

1994

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### Recommended Citation

Jónsson, Jóhannes G. (1994) "On Case and Agreement in Icelandic," *University of Massachusetts Occasional Papers in Linguistics*: Vol. 20 , Article 6.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.umass.edu/umop/vol20/iss1/6>

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## On Case and Agreement in Icelandic\*

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### 0. Introduction

The distinction between structural and lexical case is well-known from the literature on case in natural language. Simply put, the assignment of lexical case to an NP is associated with the assignment of a theta-role to that NP, while structural case assignment is conditioned by purely structural factors. Hence, there need not be any semantic relationship between an assigner of structural case and the case assignee.

There is a lot more to morphological case than this simple distinction between lexical and structural case. This is clearly seen in Icelandic, a language which makes productive use of four morphological cases (nominative, accusative, dative and genitive). In this paper, I will review the basic facts about Icelandic case marking and explore some ideas on how they should be accounted for. I will mainly be concerned with the separation between nominative case and subjecthood, the correlation between structural case assignment and agreement and the distribution of structurally case-marked arguments, but other issues will inevitably arise.<sup>1</sup>

The paper is organized as follows. Section 1 is an overview of case patterns in Icelandic. Section 2 discusses the relationship between abstract Case and morphological case in view of the syntactic similarities between nominative and quirky subjects. My proposals for nominative case assignment and agreement in finite clauses are presented in section 3 and extended to infinitivals in section 4. Section 5 deals with the distribution of structurally case-marked arguments. The paper ends with some concluding remarks in section 6.

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\* I am indebted to Ellen Woolford for detailed comments on an earlier version of this paper and to Halldór Á. Sigurðsson for many hours of discussions about case and agreement over the past 4 years. Usual disclaimers apply.

<sup>1</sup> Throughout this paper, I will use the terms assign (case) and assignment (of case), even if I assume that case is checked rather than assigned (cf. Chomsky 1992).

1.1 Subjects

As first shown by Andrews (1976), Icelandic subjects are not uniformly nominative. In addition to nominative subjects, Icelandic also has quirky (i.e. non-nominative) subjects, selected by certain predicates. This is exemplified in (1)-(2):<sup>2</sup>

- (1) a. þú fórst heim  
You went home  
(N) (2S)
- b. Jón er ánægður  
John is happy  
(N) (3S) (M-S-N)
- c. Stelpurnar voru reknar  
The-girls were fired  
(N) (3P) (F-P-N)
- (2) a. Þig klæjar  
You itches 'You itch'  
(A) (3S) (S)
- b. Jóni er kalt  
John is cold  
(D) (3S) (Nt-S-N)
- c. Stelpnanna var saknað  
The-girls was missed 'The girls were missing'  
(G) (3S) (Nt-S-N)

As the examples in (1) show, nominative subjects agree with the finite verb (person and number), predicative adjectives and passive participles (gender, number and case). By contrast, quirky subjects do not agree (2). The finite verb is invariably 3rd person singular and predicative adjectives and passive participles are neuter singular nominative.<sup>3</sup>

I will call the type of agreement shown in (1) structural agreement, because it is triggered by a spec-head relation between the subject and the head that agrees with it (cf. section 3). Icelandic also has what might be called predicational agreement, i.e. agreement between a secondary predicate and the NP it is predicated of. As shown in (3), nominative as well as quirky subjects participate in this kind of agreement :

- (3) a. Jón var handtekinn ódrukkinn  
John was arrested sober  
(N) (M-S-N) (M-S-N)

<sup>2</sup> I use the following abbreviations in the glosses: N = nominative, A = accusative, D = dative, G = genitive, S = singular, P = plural, M = masculine, F = feminine, Nt = neuter, 1 = 1st person, 2 = 2nd person, 3 = 3rd person.

<sup>3</sup> The same contrast is seen in case agreement with predicative NPs. For a recent analysis of the case properties of predicative NPs in Icelandic, see Maling and Sprouse (1992).

- b. Jóni var hent út ódrukknum  
 John was thrown out sober  
 (D) (Nt-S-N) (M-S-D)

I will leave aside the issue of predicational agreement in this paper. All that matters for our purposes is that predicational agreement is not induced by a spec-head relation.

Apart from the fact that quirky subjects are never AGENTS, this agreement contrast is the only difference between nominative and quirky subjects. In all other respects, quirky subjects behave like nominative subjects. This has been demonstrated by syntactic tests including binding, control, raising and coordination. I will not go through these tests here, but see Sigurðsson (1989) for a summary and references.

