account exists of how and why such alleged ‘speech errors’ are produced by native speakers, it is difficult to take such a suggestion seriously, and the more it appears to be an ad-hoc attempt to illegitimately dismiss examples which deserve to be taken seriously in a theory of grammar.

To summarize, in this section we have shown that several of our German examples of control infinitives involving impersonal predicates stem from literary texts, academic texts and newspapers. Such examples can therefore not be categorically dismissed as ‘performance errors’ or ‘bad German’. Moreover, these examples show that the subject-like dative of impersonal predicates can function as the unexpressed argument in control infinitives, a property generally considered as being confined to subjects. This holds true for the language of at least some German speakers, who can neither be categorized as inexperienced writers nor as foreigners not in proper command of the language. In the next two sections, we show, contra the discussion in the literature, that there is also disagreement on the acceptability of control infinitives of impersonal predicates in both Faroese and Icelandic.

4. Faroese

Barnes (1986) comments on the difficulty of finding acceptable examples in Faroese of control infinitives containing impersonal predicates. He suggests that the reasons may be purely semantic. Given that control verbs usually select for agentive predicates as non-finite complements, Barnes observes that this is semantically incompatible with experiencer verbs. Thus, whereas (11a) is perfectly acceptable, (11b) is at best marginal (Barnes 1986: 26):

- (11) a. *Eingin beyð sær til at ____ hjálpa mær.*
 no-one offered self forward to PRO.NOM help.INF me
 ‘No one offered to help me.’
- b. ^{??}*Eingin beyð sær til at ____ dáma hana.*
 no-one offered self forward to PRO.DAT like.INF her
 ‘No one offered to like her.’

In addition to the differences in the semantics of *hjálpa* ‘help’ and *dáma* ‘like’ in (11a–b), they also select for different case frames: The verb *hjálpa* selects for a nominative subject while *dáma* takes a dative subject (although nowadays *dáma* can also be constructed with a nominative subject; see below).

However, Barnes (1986: 26) was able to come up with the following examples of control infinitives which were accepted by at least some of his native speaker informants.

- (12) a. *Eg kann ikki torga at ____ vanta pengar.*
 I.NOM can not bear to PRO.DAT lack.INF money
 ‘I cannot bear to lack money.’
- b. *Eg havi ilt við at ____ dáma fisk.*
 I.NOM have bad with to PRO.DAT like.INF fish
 ‘I find it difficult to like fish.’
- c. *Hann royndi at ____ dáma matin.*
 He.NOM tried to PRO.DAT like.INF food-the
 ‘He tried to like the food.’

All the lower verbs in (12) are impersonal predicates which select for dative subjects in Faroese. Barnes (1986: 26–7) provides further examples where the non-finite clause functions as a subject, presented in (13) below, although (13b) was judged ‘doubtful or bad’ by some of his informants.

- (13) a. *At ____ leiðast við lívið er vanligt hjá ungum.*
 to PRO.DAT tire.INF with life-the is common among young
 ‘To tire of life is common among young people.’
- b. [?]*At ____ skorta mat er ræðuligt.*
 to PRO.DAT lack.INF food is terrible
 ‘To lack food is terrible.’

It is clear that the lesser acceptability of examples like (13b) cannot be due to the semantic factors that Barnes attributes it to, since in this case there is no purposive matrix control verb preferably selecting for an agentive lower predicate. Rather, (13b) is generic. Barnes discusses another possible reason for the infelicitousness of (13b), namely that there may be a tendency in Faroese to preserve lexical case, meaning that the dative cannot be implicit but has to be spelled out. However, since there is a tendency in Faroese to substitute nominative for dative in some passivizations, Barnes concludes that no general tendency to preserve the dative can be assumed to exist.

The examples and the judgments provided in the article by Barnes date from the year

1986. They are, in other words, almost two decades old. When verifying Barnes' results, the potentially serious problem arises that in current Faroese there is a strong tendency to substitute nominative for oblique case on subjects ('Nominative Substitution', cf. Barnes 1986, Eythórsson 2001, 2002, Jonas 2002, Petersen 2002, Eythórsson and Jónsson 2003, Thráinsson et al. 2004, Jónsson and Eythórsson 2005). However, the examples in (14), which we have gathered, stem from speakers for whom nominative subjects with the verbs *lysta* 'want' and *vanta* 'lack' are ungrammatical. The verb *lysta* can occur either with an accusative or a dative, while *vanta* occurs only with a dative. Not all our Faroese discussants, however, agree on the acceptability of the examples in (14). Some speakers accept them, but others do not. Nevertheless, such examples confirm that oblique subjects can be left unexpressed in control infinitives in current Faroese, exactly like nominative subjects (Eythórsson and Barðdal 2005: 839).

- (14) a. *Tað at _____ lysta at vita sum mest, er ein*
 it to PRO.ACC/DAT want.INF to know.INF as most is a
jalgur eginleiki hjá fólki.
 positive quality with people
 'Wanting to know as much as possible is a positive quality in people.'
- b. *Tað at _____ vanta pengar, er ikki gott.*
 it to PRO.DAT lack.INF money is not good
 'Being short of money is not good.'

We believe that the examples in this section clearly show that oblique subjects in Faroese behave as nominative subjects with regard to the ability to be left unexpressed in control constructions, as is also generally acknowledged in the literature. However, we also want to emphasize that not all such examples are equally well formed in Faroese, or not equally well accepted by all speakers. In this respect, Modern Faroese is no different from Modern German, discussed in the previous section, where it is shown that not all attested German examples of impersonal predicates embedded under control verbs are judged equally well formed. For Faroese, this may, of course, be a consequence of the fact that impersonal predicates have become very rare in the spoken contemporary language (cf. Barðdal 2002: 90–2, 2006: 90–4, Eythórsson and Jónsson 2003, Jónsson and Eythórsson 2005), but the effect of frequency will be further discussed in section 7. We now proceed to the section on impersonal predicates and control constructions in Modern Icelandic.

