

Quirky “subjects” and other specifiers

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1. Introductory Remarks^{*}

Theoretical concepts which were useful during a certain period in the progression of science often have to be abandoned later to give way to a necessary shift of perspective. The notion “quirky subject” (subjects bearing oblique Case) is, arguably, a case in point. It has guided important empirical research, with a major emphasis on Icelandic. The recent proliferation of “quirky subjects” to further languages has, however, eroded the fundament on which the concept stands. The distinction between languages with and without “quirky subjects” turned out not to be based on a large set of diagnostics that always go hand in hand. Rather, in many languages, only some of the criteria are fulfilled, while the others are not, often because the criteria are inapplicable.

Thus, the once clear picture of the grammatical landscape around “quirky subjects” is blurred. Drawing a clear-cut line between constructions that exemplify “quirky subjects” and those that do not therefore involves some arbitrariness. In particular, the discussion of “quirky subjects” suffers from the fact that there is no easily identifiable *and* grammatically meaningful notion of “subject”, which could decide which of the criteria are essential, a point that was stressed by Sigurðsson (2000a:27). Questioning the usefulness of the notion of a subject (as part of grammar in addition to Case and the hierarchy of arguments) thus appears more fruitful than further attempts of answering the question “Is X a quirky subject?” on partially arbitrary grounds. In this spirit, Wun-

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derlich (2001) has developed a contrastive analysis of Icelandic and German that avoids reference to the notion of (quirky) subjects. The present paper is in line with his view, it elaborates his basic insights in a different framework.

On the one hand, Reis (1982) has shown that the laws governing German syntax can be formulated properly in terms of Case and argument roles/hierarchies, while the notion “subject” is superfluous. On the other hand, the explanation of unmarked constituent order in German verb second main clauses justifies the postulation of a specific structural position that hosts the highest argument of a predicate (among other elements). In the model proposed here, Icelandic differs minimally from German in that this position has to be filled in embedded clauses as well. The further differences between Icelandic and German concerning this position, which were noted, e.g., by Zaenen, Maling & Thráinsson (1985), can be reduced to factors involving Case, or they are due to the absence of particular construction types in German. The postulation of “quirky subjects” is thus not warranted. In this respect, we concur with Wunderlich (2001), but details of our analyses differ.

The paper is organized as follows. In the next section, we introduce the notion of “quirky subjects”, and discuss some of the data that seem to motivate the postulation of a major difference between Icelandic and German in the domain of subjects. Section 3 develops and justifies an analysis of German normal word order (see Lenerz 1977), which integrates fundamental insights of Travis (1984), Rizzi (1997), and Pili (2001). Section 4 shows how Icelandic fits into the model developed for German. In section 5, we discuss the criteria for labelling a phrase as a “quirky subject” one by one. It will be shown that the empirical facts do not support the view that Icelandic, but not German, possesses such a grammatical function. Either both languages have quirky subjects, or none of them does. In the concluding section, we argue that the latter interpretation is the more promising one.

2. Setting the Stage

In Icelandic and German, noun phrases bearing a Case different from nominative can appear in preverbal/sentence initial position. Given that the two languages allow the topicalization of objects, the presence of oblique (non-nominative) noun phrases in clause initial position constitutes no surprise by itself. In both Icelandic *and* German, there are, however, constructions in which an oblique noun phrase needs no special pragmatic licensing for occupying the preverbal/clause-initial position. This is the case for sentences such as (1).

- (1) a. Honum var hjalpáð (Icelandic)
 him.DAT was helped
 b. Ihm wurde geholfen (German)
 him.DAT was helped
 ‘He was helped’

At exactly this point, the traditions of grammatical descriptions of the two languages (within the generative framework) bifurcate. For Icelandic, a battery of tests such as the one listed in (2) (borrowed from Sigurðsson 2000a) has been developed (see also Andrews 1982, Zaenen, Maling & Thráinsson 1985, among others) that seems to establish that the preverbal noun phrase in (1a) is a subject, in spite of its being marked with dative case. With respect to the domains mentioned in (2), oblique preverbal noun phrases of the type in (1a) behave like standard nominative subjects. For example, they can (and must) be realized as PRO in a control infinitive (criterion (2e)), as (3) illustrates. The idea that non-topicalized preverbal oblique nominals are “quirky subjects” has become the standard analysis for Icelandic.