Structural agreement in Icelandic is independent of the S-structure position of the subject. This is clearly seen in passives, where the subject can surface in three positions; the canonical subject position (4a,5a), an intermediate position above the passive verb (4b,5b) and the complement position of the passive verb (4c,5c):<sup>4</sup>

- (4) a. Þrír stólar voru keyptir  
 Three chairs were bought  
 (M-P-N) (3P) (M-P-N)
- b. Það voru þrír stólar keyptir  
 There were three chairs bought  
 (3P) (M-P-N) (M-P-N)
- c. Það voru keyptir þrír stólar  
 There were bought three chairs  
 (3P) (M-P-N) (M-P-N)
- (5) a. Þrem stólum var stolið 'Three chairs were stolen'  
 Three chairs was stolen  
 (M-P-D) (3S) (Nt-S-N)
- b. Það var þrem stólum stolið  
 There was three chairs stolen  
 (3S) (M-P-D) (Nt-S-N)
- c. Það var stolið þrem stólum  
 There was stolen three chairs  
 (3S) (Nt-S-N) (M-P-D)

In short, nominative subjects agree structurally wherever they occur at S-structure, while quirky subjects fail to agree. Assuming that structural agreement is induced by a spec-head relation, this means that structural agreement must be determined at LF (cf. section 3).

<sup>4</sup> There are semantic restrictions for each of these subject positions, but that need not concern us here, since these restrictions are independent of the case marking on the subject.

### 1.2 Objects

Objects in Icelandic show the same diversity of case marking as subjects do. Accusative is certainly the unmarked case on objects, but the other three cases are also attested. This is exemplified in (6):

- (6) a. *Mér voru gefnar bækur* 'I was given books'  
 Me were given books  
 (D) (3P) (F-P-N) (F-P-N)
- b. *María las bókina*  
 Mary read the-book  
 (N) (3S) (A)
- c. *Ég hjálpaði barninu*  
 I helped the-baby  
 (N) (1S) (D)
- d. *Þeir söknuðu hennar*  
 They missed her  
 (N) (3P) (G)

Note that nominative objects participate in structural agreement (6a) unlike non-nominative objects (6b-d). This shows that structural agreement (in finite clauses) correlates with nominative case rather than subjecthood.

Despite the fact that Icelandic subjects and objects can bear any of the four cases of the language, many case combinations are either impossible or extremely rare. For our purposes, the most important gaps are double nominatives and the combination quirky subject and accusative object. In general, structural accusative is never assigned unless nominative is also assigned, an important fact which we will return to in section 5.<sup>5</sup>

### 1.3 Summary

In our discussion of case and agreement in Icelandic, the following descriptive generalizations have emerged:

- (7) a. There is no correlation between nominative case and subjecthood in Icelandic (as Icelandic has both quirky subjects and nominative objects).
- b. Only a nominative argument participates in structural agreement (in finite clauses) and this is independent of the S-structure position of the argument.
- c. If a sentence has only one structurally case-marked argument, that argument must be nominative.

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<sup>5</sup> An apparent exception to this generalization is a very small class of verbs with accusative case on both subject and object. See Yip, Maling and Jackendoff (1987) for further discussion.

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These generalizations will be discussed in subsequent sections, but the next section is devoted to abstract Case and its relation to morphological case.

## 2. Abstract Case and morphological case

As shown by examples (4)-(5), all the subject positions available in a passive sentence are open to both nominative and quirky subjects. Conversely, nominative and quirky subjects are excluded from all the same positions. This includes the subject position of control infinitivals as shown in (8):

- (8) a. \*María óttast Jón að vera handtekinn  
 Mary fears John to be arrested  
 (N)
- b. \*María óttast Jóni að vera hent út  
 Mary fears John to be thrown out  
 (D)

Clearly, (8b) is problematic for the standard GB theory of Case. The dative case assigned to the subject of the infinitive by the passive verb should be enough for the subject to satisfy the Case Filter, contrary to fact.

The parallelism in the syntactic distribution of nominative and quirky subjects shows that satisfaction of the Case Filter is not a matter of overt case marking. A natural solution to this problem is to assume that only structural case is relevant for the Case Filter (cf. Cowper 1988 and Harbert and Toribio 1991). On this view, quirky subjects need an invisible nominative case to satisfy the Case Filter. By the same logic, quirky (i.e. dative or genitive) objects would need invisible accusative case.