5. Icelandic

As stated in section 2, even though control constructions involving impersonal predicates are rare in Icelandic, they are nevertheless attested, and are considered important proof for the subject status of oblique subjects. In particular, because of the explosive-like expansion of the World Wide Web, finding such examples has become relatively easy. In addition to the examples in (5) above, two more examples of control infinitives of im-

personal predicates are presented in (15), in which the dative subjects of *vera kalt* ‘freeze’ and *ganga illa* ‘do badly’ function as the unexpressed subject of the control infinitives:

(15) (gylfiolafsson.blogspot.com/2003_11_01_gylfiolafsson_archive.html, 2003)

- a. *Undanfarið hef ég mætt nokkurri andstöðu þegar ég tala*
lately have I met some opposition when I speak
um þau almennu sannindi að það sé kúl að _____ vera kalt.
about the general truth that it is cool to PRO.DAT be.INF cold
‘I have met some opposition lately when I talk about the general truth
that it is cool to freeze.’

(viktorja.tripod.com/archives/2003_05_01gamalt2.html, 2003)

- b. *Það er ekkert verra en að _____ ganga illa í prófum*
it is nothing worse than to PRO.DAT go badly in exams
sem mar [sic] á að fá hátt í.
which one should to get high in
‘Nothing is worse than doing badly at exams one ought to get good
grades in.’

There is no doubt that the examples in (5) and (15) are good examples of impersonal predicates embedded under control verbs in Icelandic. However, not all examples that we have come across are equally acceptable. Consider, for instance, the following examples, given in context:

(16) (www.rannsoknir.is/Bornin_i_borginni_lokaskyrsla.pdf, 2001)

- a. *Hlutfall nemenda í 5.–10. bekk sem eru frekar eða mjög*
proportion students in 5–10 grade who are rather or very
sammála því að _____ þykja vænt um skólann sinn,
agreeing it to PRO.DAT feel affection about school their
að samskipti nemenda og fullorðinna séu góð í skólanum og að krakkarnir í
bekknum séu góðir vinir.
‘The proportion of students in 5–10 grade who agree [with the statement]
that they care about their school, that the interaction between the teach-
ers and the students is good in the school, and that the children are on
friendly terms with each other.’

(www.shihtzu-in-iceland.com/soguhornid.html, 2003)

- b. *Ég átti nú þegar heimili með mömmu sem þótti vænt um mig og tvo*
bræður sem ég gat leikið mér við, og aðra hvolpa sem stoppuðu stundum
við, stöldruðu við um stund, og fóru síðan sína leið. Mig langar ekki að fara
neitt annað.
Loksins kom ég að húsi þessara indæla eldra fólks og
finally came I to house these lovely older people and
þau gáfu mér að borða og reyndu að _____ þykja
they gave me to eat and tried to PRO.DAT feel.INF
vænt um mig ...
care about me

'I already had a home with my mother who loved me and my two brothers whom I could play with, and the other puppies who stopped by occasionally for a while, before they went their way. I don't want to go anywhere else. Finally, though, I came to the house of this lovely older couple and they fed me and tried to care about me ...'

(kaninka.net/halla/005637.html, 2003)

- c. *En svona í alvöru talað þá er ekkert sniðugt að þér skuli líða svona illa ... þú ert með svo margt spennandi framundan og síðan ertu líka svo sæt og skemmtileg!!!*

Ég veit! hættu bara að _____ líða illa ...

I know! stop just to PRO.DAT feel.INF bad

'But seriously, it isn't good that you feel so bad ... There are so many exciting things ahead of you, and you're also so sweet and fun to be with!!!

I know! Just stop feeling bad ...'

In our opinion, all three examples in (16) are unacceptable and in particular should (16b–c) be marked with an asterisk to signal their ungrammaticality. The example in (16a) is slightly better, we feel, although it is far from acceptable.

In order to verify the (non-)acceptability of these Icelandic examples, we have carried out a questionnaire survey of the same type as in German, where we present our examples in context to native speakers, in this case students at the University of Iceland.⁶ The results are given in Table 2 below:

Table 2. Native-speaker judgments of attested Icelandic control infinitives

	Good/OK		Strange		Bad/wrong		Total
	N	%	N	%	N	%	
16a <i>að þykja</i>	16	57.1	7	25.0	5	17.9	28
16b <i>að þykja</i>	5	17.8	8	28.6	15	53.6	28
16c <i>að líða</i>	2	6.5	9	29.0	20	64.5	31
Total	23	26.4	24	27.6	40	46.0	87

As evident from the figures in Table 2, Icelandic speakers do not accept all examples of impersonal predicates embedded under control verbs that are found in Icelandic texts on the World Wide Web. In fact, the rejection rates range from 18–65%, in spite of the fact that Icelandic is the language that has always been taken to provide conclusive evidence for the existence of oblique subjects. The differences between the examples are statistically significant ($p < .000$), and so is the difference between the two verbs ($p < .004$).⁷

In this connection, the following questions pose themselves: Should we reject the subject analysis of oblique subjects in Icelandic on the basis of the judgments presented in Table 2 and hence ignore all the other control infinitives involving impersonal predicates that are clearly acceptable in Icelandic? If we do accept the subject analysis of ob-

lique subjects in Icelandic, aren't we also forced to accept a subject analysis for subject-like obliques in German? If we reject the subject analysis for German on the basis of the negative judgments presented in Table 1, aren't we also forced to reject it for Icelandic? Can we possibly assume a different syntactic analysis of subject-like obliques in these two languages given the consensus in the field that omission in control infinitives is a conclusive subject test in both languages?