- (2) a. Reflexivization
 b. Subject-verb inversion (in V1 and V2 environments)
 c. Subject position in ECM infinitives
 d. Raising
 e. Control (i.e. the ability of being a controllee)
 f. Conjunction reduction

- (3) Ég vonaðist til að PRO verða hjálpað
 I hoped for to PRO.DAT be helped
 ‘I hope that one helps me’

In contrast, the fact that certain oblique noun phrases may occupy the clause-initial position without bearing a special pragmatic function has often been noted for German (see, e.g., Lenerz 1977), but there are hardly any attempts of accounting for it. Den Besten (1985) is a notable exception – insofar as his proposal allows that the dative pronoun in (1b) can occupy the subject position [Spec,IP]. However, the construction in (1b) fails to meet certain of the diagnostics in (2). For example, the dative nominal cannot be realized as PRO in an infinitive in German.

- (4) * Ich hoffe geholfen zu werden
 I hope helped to be
 ‘I hope that one helps me’

Such contrasts between Icelandic and German suggest that the dative pronoun *ihm* in (1b) is *not* a subject (see Zaenen, Maling & Thráinsson 1985, Sigurðsson 2000a). This view is the standard approach for German, but it leaves an important question unanswered: why is it the case that some objects may always occupy the preverbal position, while others can do so only when they bear special pragmatic functions?

3. The Prefield: filling the preverbal position in German

The standard analysis of German main clauses is based on insights of Koster (1975) and Thiersch (1978), and is illustrated in (5). It takes the right-peripheral position which the finite verb occupies in embedded clauses (5a) as basic, and derives the second position effect of main clauses by moving the finite verb to an empty Comp slot. In addition, exactly one constituent of the clause is moved to the specifier position of CP [Spec,CP] preceding the Comp slot, which is filled by the finite verb (5b).

- (5) a. Dass der Peter den Hans eingeladen hat
 that the.NOM Peter the.ACC Hans invited has
 b. [_{CP} [den Hans]_i [[_C hat]_k] [_{IP} der Peter t_i eingeladen t_k]]
 the.ACC Hans has the.NOM Peter invited
 ‘Peter has invited Hans’

That this standard approach has shortcomings was first noted by Travis (1984). One fact that calls for an explanation is the privileged access of the nominative argument of standard transitive verbs to the preverbal position (the prefield). Objects of such verbs may appear in the prefield only if they bear a special pragmatic function, like being topics or being in focus. Thus, (5b) could not be used as an answer to “what has happened?”. It can only be used as an answer to “who has Peter invited”, or “who has invited Hans”.

The nominative argument, however, can *always* show up in the prefield. (6) is a possible answer to “what has happened?”. It represents the default order. Travis (1984) takes similar observations¹ as evidence for her claim that preverbal nominative noun phrases occupy the subject position [Spec,IP] rather than [Spec,CP] in German main clauses, cf. (6). In other words, there are *two types* of main clauses in German: IPs, which represent unmarked order and begin with subjects, and CPs, which may begin with any category provided that it bears a special pragmatic function like topic or focus. See also Zwart (1993) for a related approach, among others.

- (6) [_{IP} [Der Hans]_I [[_I hat]_k] [_{VP} den Peter eingeladen t_k]]
 the.NOM Hans has the.ACC Peter invited
 ‘Hans has invited Peter’

It has been noted by Lenerz (1977) that the basic or unmarked word order nominative > dative > accusative does not hold in all clauses. There are two constellations in which dative > nominative is “unmarked” or “normal”, viz., passive clauses and clauses involving unaccusative and psychological predicates. In other words, we find deviations from the nominative-first pattern only when the nominative argument is an

1. Travis (1984) cites further data involving the placement of unstressed pronouns to the prefield position as supporting her analysis, but data from more varieties of German question the validity of her pertinent argument, see Gärtner & Steinbach (2001) for details.

(underlying) *direct object*, that is, when the dative noun phrase (the indirect object) arguably is *higher* in the hierarchy of arguments than the nominative noun phrase.²

For simple embedded clauses such as (7), one can explain the unmarked status of dative > nominative order in a straightforward way. One only needs to assume that the lexical hierarchy of arguments must be reflected by the structural hierarchy of arguments in the VP³ when they are merged, and that nominative noun phrases are not forced to move to [Spec,IP] in German (see den Besten 1985 for the latter assumption).