There are a number of problems with this approach.<sup>6</sup> Perhaps the biggest one is the cooccurrence of quirky subjects and nominative objects:

- (9) a. Jóni líkuðu þessir skór  
 John liked these shoes  
 (D) (3P) (P-N)
- b. Mér voru gefnar bækur = (6a)  
 Me were given books  
 (D) (3P) (F-P-N) (F-P-N)

If quirky subjects are assigned an invisible nominative case, the objects in (9) should not be able to get nominative, as nominative case is never available overtly for both subject and object. To make matters even worse, nominative is the only possible structural case on objects with quirky subjects. Moreover, it is difficult to understand why nominative objects (and not quirky subjects) participate in structural agreement. In short, the nominative on quirky subjects would not only be morphologically invisible but also invisible to syntax in general.

<sup>6</sup> Sigurðsson (1992a) reaches the same conclusion, but his argumentation differs in some respects from the argumentation offered here.

The same kind of argument can be made for double objects. In the double object construction in Icelandic, the subject is always nominative. As for the objects, all logically possible combinations of the three non-nominative cases are attested, except that a genitive cannot be an indirect object and double accusatives seem to be impossible (Zaenen, Maling and Thráinsson 1985).<sup>7</sup> If dative and genitive objects are assigned an invisible accusative case to satisfy the Case Filter, the absence of (overt) double accusatives is unexpected.

In addition, there is evidence from PRO-infinitivals that nominative case does not entail abstract Case (Sigurðsson 1991). On standard assumptions, PRO does not receive abstract Case. Still, adjectival agreement in PRO-infinitivals suggests that Icelandic PRO can be nominative:

- (10) a. Það er hræðilegt PRO að vera handtekinn ódrukkinn  
 It is terrible PRO to be arrested sober  
 (M-S-N) (M-S-N)
- b. Jón óttast PRO að vera handtekinn ódrukkinn  
 John fears PRO to be arrested sober  
 (N) (M-S-N) (M-S-N)
- c. Jón óttast PRO að vera hent út ódrukknum  
 John fears PRO to be thrown out sober  
 (N) (Nt-S-N) (M-S-D)

Since adjectival secondary predicates always agree with the NP they are predicated of (in gender, number and case), the source of these features (including case) must be that NP.<sup>8</sup> Hence, PRO is nominative in (10a,b) and dative in (10c).

The agreement with the passive participle in (10a,b) also supports the conclusion that PRO is nominative in these examples, assuming that agreeing passive participles receive case by agreement with nominative subjects (cf. section 3).

As nominative case is assigned in PRO-infinitivals, the ungrammaticality of (8) cannot be due to a lack of nominative case. In fact, nominative is generally available in Icelandic infinitivals, an issue that we will discuss in section 4.

In view of these arguments, we can safely conclude that satisfaction of the Case Filter is independent of morphological case, at least in Icelandic (Sigurðsson 1991, 1992a). It seems likely that this is true for all languages with rich case morphology. Generally, such languages have many uses of morphological case that cannot possibly be an overt reflection of abstract Case (e.g. case on adjectives, determiners and numerals in Icelandic). Hence, it is not surprising that morphological case on arguments does not reflect abstract Case in these languages.

<sup>7</sup> Yip, Maling and Jackendoff (1987) list the verb *kosta* 'cost' as the only verb in Icelandic that takes two accusative objects, but they also note that this verb is exceptional among ditransitives in that the subject is not an AGENT.

<sup>8</sup> It is not likely that the nominative on the secondary predicate is default (like the nominative on non-agreeing adjectives) because case agreement seems to be a prerequisite for agreement in other nominal features in Icelandic.

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In the remainder of this paper, I will ignore abstract Case. However, it is important to keep in mind that my theory of nominative case assignment in Icelandic crucially assumes a strict separation between abstract Case and morphological case. In particular, assignment of nominative case does not entail assignment of abstract Case.

### 3. Nominative case assignment in finite clauses

The basic claim of this section is that an AGR-head assigns nominative case to its specifier at LF. In addition to the clausal AGR hosting the agreement features of the finite verb, I assume that passive participles and predicative adjectives are associated with an AGR-projection. However, as we will discuss in section 5, this second AGR never gets a chance to actually assign nominative case.

I assume a clausal architecture where (the clausal) AGRP is dominated by TP (cf. Pollock 1989). In this structure, the canonical subject position is TP-spec, a case neutral position. Note that this structure does not include AGR-O (Chomsky 1991, 1992), but see Jonas (1992) for an analysis of nominative case assignment in Icelandic within that framework.