Our answers to these questions are in the negative. We can neither ignore the negative judgments on Icelandic nor the positive judgments on German when analyzing the syntactic behavior of subject-like obliques in these languages. Doing so would be both opportunistic and inconsistent with good scientific method. Despite our lack of appreciation of the examples in (16), they still exist and cannot be discarded as evidence for the omissibility of oblique subjects in control infinitives in Icelandic. Some Icelandic speakers have not only formulated these examples but also put them in writing. The same is true for German. In other words, speakers vary in their grammaticality judgments of control constructions in Icelandic and in their judgments of which lexical predicates may instantiate such constructions. The existence of the examples in (16), and both our and the participants' disapproval of them, shows that there is no clear-cut agreement on the acceptability of control constructions involving impersonal predicates in Icelandic, although this fact has not figured in the previous literature on Icelandic.

The question now arises why the examples in (16) are worse than the ones in (15). Starting with the sentences in (15), both are generic with an indefinite reading of the unexpressed dative subject, which is thereby not left unexpressed on identity with a nominative subject of a possible control predicate, as one would expect given the nature of prototypical control constructions. The examples in (16b–c), however, are purposive while the ones in (15) have either a generic or a happenstance reading.

It is not equally clear why the example in (16a) is not judged good, since the matrix control predicate *vera sammála* 'agree with' is not nearly as intentional as *reyna* 'try' in (16b) or *hætta* 'stop' in (16c). It would seem that a predicate referring to the cognitive state of 'agreeing' should be semantically compatible with an impersonal predicate expressing the emotion *þykja* 'feel'. In order to investigate this, we have searched for examples of the same string *vera sammála því að* 'agree to/that' on the World Wide Web, and come up with 553 hits. Of these, only 38 hits involved control infinitives, while the remaining 515 involved subordinate clauses. All 38 instances had agentive/intentional predicates as non-finite verbs, except one with the stative verb *hafa* 'have' expressing location, as in *hafa kirkuna í Borgarholtinu* 'have the church in Borgarholt'. It is clear in this last case that the 'agreement' does not refer to the cognitive state of 'agreeing' but to a decision on the location of the church. That is, this sentence refers to an agreement on the suggestion/decision of having that particular church at the given location. This means that even though *vera sammála því að* in (16a) is not purposive it still expresses a strong enough degree of determination to be incompatible with *þykja* 'feel' in Icelandic, at least for some speakers. In essence, this means that *vera sammála því að* conventionally combines with agentive/intentional/determinative predicates in Icelandic lan-

guage use and not experiencer-based predicates like *þykja* ‘feel’. To conclude, for some speakers of Icelandic, impersonal predicates are incompatible with purposive constructions (cf. Barðdal 2001c: 132–3, 2002: 88–9, Eythórsson and Barðdal 2005: 851–3), while other speakers are more liberal in this respect.

Impersonal predicates, however, are not incompatible with purposive meaning in general, since both raising infinitives and ordinary finite impersonal predicates can embed under, or be subordinated by, control predicates with purposive or determinative meaning. This is shown in the examples in (17) below:

- (17) a. ... *sem eru sammála því að þeim þykja vænt um skólann sinn.*
 ... who are agreeing it that they.DAT feel care of school their
 ‘... who agree that they care about their school.’
- b. *Þau reyndu að _____ láta sér þykja vænt um mig.*
 they tried to PRO.NOM let.INF themselves.DAT feel.INF care of me
 ‘They tried to have warm feelings for me.’
- c. *Hættu bara að _____ láta þér líða illa.*
 stop just to PRO.NOM let.INF yourself.DAT feel.INF bad
 ‘Just stop having these bad feelings.’

In (17b–c) the impersonal predicates *þykja* and *líða* ‘feel’ occur in raising-to-object constructions embedded under the verb *láta* ‘let’. The ‘let’-infinitives are, in turn, embedded under the control predicates *reyna* ‘try’ and *hætta* ‘stop’. In (17a), *vera sammála því að* ‘agree that’ is perfectly grammatical with the finite *þeim þykja* ‘they feel’, as opposed to the non-finite *að þykja* ‘to feel’. These examples show that impersonal predicates are not semantically incompatible with control predicates or purposive/determinative predicates in Icelandic, as argued for instance by Jónsson (2000: 76–7), but rather that they are incompatible with the infinitive form in combination with a purposive control predicate. Impersonal predicates are not incompatible with the form of a control infinitive if the meaning is non-purposive (cf. examples (15) above) and they are not incompatible with purposive meaning if they are not embedded directly under a control verb (cf. examples (17) above). More investigation is needed to elucidate the restrictions on impersonal predicates embedded under control verbs in Icelandic. We have, however, shown that there are constraints on whether and how impersonal predicates can occur in control constructions in Icelandic and that these constraints vary across Icelandic speakers, yielding differences in grammaticality judgments of attested Icelandic data.

In this section we have demonstrated that Icelandic is not significantly different from German and Faroese as control infinitives involving impersonal predicates are not unanimously accepted by all speakers. Some speakers do not accept a subset of the documented example sentences in all three languages, although the tolerance is presumably higher in Icelandic and Faroese than in German. This tolerance, moreover, correlates with frequency, since more utterances of this type can be found in Icelandic than in German (cf. Barðdal 2002: 90–2, 2004: 110, 2006: 90–4). Crucially, however, control infinitives of impersonal predicates are being produced in all three languages,

by native speakers, many of whom are professional writers. This fact shows that subject-like obliques can be left unexpressed in control infinitives and they behave thus as syntactic subjects in all three languages, and not as objects.

6. Earlier Germanic

Impersonal predicates embedded under control verbs have also been reported in Early Middle English, Old Swedish and Old Norse-Icelandic. The Old Swedish examples in (18) were reported by Falk (1997: 25) and the Early Middle English ones in (19) are here cited from Seefranz-Montag (1983: 133–4) (see also Cole et al. 1980, amongst others).