- (7) [CP Dass [IP[VP einem Kind das Fahrrad gestohlen wurde]]]
 that a.DAT child the.NOM bike stolen was
 ‘That the bike was stolen from a child’

Identical unmarked order facts characterize main clauses, as illustrated by (8) and (9). Both (8) and (9) are potential answers to an out-of-the-blue question like “what has happened” (unlike their nominative-initial counterparts!).

- (8) Einem Kind wurde das Fahrrad gestohlen
 a.DAT child was the.NOM bike stolen
 ‘The bike was stolen from a child’
- (9) Einem Schauspieler ist der Text entfallen
 a.DAT actor is the.NOM text forgotten
 ‘An actor has forgotten the text’

That this constitutes a problem for the standard analysis of the German prefield construction was (to the best of my knowledge) first noted by Hubert Haider in a talk at the 1988 GGS-conference in Passau. Why should the dative object have a privileged access to á in (10) if what is involved is movement to [Spec,CP], that is, to an operator position? How can the dative object move at all to an operator position if it is neither a topic nor a focus phrase?

- (10) [CP á wurde [VP einem Kind [das Fahrrad gestohlen]]]
 was a.DAT child the.NOM bike stolen

The natural analysis in the spirit of Travis (1984) seems to be that the clauses in (8) and (9) are IPs, with the subject position [Spec,IP] being filled by the dative noun phrase, cf. (10’) and see den Besten (1985) for a proposal allowing such an account.

- (10’) [IP Einem Kind wurde [VP [das Fahrrad gestohlen]]]
 a.DAT child was the.NOM bike stolen

2. That this holds for psychological predicates with a dative argument, too, has been argued for in Fanselow (1992).

3. This may be due to a principle such as SEMHIER(ARCHY) proposed in Wunderlich (2001): “The linear order of arguments should correspond to their semantic ranking (with the highest argument first).” For base structures, the relevant generalization also follows from the strict compositionality of interpretation in a straightforward way, see Fanselow (1991), Stechow (1992).

Such a solution seems to work well for the data considered so far, but other observations call for a modification. What (7) and (8), (9) show is that unmarked order facts of embedded and main clauses are identical:⁴ if *á* can be the leftmost element of an unmarked complement clause, it can occupy the preverbal position in an unmarked main clause, too, and vice versa. This, however, does not only hold for phrases that may be considered subjects in some extended sense. It is also true for adverbials.

Thus, Frey (2000) shows that temporal adverbs may freely precede nominative subjects in pragmatically unmarked embedded clauses. The same is true of main clauses: temporal adverbials may precede the finite verb in a main clause without bearing any special pragmatic function.

- (11) Am Sonntag hat ein Eisbär einen Mann gefressen
 on Sunday has a polar bear a man eaten
 ‘A polar bear ate a man on Sunday’

Likewise, sentence level adverbs can always precede subjects, and they are tolerated in the prefield in unmarked situations, as has already been noted by Koster (1978) for Dutch. (11) and (12) are perfect answers to “what has happened?”

- (12) Vielleicht hat der Schauspieler seinen Text vergessen
 perhaps has the actor his text forgotten
 ‘Perhaps, the actor forgot his text’

Koster (1978) observes furthermore that sentence level adverbs originating in an embedded clause cannot be placed into the prefield position of the matrix clause, as (13) and (14) illustrate for Dutch and German, respectively. Since long-distance operator movement *is* possible in Dutch and German, the ungrammaticality of the b-examples in (13) and (14) suggests that sentence level adverbs cannot undergo operator movement. If so, the adverbs cannot have reached the clause-initial position by operator-movement in the a-examples either.

- (13) a. Waarschijnlijk is hij ziek
 probably is he sick
 ‘Probably, he is sick’
 b. *Waarschijnlijk zegt Jan dat hij ziek is
 probably says Jan that he sick is
 ‘John says that he is probably sick’
- (14) a. Glücklicherweise hat er angerufen
 fortunately has he called
 ‘fortunately, he has called’

4. This is not entirely correct, since clitic non-subject pronouns and certain particles may be adjacent to the complementizer in an embedded clause, although they cannot precede the finite verb in a main clause. We will ignore this problem here because of limitations of space. See Fanselow (2002) for a sketch of an account.