Another important claim is that case conflict prevents quirky subjects from moving to AGR-spec and thereby entering into a spec-head relation with the finite verb, passive participles and predicative adjectives. Hence, the absence of structural agreement with quirky subjects is derived in a rather straightforward manner.<sup>9</sup>

#### 3.1 Nominative subjects

Let us now look at the consequences of our claims about nominative case assignment, beginning with nominative subjects:

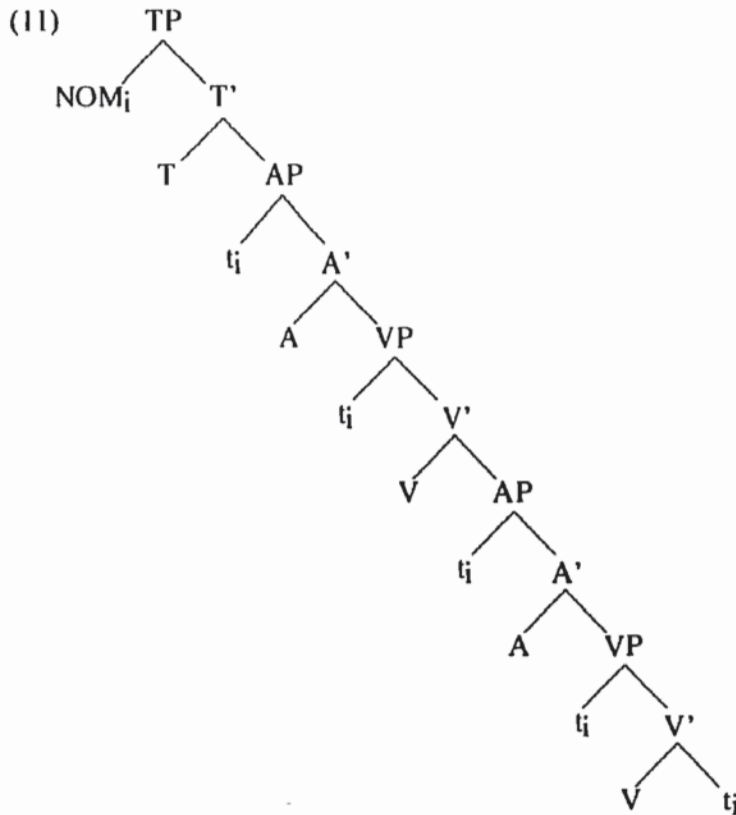
- (4)
- a. Þrír stólar voru keyptir  
Three chairs were bought  
(M-P-N) (3P) (M-P-N)
  - b. Það voru þrír stólar keyptir  
There were three chairs bought  
(3P) (M-P-N) (M-P-N)
  - c. Það voru keyptir þrír stólar  
There were bought three chairs  
(3P) (M-P-N) (M-P-N)

Since expletives must be replaced at LF (Chomsky 1991), the thematic subjects in (4b) and (4c) raise to TP-spec at LF. As a result, all the examples in (4) get the same LF representation (where A = AGR):<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> This analysis of non-agreement with quirky subjects stands in stark contrast to the analysis of Sigurðsson (1992b, 1993) where spec-head relations are claimed to be irrelevant for agreement. Needless to say, I believe that my analysis is at least a viable alternative to Sigurðsson's analysis.

<sup>10</sup> This assumes that expletives are literally replaced rather than adjoined to as in Chomsky (1991), but this does not matter for our purposes.



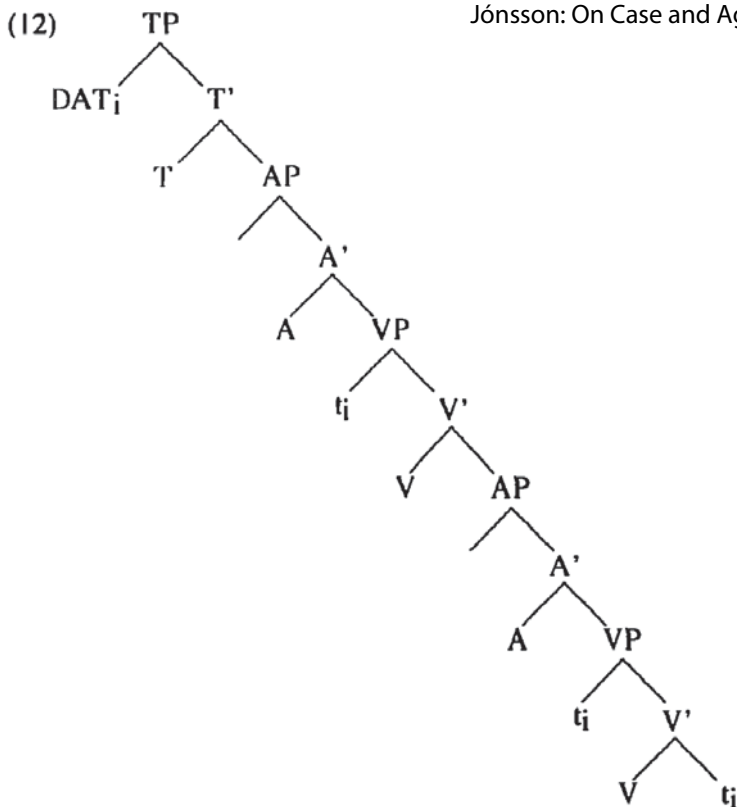


In this representation, the subject receives nominative case via the traces in AGR-spec. These traces also ensure agreement with the finite verb and the passive participle.