- (18) a. *os duger ey _____ ther æptir langa.* (c.1450)
 us.OBL suffices not PRO.OBL there after long.INF
 ‘It is useless for us to long for that.’
- b. *huat hiælper idher _____ ther æptir langa.* (c.1400)
 what helps you.OBL PRO.OBL there after long.INF
 ‘Is it of any help to you to long for that?’
- (19) a. *good is, quap Iosef, to _____ dremen of win.* (c.1250)
 good is, said Iosef to PRO.OBL dream.INF of wine
 ‘It is good, said Joseph, to dream of wine.’
- b. *him burþ to _____ liken well his lif.* (c.1275)
 him.OBL should to PRO.OBL like.INF well his life
 ‘He should like his life well.’

The Old Swedish verb *langa* ‘want, long for’ selects for an oblique subject-like argument, whose oblique case was gradually replaced by nominative case in the history of Swedish. The accusative and dative cases had already merged into an oblique or ‘objective’ form at this time (Delsing 1991, 1995). According to Falk (1997: 26), however, both examples in (18) date from a period before *langa* started occurring with a nominative. The unexpressed argument in these controlled infinitives thus corresponds to the subject-like oblique of the impersonal predicate *langa*. Observe that the matrix verb in (18a) *duga* ‘suffice’ is itself an impersonal predicate selecting for a subject-like oblique. The subject-like oblique selected by *langa* has therefore been left unexpressed on identity with the subject-like oblique selected by the matrix verb *duga* ‘suffice’.

The non-finite verbs in the English control constructions in (19), *dremen* ‘dream’ and *liken* ‘like’ are impersonal predicates that select for a subject-like oblique, which is also gradually replaced by a nominative in the history of English. However, both sentences are from a period before the subject-like oblique changes into a nominative (Cole et al. 1980: 729, Allen 1986: 381). The control verb *biren* ‘be obliged’ in (19b) is itself an impersonal predicate, exactly like the Swedish *duga* in (18a).⁸ Therefore, the unexpressed argument in the English control infinitives in (19) corresponds to the subject-

like oblique of *dremen* and *liken* in finite clauses. This behavior, in turn, is only found with subjects, and not objects.

The first three examples in (20) of control constructions involving impersonal predicates in Old Norse-Icelandic were recorded by Rögnvaldsson (1995, 1996), while the latter three were documented by us (Barðdal and Eythórsson 2003a: 458–9):

- (20) a. *Þorgils kvaðsk _____ leiðask þarvistin.*
 Þorgils.NOM said PRO.DAT be-bored.INF staying-there-the.NOM
 ‘Thorgils said that he was bored staying there.’
- b. *Þórðr kvaðsk _____ þykkja tvennir kostir til.*
 Þórðr.NOM said PRO.DAT feel.INF two choices.NOM to
 ‘Thórðr said that he felt that there were two alternatives.’
- c. *Hrafn kvaðsk _____ sýnask at haldinn væri.*
 Hrafn.NOM said PRO.DAT feel.INF that held be
 ‘Hrafn said that he felt that guard should be kept.’
- d. *Hqskuldr kvaðsk _____ þat mikit þykkja ef þau skulu skilja ...*
 Hqskuldr.NOM said PRO.DAT it.NOM much.NOM seem.INF if
 they shall depart
 ‘Hqskuldr said that it concerned him greatly if they should depart ...’
- e. *Indriði kveðsk eigi _____ svá á lítask ...*
 Indriði.NOM says not PRO.DAT so on seem.INF
 ‘Indriði says that he does not think (that) ...’
- f. *Þiðrandi kvaðsk _____ gruna hversu ...*
 Þiðrandi.NOM said PRO.ACC suspect.INF how
 ‘Þiðrandi said that he suspected how ...’

All the non-finite predicates in these examples consistently select for a subject-like oblique in Old Norse-Icelandic. The verbs in (20a–e) select for a dative while the verb in (20f) selects for an accusative. This last verb, *gruna* ‘suspect’, can occasionally occur with a nominative in Old Norse-Icelandic texts. It also selects for a nominative in one particular idiomatic expression in Icelandic, not at issue here. However, in the actual text from which this example is cited, the author uses *gruna* consistently with an accusative. It therefore seems clear that the unexpressed subjects in the Old Norse-Icelandic control infinitives in (20) correspond to subject-like accusatives/datives but not a nominative. In this respect, the subject-like oblique of impersonal predicates in Old Norse-Icelandic behaves syntactically as a subject and not as an object.

Observe that all the examples in (20) involve the same matrix verb *kveðask* ‘say (of oneself)’. Some objections to the control analysis of *kveðask* ‘say (of oneself)’ have been offered in the literature. First, Faarlund (2001: 106) argues that the final morpheme *-sk* is a cliticized reflexive object *sik* ‘oneself’ on the verb *kveða* ‘say’, and thus that the sentences in (20) exemplify raising-to-object infinitives and not control infinitives. It has however been shown elsewhere that the verb *kveðask* in Old Norse-Icelandic does not

select for object predicates, as expected on the raising-to-object analysis, but always for subject predicates, as predicted by the control-infinitive analysis (Ottósson 1992: 65–9, Rögnvaldsson 1996: 61, Barðdal 2000a: 39, Barðdal and Eythórsson 2003a: 456–8):

- (21) a. *Hann kvað sig heita Njál.* Object predicate
 he.NOM said self.ACC be-called.INF Njáll.ACC
 ‘He said that he was called Njáll.’
 b. *Hann kvaðst heita Njáll.* Subject predicate
 he.NOM said be-called.INF Njáll.NOM
 ‘He said that he was called Njáll.’