- b. * Glücklicherweise denke ich dass er t angerufen hat
 fortunately think I that he called has
 ‘I think that fortunately he has called’

The position preceding the finite verb in a pragmatically unmarked clause is, thus, not an operator position, but it is also not a “subject” position in an interesting sense of the term: it is obvious that nominative subjects and sentence level adverbs have too little in common from a grammatical perspective. The claim that the sentence level adverbs occupy the “subject position” in (13,14a) may be unobjectionable in a certain technical sense, but it implies that the content of the notion “subject” is reduced to “leftmost element in a pragmatically unmarked clause”

In other words, there is a non-operator position, an A-position, at the left periphery of German main clauses which is not confined to subjects, but can be occupied by quite diverse types of phrases. There are several ways of making this idea precise. For example, let us assume that German main clauses are projections of a Finiteness-head Fin (see, e.g., Rizzi 1997). Fin is the target of verb movement in main clauses. The specifier position [Spec,Fin] must be filled *obligatorily*, and movement to it is governed by some version of the Minimal Link Condition (MLC): only the element which is closest to [Spec,Fin] and which meets the requirements for the position targeted by movement can undergo movement (see Chomsky 1995).⁵ Since Fin itself imposes *no* restrictions at all on its specifier position, nothing but \hat{a} can move to \acute{a} in (15a). The MLC thus implies that normal order facts of main and complement clauses are identical. What may appear in \hat{a} in main and embedded clauses is determined by laws governing the hierarchy of arguments and the placement of adverbials, which need not concern us here.⁶

- (15) a. \acute{a} Fin [_{OP} \hat{a} [...]]
 b. Comp [_{OP} \hat{a} ...]

Leaving the domain of unmarked word order, we may first observe that non-focal, thematic elements may appear in the first position following the complementizer in embedded clauses (16a). The same is true for matrix clauses (16b). This follows straightforwardly in our model: because of the MLC, exactly the highest element \hat{a} is attracted (moved) to [Spec,FinP]. It does not matter whether the phrase occupying \hat{a} shows up there because it was merged (base-generated) in this slot, or because it was moved there by scrambling. Thus, under the pragmatic conditions that license

5. This may be formulated, e.g., as follows (in the spirit of Chomsky 1995): \acute{a} cannot move to \acute{O} if there is a \hat{a} that could also move to \acute{O} , such that \hat{a} c-commands \acute{a} .

6. Since Wunderlich’s constraint SEMHIER mentioned above applies to surface representations, it has, essentially, the same effects as a Minimal Link Condition restricting the movement of XPs out of their base positions to [Spec,FinP].

scrambling, both (16a) *and* (16b) are correctly predicted to be fine: the scrambled⁷ element is mapped⁸ further to [Spec,FinP].

- (16) a. dass den Wagen niemand reparierte
 that the.ACC car nobody fixed
 ‘that nobody fixed the car’
 b. den Wagen hat niemand repariert
 the car has nobody fixed
 ‘nobody has fixed the car’

Rosengren (1993) and Krifka (1998) argue convincingly that the conditions for scrambling cannot always be formulated in terms of conditions that are met by the scrambled phrase itself. Rather, the scrambling of \hat{a} at least sometimes serves the purpose of allowing *another* phrase \hat{a} to be in focus. If correct, their analyses imply that *den Wagen* does not reach its position in (16a) *and* (16b) by operator movement (because it has no operator features). Consequently, *den Wagen* occupies an A-position in (16b) (=Spec,FinP) - again, it would make little sense to equate that slot with a *subject* position.

Finally, the prefield can also host *wh*-phrases and focused material, as (17) shows. The simplest analysis would seem to be that Fin is also able to bear operator features such as *wh* or *foc*. Recall that the Minimal Link Condition requires that a phrase P can move to a position Q only if P is the phrase closest to Q that meets the requirements imposed for Q. Thus, if Fin has a [+wh]-feature in (18), its specifier can only be filled by a phrase bearing a [+wh]-feature, if one makes the standard assumption that the features of specifiers and heads must agree (so that the [+wh]-feature of Fin can be checked, as required). Consequently, \hat{a} can move to \hat{a} in (18), provided that it possesses a [+wh]-feature while \tilde{a} lacks it. In other words, when Fin has a [+wh]-feature, the closest *wh*-phrase will move to its specifier position, possibly crossing other [-wh]-phrases on its way up. This accounts for (17b).