### 3.2 Quirky subjects

Just like nominative subjects, quirky subjects occupy TP-spec at LF. However, quirky subjects cannot go through AGR-spec on their way to TP-spec, since AGR-spec is a position of nominative case. As a result, quirky subjects cannot participate in structural agreement and the LF representation for the examples in (5) is (12):

- (5)
- a. Þrem stólum var stolið  
Three chairs was stolen  
(M-P-D) (3S) (Nt-S-N)
  - b. Það var þrem stólum stolið  
There was three chairs stolen  
(3S) (M-P-D) (Nt-S-N)
  - c. Það var stolið þrem stólum  
There was stolen three chairs  
(3S) (Nt-S-N) (M-P-D)



The representation in (12) raises questions about Rizzi's (1990) Relativized Minimality (RM), which bars A-movement over an A-specifier. I would like to suggest (somewhat tentatively) that the requirements of RM be restricted to lexically filled specifiers only, i.e. neither empty specifiers nor traces should count. On this view, the empty AGR-specifiers in (12) can be skipped.<sup>11</sup>

This relaxation of RM means that none of the intermediate traces in (11) are necessary as far as RM is concerned, including the traces in AGR-spec. As I will argue in section 5, movement to AGR-spec is triggered by a requirement that AGR-spec be filled by a non-quirky argument. For the other specifiers, we can assume that movement through them is optional, but nothing crucial hinges on that assumption.

### 3.3 Nominative objects

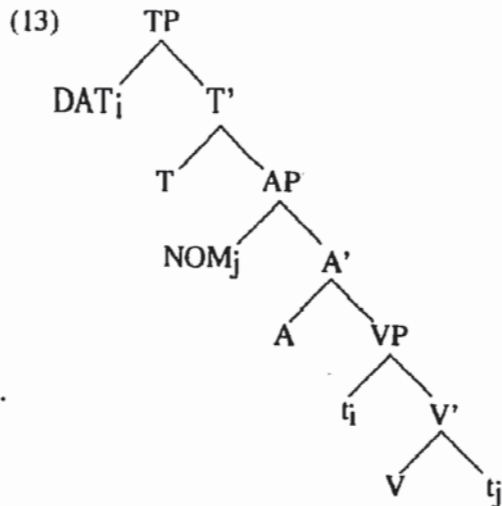
The biggest challenge to any theory of nominative case assignment in Icelandic is posed by nominative objects as in (9):

- (9) a. Jóni líkuðu þessir skór  
 John liked these shoes  
 (D) (3P) (P-N)