Observe that *kveða* in (21a) selects for a raising-to-object infinitive, as the predicative *Njál* is in the accusative case, agreeing with the ‘raised object’ *sig* ‘himself’ in case. In contrast, in (21b) the predicative *Njáll* is in nominative case, agreeing in case with the subject of *kveðast*, but not with the *-st* element. If *kveðast* were a raising-to-object verb the predicate *Njáll* should show up in accusative case as in (21a) and not in the nominative. Examples with that kind of structure, however, are ungrammatical in Modern Icelandic and, according to Kjartan G. Ottósson (p.c), they are also non-attested in Old Norse-Icelandic. These facts show that the examples in (20) are not raising-to-object infinitives but control infinitives.⁹

To give a parallel example, *kveðask* in Old Norse-Icelandic could also occur in raising-to-subject constructions. Faarlund claims, however, (based on information from Kjartan G. Ottósson (p.c.) in the year 1999) that the modern descendent of *kveðask*, i.e. *kveðast*, is ungrammatical in raising-to-subject constructions in Modern Icelandic. We have, however, other intuitions on this, and we have found examples of the Modern Icelandic control verb *segjast* ‘say of oneself’, which is semantically and stylistically equivalent to *kveðask* in Old Norse-Icelandic, used as a raising-to-subject verb in present-day Icelandic. The examples in (22a–e) were found by searching the Web, but (22f) was overheard, and reported to us, by Kjartan G. Ottósson (p.c.) in January 2005:

- (22) (www.hugi.is/syndir/prentvaen.php?grein_id=16340596, 2005)
 a. *Svo sagði ég mínum fyrrverandi frá þessu, og honum sagðist*
 then told I my ex from this and he.DAT said
vera allveg [sic] sama um hvað strákurinn og ég
 be.INF totally indifferent about what guy-the and I
gerðum, við værum ekki lengur saman ...
 did we were not anymore together
 ‘Then I told my ex about this and he said that he didn’t care what I did
 with this guy, we are not together anymore ...’
 (www.hamstur.is/mm/frettir/sludur/2921, 2003)
 b. *Henni segist vera slétt sama hvort myndin nái vinsældum ...*
 she.DAT says be.INF quite same whether film-the achieves popularity
 ‘She says that she doesn’t care whether the film will be popular (or not) ...’

- (staerdfraedi.khi.is/haustkjarni/_reqdis/0000006e.htm, 2002)
- c. *Öðrum stráknnum sagðist ekki ganga sérlega vel í*
 other.DAT guy.DAT said not go.INF particularly well in
stærðfræði en hinum tveim sagðist ganga vel ...
 math but other.DAT two.DAT said go.INF well
 ‘One of the guys said that he wasn’t doing particularly well in Math but
 the other two said that that they were doing well ...’
 (www.73argangur.com/2002_10_01_archive.html, 2002)
- d. *Þórði segist líka vel í Osló.*
 Þórður.DAT says like.INF well in Oslo
 ‘Þórður says that he quite likes it in Oslo.’
 (www.bb.is/?PageID=47, 2005)
- e. *Honum sagðist hafa létt þegar hann komst að raun*
 he.DAT said have.INF felt-relieved when he came to experience
um að um var að ræða stafsetningarvillu.
 about that about was to regard spelling-error
 ‘He said that he was relieved when he found out that it was only a ques-
 tion of spelling error.’
- f. *Honum sagðist ekki vera kalt.*
 he.DAT said not be.INF cold
 ‘He said that he wasn’t freezing.’

These examples show, contra the standard view, that the categories of control predicates and raising-to-subject predicates are fuzzy, and that there is some unexpected exchange of verbs between them. Additional support for that stems from the fact that the uncontroversial control predicate *búast við* ‘expect’ in Icelandic is used as a raising-to-subject verb in the following documented example:

- (23) (strumpurinn.tripod.com/2001_12_01_gamalt.html, 2001)
Efmér bjóst við að ganga vel í einhverju þá var
 if I.DAT expected with to go.INF well in something then was
það réttarsagan, en ...
 it legal-history-the but
 ‘If I expected to do well in any subject, it would have to be Legal History, but ...’

As native speakers of Icelandic we confirm that the sentence in (23) is an acceptable sentence, despite this non-standard usage. One of us finds it perfectly acceptable whereas the other judges it as marginally acceptable. This is the first of two examples that we have encountered in our research on control and raising-to-subject in Icelandic, where the control verb *búast við* ‘expect’ is used as a raising verb, which brings us to the third criticism put forth by Faarlund (2001: 131), namely the scarcity of documented examples of control constructions involving impersonal predicates in Old Norse-Icelandic. Examples like those in (22–3) are statistically very rare in Modern Icelandic, yet

they are acceptable sentences in our opinion. There may, however, be some more conservative speakers who might reject them.

Scholars working on phenomena that are statistically rare in language use face the problem of possible accidental gaps in the corpus. This problem raises the methodological issue of the amount of linguistic data needed to draw conclusions from about the grammar of dead languages, including their syntax. Clearly, the more text material is available, the less the chances are that lack of documented structures is due to accidental gaps, and the higher the chances that the data are representative of the language in question. Specifically in historical linguistics, traditional philological wisdom holds that ‘one example is no example’ (cf. the Latin slogan ‘*unus testis — nullus testis*’). Contrary to this, we defend the view that what really matters in determining the status of rare syntactic phenomena is not the quantity but the quality of the attested examples. Even for well-documented languages like Old and Early Middle English and Old Norse-Icelandic, a grammar of these languages based solely on the most frequently occurring structures in the texts runs the risk of overlooking rare but important patterns, which may have been perfectly grammatical for the speakers of these languages, but which, for some reasons, are underrepresented in the texts. We argue that all occurring structures, both frequent and infrequent, have its place in the language system, but not only the frequent ones, as is implied by Faarlund’s criticism (2001: 131). The occurrence of even a single, philologically and linguistically unambiguous example of a particular structure may suffice to establish that it is part of the grammar of the language in question, although its status is, of course, less central than the status of high-frequent structures.