- (17) a. Was hat sie ihm gegeben
 what has she him given
 ‘What has she given to him?’
 b. Nichts hat sie ihm gegeben
 nothing has she him given
 ‘she has given him NOTHING’

(18) [\hat{a} [FIN (\pm wh), (\pm foc)] [\acute{o} _P \tilde{a} ... \hat{a} ...]]

7. The term “scrambling” is used here in a loose, non-technical sense. See Fanselow (2001) for arguments against deriving free constituent order by movement.

8. Movement to [Spec,FinP] is an instance of A-movement. Our analysis therefore presupposes that short scrambling involves A-movement (see Deprez 1989, Mahajan 1990) or no movement at all (Fanselow 2001), because A-movement to [Spec,FinP] following scrambling would be improper otherwise.

In a similar way, a [+focus]-specification of Fin allows the fronting of focus phrases, as in (17b).⁹ When Fin is not specified positively for any operator feature, [Spec,Fin] is an A-position, and the constellation discussed in the context of (15a) arises again: the phrase closest to [Spec,Fin] moves to that position.

In a slightly more complex analysis, Fin is not able to bear operator features. One then needs (at least) one additional functional layer above FinP, as shown in (19), where Comp bears the operator features.

(19) [_{CP} á [Comp (±wh), (±foc)] [_{FinP} Fin ... [_{OP} ã ... â ...]]]

The choice between (18) and (19) depends, partially, on the analysis of further languages. In Russian (see Baylin, 2001), there seems to be a verb second effect comparable to the one in German, but only in clauses representing “unmarked” order, and in clauses involving the preposing of thematic material (as in (16b)). The verb does not, however, move to second position when *wh*-phrases or phrases involving (contrastive) focus are preposed. Relative to (19), this difference between German and Russian can be explained easily: the finite verb moves only to Fin in Russian, whereas it climbs up to Comp (when present) in German. Kashmiri main clauses (see Bhatt 1999) resemble their German counterparts very closely, but in questions that also contain topic material, the order topic-*wh*-phrase(s)-verb (20) is preferred over simple verb second structures. This seems to indicate that there is yet another functional head above Comp that fails to attract the verb in Kashmiri.

(20) Rameshan kyaa dyutnay tse
Ramesh what gave you
‘what did Ramesh give to you’

The resulting model comes close to the one proposed in Rizzi (1997). Since the proper analysis of *wh*- and focus-movement is not crucial for the point to be made, we will simply assume that (19) is correct, and leave the issue in the interest of space.

In this section, we have argued for the existence of a non-operator Aposition [Spec,FinP] at the left periphery of German main clauses, an idea that elaborates basic insights of Travis (1984) and Zwart (1993). [Spec,FinP] is the landing site for the highest argument and certain adverbials in sentences involving unmarked order, and it may host a scrambled phrase under the pragmatic conditions that license this type of reordering. If the nominative arguments of active transitive predicates are prototypical subjects, then [Spec,FinP] is a “subject position” in the sense that prototypical subjects typically move to it in unmarked sentences. If a “subject position” is a structural slot that is reserved for the category of subjects, and relative to which the subject properties of a phrase are established, then [Spec,FinP] is not a subject position – unless we are willing to make the notion of subject void of empirical content

9. It need not concern us here whether topichood corresponds to a further operator feature, as is implied by the analyses of Frey (2000) and Pili (2001). See in particular Frey (2000), for the need of assuming (clause-internal) topic-movement in addition to scrambling.