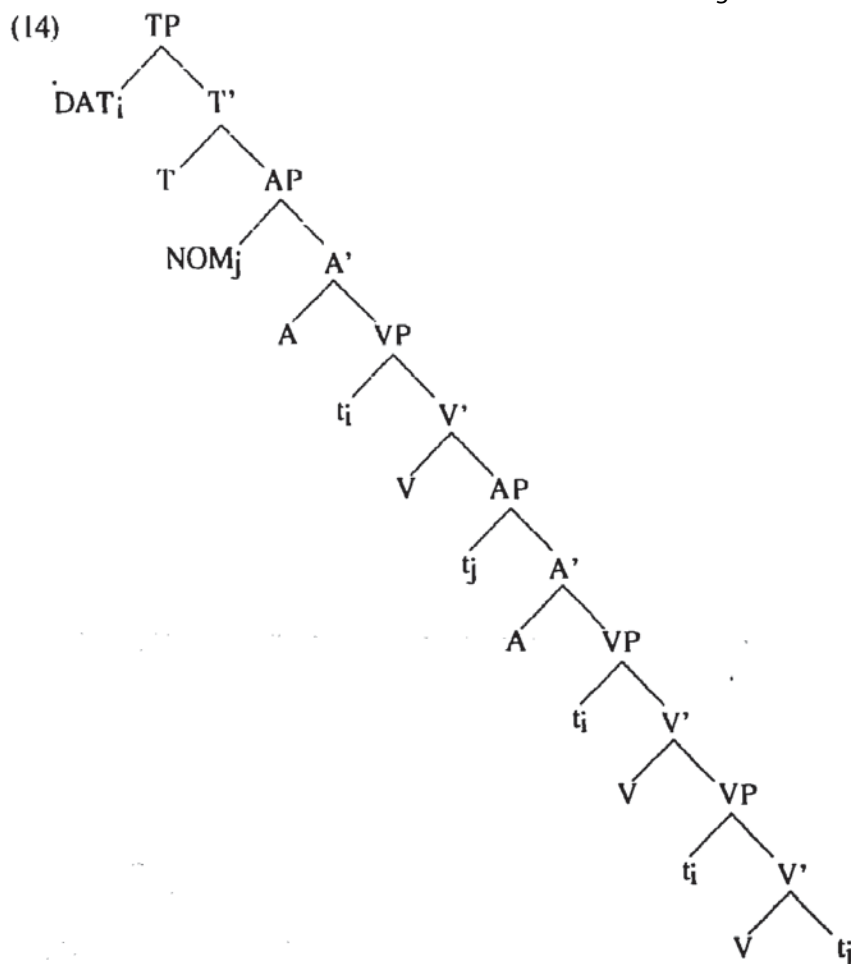
<sup>11</sup> Due to verb raising to T(ense) in Icelandic, movement over the clausal AGR-spec would be consistent with Chomsky's (1992) ideas about equidistance. However, the movement over the participial AGR-spec would still be ruled out in his framework, as there is no head-to-head movement to render the higher VP-spec equidistant to the participial AGR-spec.

b. *Mér voru gefnar bækur* = (6a)  
 Me were given books  
 (D) (3P) (F-P-N) (F-P-N)

As we noted in section 2, these examples are problematic for the hypothesis that quirky subjects are assigned an invisible nominative case. On my analysis, the availability of the nominative on the object stems precisely from its absence on the subject. As AGR-spec is not open to the quirky subject, the object can raise to AGR-spec at LF and receive nominative case. This is shown in the following LF representation for (9a):



The LF representation for (9b) is more complicated because of the VP-shell associated with double objects (Larson 1988) and the participial AGR-spec which the nominative object moves through on its way to the clausal AGR-spec:



The movement of the quirky subject across AGR-spec is possible for the same reasons as in (12). Note also that movement of the nominative object over the subject traces in VP-spec is consistent with our assumptions about locality conditions on A-movement, as traces don't count as intervening A-specifiers.

My account of the examples in (9) carries over to examples like (15) where the quirky subject is postverbal:<sup>12</sup>

- (15) a. Það líkuðu öllum þessir skór 'Everyone liked these shoes'  
 There liked everyone these shoes  
 (3P) (D) (P-N)
- b. Það voru öllum gefnar bækur 'Everyone was given books'  
 There were everyone given books  
 (3P) (D) (F-P-N) (F-P-N)

<sup>12</sup> I assume, following Sigurðsson (1991), that the subject in these examples is in the highest VP-spec. By contrast, Bošković and Jonas (1993) argue that postverbal subjects in examples like (15) are in TP-spec (which in its location corresponds to my clausal AGR-spec), an assumption that is at odds with my analysis of nominative case assignment. Due to limitations of space I cannot go into this important issue here.

In these examples, both the subject and the object raise at LF, but the resulting representation is the same as in (13) and (14). Crucially, the subject has to move prior to the object, otherwise the subject will block movement of the object to AGR-spec.

A final note on agreement is in order here. As a result of LF movement to the clausal AGR-spec, a nominative object agrees with the finite verb. All of the examples that I have used to show this involve 3rd person objects. However, if the object is 1st or 2nd person, full agreement is impossible:

- (16) \*Honum líkuðum við  
 He liked us  
 (D) (IP) (N)

As noted by Sigurðsson (1990-1991), native speakers try to avoid 1st or 2nd person nominative objects, but if they are used, the verb either agrees in number with the object or not at all. Thus, the verb in (16) must be either 3rd person singular (no agreement) or third person plural (only number agreement).

As the finite verb is always third person irrespective of the person of the nominative object, we may conclude that nominative objects (even those that are 3rd person) never agree with the finite verb in person. It is not clear to me why this should be the case. Perhaps, the person features of the verb reside in the chain linking T(ense) and AGR so that an NP must move to both AGR-spec and TP-spec to agree in person with the finite verb. If correct, this would explain why nominative subjects agree in person with the finite verb while nominative objects (and quirky subjects) do not.