By ‘philologically unambiguous’ we refer to examples that can be justified on the basis of the manuscripts considered most reliable. Falk’s Old Swedish control infinitives in (18) are from manuscripts from around 1400–1450, while the texts date back to 1303 and 1308, respectively (1997: 200). There is also a consensus in the literature on Early Middle English that the control infinitives in (19) are valid Early Middle English data (cf. Allen 1986: 381). Rögnvaldsson has, moreover, compared the examples in (20a–c) with the original manuscripts (1995: 22, n. 1), and we have ensured that the examples in (20d–f) are here given in their correct form.¹⁰ All the examples in (20) are from the oldest and most reliable manuscripts of the classical Old Norse-Icelandic period (1200–1400) (cf. Barðdal and Eythórsson 2003a: 458–9). Therefore, although few in number the crucial examples which have been documented in Early Middle English, Old Swedish and Old Norse-Icelandic must on both philological and theoretical grounds be considered valid evidence for the subjecthood of subject-like obliques, given that only subjects, and not objects, can be left unexpressed in control constructions.

7. ‘Performance errors’ or marginally acceptable constructions?

Control constructions are infrequent to begin with and with impersonal predicates they are even less frequent. This is true not only for German, but also for both Faroese

and Icelandic. We have come across fewer examples on Modern German web sites than on Modern Icelandic sites, and the German examples that we have found show a greater range in their acceptability across German speakers than the Icelandic examples across Icelandic speakers. In this work we have used two accepted methods: First, we have searched for documented examples in literary texts, and second, we have carried out a questionnaire survey, containing a subset of these examples, with native speakers of both German and Icelandic. The third method we have used, and perhaps a more controversial one (see below), is to cite as evidence examples from the World Wide Web. However, we have included examples from the Web in both our German and our Icelandic questionnaire survey, and the results show that not all speakers accept all examples of impersonal predicates embedded under control verbs in either language. We have nevertheless established that the examples that we have found are real examples and not performance errors, which again shows that impersonal predicates can occur in control constructions in real language use in German, that they are being uttered during real usage events, and are accepted by a proportion of the German population. The examples discussed in the present paper show acceptability rates up to 36%, while the total for our complete survey is 86% (cf. Eythórsson and Barðdal 2005: 857, Barðdal 2006: 68–9). Moreover, some of the German participants have claimed that our examples are typical of colloquial spoken German, and not of written German. As such, our examples cannot be categorically dismissed as performance errors.

Because of the growth of the World Wide Web, corpus linguists have pondered the question whether the Web can be used in corpus linguistics in the same way as edited balanced corpora. Keller, Lapata and Ourioupina (2002) have particularly investigated this by comparing results obtained through Google and AltaVista with the results obtained from the British National Corpus (BNC). In an article entitled *Using the Web to overcome data sparseness* they examine the distribution and frequency of a specific set of randomly chosen lexical items in certain syntactic constructions, testing both existing word combinations and combinations which do not occur in BNC. They estimate that the English part of the Web is approximately 330 to 980 times larger than BNC, which in fact contains 100 million words. Keller, Lapata and Ourioupina found that the frequency figures they obtained from the Web correlate with the frequency figures yielded by the searches in BNC. Moreover, they also found that their frequency figures correlate with speakers' acceptability judgments; the most frequent combinations were judged most acceptable by speakers, and vice versa, the lowest or non-attested combinations were judged least acceptable. They therefore conclude that despite the fact that various 'noise' factors cannot be properly controlled for when using the Web, because of its gigantic size, it is still a useful and accurate tool for linguists who work on low-frequency, and thus marginal, constructions.

In a follow-up study, Keller and Lapata (2003) compared the correlation between acceptability judgments and frequencies of occurrence for similar combinations of lexical and constructional patterns as in their previous study. This time they compared the

degree of acceptability of the relevant patterns and combinations with frequencies of occurrence from different corpora. In fact, they found that not only do acceptability judgments correlate with frequencies of occurrence, but also that the strength of the correlation varies between corpora. *The strongest correlation effect was in fact obtained for the World Wide Web.* This means that of the three 'corpora' they investigated, BNC, the North American News Text Corpus (NANTC) and the Web, there is highest correlation between speakers' degree of acceptability and Web frequencies, rather than BNC frequencies or NANTC frequencies. Keller and Lapata's research thus shows that the Web is not a worse corpus than any other corpus. On the contrary, it is quite representative of language and language use, and for linguists working on low-frequency constructions, there are simply better chances of finding such examples on the Web than in other smaller corpora.

A comparison of the results of our questionnaire survey and the frequency of the data we found on the Web, in fact supports the findings of Keller and his colleagues, in that we found fewer examples in German than in Icelandic, and those we did find are less accepted in German than in Icelandic.

Keller and Lapata's findings, that there is a correlation between frequency and acceptability, accord with usage-based models of language which assume that the language system is a dynamic, emergent system, in which frequency plays a central part (cf. various papers in Barlow and Kemmer 2000 and Bybee and Hopper 2001, in particular MacWhinney 2001). The language system is shaped by experience and all usage events contribute to the extension and reshaping of the system. The most commonly found structures are also the most central ones, whereas infrequent structures have a less prominent place in the system. On such an approach, it is expected that acceptability correlates with frequency, and it is expected that the system varies for different speakers, since not all speakers of a language have necessarily had the same experience with it. Again, this is exactly what our research on control constructions in Germanic has shown.

Given that grammar is not only a collective system of form-meaning correspondences which interact at different linguistic levels, but also that each individual in this collective encompasses his or her version of the system, it is expected that there is not a complete overlap between individual grammars. As stated above, this is motivated by the fact that not all individuals in a linguistic community have necessarily been exposed to the same subset of language use. Therefore, it is expected that what is acceptable for one speaker of a language need not be accepted by a different speaker. On our approach, therefore, the differences in the acceptability of control infinitives involving impersonal predicates in a language are explainable in terms of a difference in the language system of these individuals. The speakers who accept these combinations of lexical and structural patterns do so because they have been exposed to such lexical and structural patterns earlier, while the speakers who reject them do so due to lack of exposure. This is the reason why native speakers of one and the same language disagree on the acceptability of documented lexical and syntactic strings of rare and marginal

status. What is rare but marginally acceptable for one speaker can only be interpreted as a ‘performance error’ by another speaker if their grammars do not overlap in this particular respect.