4. Linking German and Icelandic

The analysis (19) for German main clauses developed in the preceding section resembles the proposal Holmberg (2000) puts forward for *Stylistic Fronting* in Icelandic in certain respects. Holmberg follows the standard minimalist assumption (see Chomsky 1995) that the subject position [Spec,IP] must be filled because Infl has an “EPP¹⁰-feature”, that must be checked by a phrase moving to its specifier position. Originally, the EPP-feature was equated with a determiner-feature, because only DPs (that is, categories that have determiner features) appear to be able to fill the subject position, i.e., [Spec,IP], in English. One may question the appropriateness of such a decision on the basis of examples like (22), in which a PP occupies the subject position. Dissociating the “EPP-feature” from the determiner-feature becomes inevitable, however, when one tries to account for movement to the specifier position of CP in terms of an EPP-feature, too, as Chomsky (2000) and Fanselow & Mahajan (1996, 2000) have proposed, because the specifier position of CP in German and other languages can be filled by *all* types of phrases, not just by DPs. The EPP-feature is, thus, a feature that only marks that certain positions be filled, it has no additional content.¹¹

(21) Into the room came a man from India

Consider now Icelandic *Stylistic Fronting*, as exemplified by (22). When there is no argumental noun phrase that could fill the position preceding the finite verb in an Icelandic clause (= [Spec,IP] in the standard analysis), two possibilities exist. The expletive *þuð* may be inserted, or a non-finite verb or verbal particle may be fronted, as in both the main and the embedded clause in (22). According to Holmberg (2000), *Stylistic Fronting* is by no means an exceptional construction. Rather, *Stylistic Fronting* results from standard movement to [Spec,IP].

(22) Fram hefur komið að fiskað hefur verið í leyfisleysi
 forth has come that fished has been illegally
 ‘It has come forth that it has been fished illegally’

It has been established by Jacobson (1987) and Larson (1988) that the verb and the verbal complex can be the highest category in the projection that is embedded by Infl (in particular, in verb-object languages), because a structure such as (23)¹² is

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10. Recall that EPP stands for *Extended Projection Principle*, that is, the requirement that all clauses have a subject.
 11. One may wonder whether that insight refutes rather than supports the claim of the minimalist program that movement is only triggered when there is a need to check an uninterpretable feature of an attracting head. The only *raison d'être* for the EPP-feature is the fact that movement is necessary. We will not pursue this issue here.
 12. Several proposals have been made in the literature concerning the nature of F, the choice among which is, again, not crucial for the point we wish to make.

established. When the “external” argument is absent, or when no other argument c-commands the verbal complex, the verbal complex is the highest element below Infl.

(23) á Infl [[_F verbal complex]_i [_{VP} ..._{t_i} ...]]

Given the Minimal Link Condition, á can only be filled by an element from the verbal complex in (23), because these are closest.¹³ Since the finite verb must occupy Infl itself, it is only the non-finite parts of the verbal complex that can go to [Spec,IP], such as the participle *fiskað* or the verbal particle *fram*.

Holmberg (2000) shows in detail why this account of *Stylistic Fronting* is superior to previous analyses. For our purposes, it is of particular importance that he has established that [Spec,IP] can be filled by a particle or a participle. Icelandic [Spec,IP] thus is a “subject position” only in the uninteresting sense introduced above: it is the position which prototypical subjects can move to - not because of any intrinsically important “subject property”, but because movement to the position is governed by the Minimal Link Condition. Other categories are tolerated in the position as well. It is thus more appropriate to speak of a FinP rather than an IP (as we did for German), in order to avoid unwanted connotations of [Spec,IP].

Icelandic differs from German, however, in that the verb moves to second position in embedded clauses introduced by a complementizer as well. Pili (2001) argues that German and Icelandic embedded clauses possess the abstract structure [_{CP} ... Comp [_{FinP} .. Fin ..]]. In Icelandic, complementizers are inserted into Comp, and the verb always moves to Fin. In German, complementizers are inserted in Fin, and move to Comp. Consequently, the verb cannot move to an embedded Fin in German (because the position is occupied by the trace of the complementizer).¹⁴ We will adopt this solution for the purposes of the present paper.

Thus, German and Icelandic share the structure (24). FinP is always projected, while Comp is present only in embedded clauses, and in structures involving wh- or focus features. [Spec,FinP] is an A-position to which the highest element in the category below it moves. It is not a subject position in any interesting sense.

(24) [_{CP} ã [Comp (±wh), (±foc)] [_{FinP} á Fin ... [ópâ ...]]]