#### 4. Infinitivals

##### 4.1 Nominative case

It is very clear that nominative case assignment is not restricted to finite clauses in Icelandic. This has already been demonstrated by examples like (10a,b) where PRO is assigned nominative:

- (10) a. Það er hræðilegt PRO að vera handtekinn ódrukkinn  
 It is terrible PRO to be arrested sober  
 (M-S-N) (M-S-N)
- b. Jón óttast PRO að vera handtekinn ódrukkinn  
 John fears PRO to be arrested sober  
 (N) (M-S-N) (M-S-N)

As the nominative on PRO could be assigned by the participial AGR, these examples do not provide any evidence for the existence of an (abstract) clausal AGR in Icelandic infinitivals. However, such examples are not difficult to find. The clearest cases involve overt nominative subjects or objects (and absence of a participial or adjectival AGR):<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> It is possible for the nominative to agree with the finite verb in (17), a clear sign that it can raise to the matrix AGR-spec for case.

- (17) Mér virðist þessir skór vera á útsölu  
 Me seems these shoes be on sale 'These shoes seem to me to be on sale'  
 (D) (3S) (P-N)
- (18) Það er enginn glæpur PRO að líka þessir skór  
 It is no crime PRO to like these shoes  
 (D) (N)

As shown by the default features on the finite verb, the nominative argument in (17) is the subject of the non-finite clause and not the matrix (Thráinsson 1979). In fact, the construction in (17) is very much like the ECM-construction apart from the case marking on the subjects (Sigurðsson 1989).

#### 4.2 ECM-clauses

There are two facts about ECM-clauses that make them very important to the study of case and agreement in Icelandic. One is that structural accusative subjects of ECM-clauses agree with predicative adjectives and passive participles (just like nominative subjects in finite clauses):

- (19) a. Ég taldi Maríu vera ábyrga  
 I believed Mary to-be responsible  
 (F-S-A) (F-S-A)
- b. Ég taldi hafa verið keypta þrjá stóla  
 I believed to-have been bought three chairs  
 (M-P-A) (M-P-A)

This means that the accusative subject goes through the adjectival or participial AGR-spec as it raises to TP-spec. It also goes through the clausal AGR-spec. Note that the raising to TP-spec takes place at LF in (19b) and is triggered by the need to replace the (null) expletive in TP-spec.

An important property of (19) is that the raising of the subject to TP-spec creates a chain with three case positions; TP-spec (which receives accusative from the matrix verb) and the two nominative AGR-specifiers. This case conflict is resolved by suppressing the nominative in AGR-spec. I claim that this follows from the following principle:

- (20) Principle of case uniqueness (PCU)

If a chain has more than one case position, case is suppressed in all but the highest case position of the chain.

Note that the PCU is not equivalent to the common assumption that the head position of an A-chain must be the unique case position of the chain. The highest case position need not be the head of the chain, e.g. in chains created by raising of a passive nominative subject to TP-spec. In such cases, the nominative of the clausal AGR-spec is retained, but the nominative of the participial AGR-spec is suppressed.

Despite the fact that case conflict can arise in structurally case-marked chains, case conflict must still be avoided when quirky subjects raise to TP-spec (i.e. quirky subjects must not move through AGR-spec). The reason is that such a case conflict would lead to a clash between the PCU and the Principle of Lexical Satisfaction (PLS)

(Freidin and Babby 1984). The PCU would mandate suppression of the lexical case assigned to the tail of the chain in violation of the PLS, which requires that lexical properties (like quirky case) be satisfied.

The other important fact about ECM-clauses has to do with the occurrence of quirky subjects and nominative objects as shown in (21):<sup>14</sup>

- (21) a. Ég taldi Jóni hafa líkað þessir skór  
 I believed John to-have liked these shoes  
 (D) (N)
- b. Ég taldi Jóni hafa verið gefnar bækur  
 I believed John to-have been given books  
 (D) (F-P-N) (F-P-N)

The fact that nominative objects in ECM-clauses do not turn accusative follows straightforwardly from my analysis. The object only moves to AGR-spec at LF, a position that the matrix accusative cannot reach into.

On the other hand, there is a problem in that the raising of the quirky subject to TP-spec in (21) creates a case conflict with the matrix accusative. This conflict is resolved by suppression of the matrix accusative, in violation of the PCU. This suggests that the PCU can only be violated to uphold the Principle of Lexical Satisfaction. Apparently, a clash between the two principles is inevitable here, since the embedded TP-spec in (21) is the only possible position for the quirky subject.