Moreover, the larger a language community is in terms of number of speakers and geographical region, the higher the chances are that the language exposure will vary considerably for speakers. This is the situation in the German-speaking area in Europe, while the Icelandic language community is much smaller and known to be exceptionally homogenous. This is presumably a part of the explanation for impersonal predicates being more accepted in control constructions in Icelandic than in German. This difference may also be due to a difference in the type frequency of impersonal predicates in Icelandic and German (cf. Barðdal 2002: 90–2, 2006, Eythórssón and Barðdal 2005). On a frequency-based account, the category of oblique subjects is both stronger and more entrenched in Icelandic than in German, as impersonal predicates amount to approximately 700 in Icelandic, while the corresponding number for German is perhaps around 80–100 (Barðdal 2004: 109–10). Oblique subjects are therefore a more robust and integrated part of the Icelandic system than of the German system, and can thus more easily be left unexpressed in elliptic structures in Icelandic than in German. For a further discussion and explication of this, we refer the reader to the references cited above.

In the year 1999, we sent out an informal inquiry by e-mail to some fellow Icelandic linguists regarding the acceptability of *segjast* used as a raising-to-subject verb. The message only contained one constructed example sentence of the type in (22), asking for feedback on its acceptability. Four responses of five stated that it was ungrammatical. Our fifth correspondent, however, pronounced that the example was ‘not entirely bad’. In the meantime, we have come across the examples in (22) in naturally occurring language settings, despite their assumed ungrammaticality. Again, in the summer 2003, we sent out another message reporting on an example that we had overheard for the first time, during a stay in Iceland, of a compositional predicate, standardly selecting for an accusative object, which was being used with a dative object on this particular occasion. Two Icelandic colleagues responded to the message, one by saying that ‘he thought that he had heard sentences like this before’, the other by saying that ‘this must surely be a performance error’.

These two true stories underscore our point that the line between marginally acceptable data and so-called performance errors may be hard to draw. As other scholars have called attention to (for instance, Joseph 1997), research on the ‘periphery’, as well as the ‘core’, may shed light on interesting linguistic phenomena, both language specific and across languages and language families. In fact, Joseph argues that in a synchronic system all linguistic data start out as ‘marginal’, and that only through a quantitative approach is the sphere of marginalia abandoned paving the way for larger generalizations. This entails a bottom-up approach to language and language structure, and a view of the difference between the ‘core’ and the ‘periphery’ as being a difference of quantity but not a difference in ontological nature. In other words, the difference between the

‘core’ and the ‘periphery’ is not dichotomous but represents a gradual scale, where high quantity is concomitant with high acceptability, and low quantity with low acceptability. As we have shown here, one person’s performance errors equate other people’s marginalia. Therefore, marginally acceptable constructions, like control infinitives of impersonal predicates in German, cannot be categorically dismissed as ‘performance errors’, but deserve to be taken seriously since they are accepted by a subset of the German population.

To conclude, in order to throw some light on the question of how to distinguish between performance errors and marginally acceptable data, we have carried out a systematic questionnaire survey to investigate the acceptability of our control infinitives and found that they are not regarded as performance errors by a proportion of the German population. We hope to have shown with our initiation of this discussion that more research is needed on this topic. Our results demonstrate that this problem deserves to be properly addressed, and that principled methods need to be developed to deal with it.

8. Summary

In this paper we have discussed control constructions involving impersonal predicates, in which subject-like obliques are the unexpressed subjects of controlled infinitives. This particular syntactic behavior can be shown to correlate with other subject properties in Germanic and does not exist for objects. We have presented attested examples of such control infinitives from Modern Icelandic and Modern German, all of which we have obtained from the World Wide Web. We have also discussed control infinitives of impersonal predicates in Modern Faroese.

Our linguistic evidence stems from three sources: 1) literary texts, 2) corpora, including the World Wide Web, and 3) a questionnaire survey involving native-speaker judgments. All the evidence point in the direction that the difference assumed in the literature between Modern Icelandic and Faroese, on the one hand, and Modern German, on the other, does not exist. We have called attention to the fact that examples of impersonal predicates embedded under control infinitives are extremely rare in written Modern Icelandic, yet a subset of the attested examples is accepted by native speakers, whereas other more colloquial examples are rejected.

We have found indubitable examples of impersonal predicates in German embedded under control predicates, in which the subject-like oblique takes on the subject behavior of being the unexpressed argument. Our German examples, however, are both fewer than our Icelandic ones and subject to more controversy. Nevertheless, a subset of our German informants has judged our examples as perfectly acceptable. Other German speakers find them possible but strange, and yet others reject them. This must be evaluated in the light of the fact that impersonal predicates embedded under control verbs in Icelandic and Faroese are not unanimously judged as acceptable in these lan-

guages either. In fact, both a speaker variation and example variation is found here. In any event, there is a clear correlation between observed frequencies, obtained from the Web, and the degree of acceptability found for these structures, as they are more frequent and more accepted in Icelandic than in German. This suggests that the difference between Icelandic and German is not categorical but gradient, contra the standard view that subject-like obliques of impersonal predicates are syntactic subjects in Icelandic but not in German.

We have also discussed the few examples of impersonal predicates embedded under control verbs which have been documented in Old Norse-Icelandic, Old Swedish and Early Middle English. We have argued that the sole existence of such examples demonstrates that subject-like obliques of impersonal predicates also behaved syntactically as subjects in earlier Germanic, and that the scarcity of the examples is prognosticated since such examples are also statistically rare in the modern languages. We thus conclude that not only do Modern Icelandic and Modern Faroese have oblique subjects but that there are also data in Modern German and earlier Germanic which demand an oblique-subject analysis.