## 5. Nominative vs. accusative

If a clause has only one structurally case-marked argument, that argument must be nominative (7c). The validity of this generalization is manifested in the ban on accusative objects with quirky subjects (cf. section 1), but it is most clearly seen in the alternations between accusative and nominative in active-passive pairs like the following:

- (22) a. Jón seldi myndina  
 John sold the-picture  
 (N) (3S) (A)
- b. Jón gaf Maríu myndina  
 John gave Mary the-picture  
 (N) (3S) (D) (A)
- (23) a. Myndin var seld  
 The-picture was sold  
 (F-S-N) (3S) (F-S-N)

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<sup>14</sup> Some speakers allow the object to be accusative (Sigurðsson 1990-1991). Presumably, these speakers (optionally) reanalyze ECM-infinitivals as small clauses (which do not have any mechanism for nominative case assignment as shown by Ottósson (1990)). For a discussion of case in Icelandic small clauses, see Maling and Sprouse (1992).

- b. Maríu var gefin myndin  
 Mary was given the-picture  
 (D) (3S) (F-S-N) (F-S-N)

The absence of accusative in passives is often attributed to the so-called Burzio's Generalization (BG), which states that if a verb assigns structural accusative case to its object, it also assigns an external theta-role to its subject. Since a passive verb does not assign an external theta-role to its subject, it follows from BG that it cannot assign accusative case to its object. The non-existence of verbs with a quirky subject and an accusative object also follows from BG, assuming that quirky subjects are internal arguments.<sup>15</sup>

The problem with BG (as many researchers have noted) is that it is a rather spurious generalization connecting theta-roles with the assignment of structural case. In my view, BG should be replaced by a condition on structural case assignment without any reference to theta-roles. Such a condition would have the effect of giving nominative case assignment priority over assignment of structural accusative case (cf. Zaenen, Maling and Thráinsson 1985 and Yip, Maling and Jackendoff 1987). Within my framework, this could be (24):

(24) Fill AGR-spec, if possible

This principle ensures that nominative subjects move through AGR-spec on their way to TP-spec (and hence participate in structural agreement). It also triggers raising of nominative objects to AGR-spec at LF. In the latter case, the structural accusative assigned by the verb is suppressed in accordance with the PCU. The same applies to nominative subjects of passives. Hence, generalization (7c) is derived without any stipulations about passives or verbs taking nominative objects.<sup>16</sup>

Principle (24) is also respected in non-finite clauses. This is seen by the fact that nominative PRO and accusative subjects of ECM-clauses agree with predicative adjectives and passive participles. It is also shown by overt nominative arguments in non-finite clauses as in (17)-(18) and (21).

<sup>15</sup> Woolford (to appear) replaces BG by a principle of Accusative Case Blocking which blocks a verb from assigning structural accusative case to its thematically highest argument that is available for structural case assignment. This gives the desired results for Icelandic, irrespective of whether quirky subjects are internal arguments or not.

<sup>16</sup> It is worth noting that accusative objects of passives are possible in a non-standard dialect of Icelandic as shown in (i):

- (i) Það var lamið mig  
 There was hit me (A)

In this case it is the expletive that satisfies (24), as it is base-generated in VP-spec and moves through AGR-spec on its way to TP-spec. By contrast, the expletive is generated in TP-spec in the standard dialect, so that an argument must raise to AGR-spec to satisfy (24).



## 6. Conclusion

In this paper, I have argued for a theory where nominative case is assigned in AGR-spec at LF. As TP dominates AGRP in Icelandic, TP-spec is the canonical subject position. As a result, there is no correlation between subjecthood and nominative case in Icelandic. Quirky subjects raise to TP-spec without going through AGR-spec and nominative objects raise only as high as (the clausal) AGR-spec at LF.

This theory also accounts for the absence of structural agreement with quirky subjects. Due to case conflict (that cannot be resolved), quirky subjects cannot move through AGR-spec. Hence, quirky subjects cannot enter into a spec-head relation with the finite verb, passive participles and predicative adjectives.

The raising of quirky subjects over AGR-spec and nominative objects over subject traces (cf. (13)-(14)) necessitates a relaxation of Relativized Minimality (RM). I have suggested that only lexically filled specifiers can function as intervening specifiers, but this requires further investigation.

This relaxation of RM does not affect the raising of structurally case-marked subjects through AGR-spec. Principle (24) guarantees that these subjects cannot skip AGR-spec. It also triggers raising of nominative objects to AGR-spec. In conjunction with the PCU, (24) derives the distribution of structurally case-marked arguments in Icelandic. It ensures that nominative wins over accusative when a non-ECM clause contains only one structurally case-marked argument, as the clausal AGR-spec will be the highest case position of the chain. It also ensures that structurally case-marked subjects of ECM-clauses are accusative, as TP-spec is the highest case position in the chain.

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