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Abbreviations

ACC accusative, DAT dative, INF infinitive, NOM nominative, OBL oblique, REFL reflexive.

Notes

1. For a general discussion of control infinitives, we refer the interested reader to Kristoffersen's work on control infinitives in Old-Norse Icelandic (1996), Lyngfelt's work on Swedish (2002), and Jackendoff and Culicover's work on English (2003), and the references cited therein.
2. We categorically gloss the unexpressed subject in control infinitives as PRO in all examples in this paper. This has no theoretical implications from our side and is only done to distinguish control infinitives from other types of infinitives, such as raising infinitives.

3. The compositional predicate *falla í geð* in fact differs from *líka* in that it is a so-called alternating predicate, whereas *líka* is not (cf. Barðdal 2001b, Eythórsson and Barðdal 2005). That is, *falla í geð* can either occur as a Dat–Nom predicate with the dative passing all behavioral subject tests in Icelandic, or as a Nom–Dat predicate with the nominative passing the relevant behavioral subject tests. The predicate’s meaning varies accordingly, ranging from ‘like’ via ‘be to sb’s liking’ to ‘please’. In (5b) above, it is the dative experiencer that functions as an unexpressed subject and not the nominative stimulus. For an argumentation that the German cognate of *falla í geð*, *gefallen*, is also an alternating predicate, see Eythórsson and Barðdal (2005).

4. We are indebted to Werner Abraham, Ulrike Demske, Beate Hampe and Doris Schönefeld who gave their classes the task to fill out our questionnaire in April–June 2004.

5. An anonymous reviewer, apparently a native speaker of German, rejects all our German examples (originally presented here out of context) except (6c), (8) and (9b), which s/he finds only marginally possible. The reviewer suggests that these particular examples may be better than the others because they are coordinated. As seen from Table 1, the examples in (6c) and (9b) are nevertheless judged worse by the participants of the questionnaire survey than, for instance, (7) and (9c), so coordination is hardly at issue here, or at least not solely. Interestingly, however, the sentence in (8) is not an example of a control infinitive but of an ordinary subordinate clause and is perfectly grammatical in German, yet the reviewer claims that it is only marginally possible in his/her language. This suggests that at least some of our discussants/informants may be more restrictive in their judgments than prescriptive standards of German demand.

6. We thank Jóhannes G. Jónsson, Sigríður Sigurjónsdóttir and Matthew Whelpton for giving their classes the task to fill out our questionnaire in April 2005. The Icelandic version of the questionnaire is structured in exactly the same way as the German one (cf. Appendices in Eythórsson and Barðdal 2005 and Barðdal 2006).

7. It is interesting that both for the Icelandic and the German responses, the judgments varied substantially depending on the participants’ majoring subject at university. The students majoring in English were much more liberal in their judgments than the students majoring in their native language (i.e. Icelandic and German, respectively). This correlation was found in both questionnaire surveys, although all the participants were native speakers of either Icelandic or German. This difference is highly significant for both surveys ($p < .000$), suggesting that students majoring in their own language may perhaps be stricter in their judgments than is demanded by prescriptive standards. At least they are significantly stricter in their judgments than other groups of speakers (cf. Barðdal 2000: 69–70, 85–6).

8. It could perhaps be argued that if *biren* is a modal verb whose complements were often preceded by the marker *to* in earlier English, the example in (19b) may well be monoclausal and not biclausal, which is a necessary prerequisite for a control analysis. An argument against a monoclausal analysis of sentences with *biren* together with an infinitive stems from the fact that its Icelandic cognate *bera* ‘be obliged’ is a control verb selecting for an infinitive, also preceded by the infinitive marker *að* (cf. Sigurðsson 2002: 701–3):

- (i) (www.fila.is/stylesheet.asp?file=08282003203036, 2002)

Honum ber að _____ vinna störf sín óháð persónulegum

he.DAT is-obliged to PRO.NOM do.INF jobs his irrespective-of personal

skoðunum ...

opinions

‘He is obliged to carry out his duties irrespective of personal opinions ...’

Modal verbs in Icelandic divide into four syntactic classes: (a) control verbs with the infinitive marker *að*, like *bera*, (b) raising verbs with the infinitive marker *að*, like *hljóta* ‘be bound to’, (c) raising verbs without the infinitive marker, like *skulu* ‘shall’, and (d) monoclausal modals selecting for a past participle, like *geta* ‘can’. Control verbs with modal meaning are, however, not restricted to Icelandic, as the German verb *obliegen*, which is synonymous to Icelandic *bera*, is also a control verb selecting for an infinitive with the infinitive marker *zu* ‘to’:

(www.gema.de/urheberrecht/fachaufsaetze/gema.shtml)

- (ii) ... *dass es den Mitgliedern der GEMA obliegt, _____ zu entscheiden ...*
 that it the.DAT members.DAT the.GEN GEMA are-obliged PRO.NOM to decide.INF
 ‘... that the members of GEMA have the obligation to decide ...’

The fact that English *biren* can be semantically classified as a modal verb must therefore not be confused with it necessarily having a monoclausal structure. On the contrary, we have shown here that the category of modal verbs is not only consistent with a control analysis but that some control verbs are in fact also modal verbs.

9. A possible objection against our control analysis could be put forth on the basis of the fact that *kveðask* does not occur with the infinitive marker *að*, as is usual with control verbs in Icelandic. However, it has been shown by Anderson (1990: 264–7) that a small class of control verbs in Icelandic does not select for this marker. Both the verb *kveðast* and its synonymous *segjast* are included in this class. For a further discussion of this, and of the status of *kveðast* and *segjast* as evidential verbs selecting for different kinds of complement clauses, cf. Barðdal and Eythórsson (2003a: 452–62) and Eythórsson and Barðdal (2005: 836–7).

10. We are indebted to Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson and Heimir Freyr Viðarsson for checking our Old Norse-Icelandic examples against the original manuscripts.

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