We can now return to the issue of quirky subjects. If [Spec,FinP] is able to host elements other than nominative subjects in Icelandic and German, because it is a position not restricted to subjects (as evidenced by (22) and related constructions), we do not have to assume that dative *henni* is a quirky *subject* in (25) if we want to explain why *henni* rather than *their* occupies the preverbal position in an unmarked clause. It suffices to assume that the dative corresponds to the higher of the two arguments in (25), so that it will move to [Spec,FinP] under the restrictions imposed by the Minimal Link Condition.

13. We have simplified the proposal of Holmberg (2000) in a number of respects that are irrelevant for our discussion.

14. In Pili’s model, the question arises whether [Spec,FinP] can and must be filled when a complementizer is inserted into Fin. We will simply assume that complementizer are not compatible with specifiers. See Pili (2001) for a different view concerning this issue.

- (25) Henni leiddust/leiddist their
 she.DAT be.bored.3pl/3sg they.NOM
 ‘She was bored with them’

The literature on Icelandic (Zaenen et al. 1985, Sigurðsson 1989), Faroese (Barnes 1986) and Spanish (Masullo 1993, Fernández-Soriano 1999) claims that linearization facts constitute evidence for the subject status of preverbal oblique noun phrases. The claim is made that phrases appearing in the first position of a clause without bearing a special pragmatic function (topic or focus) are subjects. It is the same phrases that immediately follow a verb moved to Comp in a yes-no-question, and a non-subject wh-question. In the light of our discussion, this argument is invalid. Adverb placement data (in German) and participle placement facts (in Icelandic) show that the highest A position of a clause, [Spec,FinP], is not restricted to subjects. Consequently, we cannot conclude anything concerning grammatical functions from the fact that a phrase is able to show up in [Spec,FinP].

Special reference to subject status would be necessary only if the oblique noun phrase appearing in [Spec,FinP] would not be the highest argument in the construction. In a mono-argumental structure, this cannot be the case for obvious reasons. In structures with two arguments, oblique noun phrases can appear in [Spec,FinP] only in passive and unaccusative and psych-verb constructions (see Sigurðsson 1989), and they always correspond to the higher of the two arguments (the indirect rather than the direct object). Therefore, no reference to subject status is necessary in an account of their placement into the clause-initial position.¹⁵

15. This does not imply that subjects of active transitive constructions never show up with a Case different from nominative in other languages. If the Case of (such) subjects is determined by Infl, then variation in the feature composition of Infl is able to trigger Case differences. Indeed, finite Infl combines with nominative subjects in Latin, while infinitives are constructed with an accusative subject (Jensen 1983, Pillinger 1980). There are aspect-related Case differences in Hindi (Mohan 1994, Alexiadou 1999, Stiebels, 2000) and Georgian (Anderson 1984), and modality has an influence on subject Case in Finnish (see Laitinen & Vilkuna 1993), and Russian (Moore & Perlmutter, 2000). The existence of ergative languages also proves that nominative is not the only Case that can go to subjects (see also Stiebels 2000 for a detailed discussion).

Non-nominative “quirky” subjects pose a problem in those construction types only in which the Case to be expected for a subject is nominative because, e.g., Infl assigns nominative Case only (as is true for Icelandic, Faroese, and German). See Sigurðsson (2000a) for a discussion of the importance of this distinction between the two types of non-nominative subjects. The Case of the oblique noun phrases in [Spec,FinP] may be a structurally assigned dative (as in a passive of a double object construction, and, perhaps, unaccusative and psychological predicates), or be the result of an idiosyncratic Case government property of individual verbs. See Blume (1998, 2000) and Fanselow (2000) for different attempts of reducing the amount of idiosyncrasies in lexical Case government.

5. Differences between Icelandic and German

It is, of course, not only the word order facts (which German shares with Icelandic) that have motivated the postulation of quirky subjects. Rather, preverbal oblique noun phrases behave differently in Icelandic and German in a number of respects. In this section, we discuss these differences, and show that they do not involve a difference in the grammatical function (subject vs. object) of the phrase in [Spec,FinP].

5.1 Coordination Reduction

Icelandic shows a peculiar behavior in (26) with respect to coordination reduction. The deletion of an oblique noun phrase in [Spec,FinP] can be licensed by a nominative subject antecedent (and vice versa):

- (26) Ég hafði mikið að gera og (mér) var samt ekki hjálpað
 I.NOM had a lot to do and (me.DAT) was nevertheless not helped
 ‘I had a lot to do, and noone helped me’

If conjunction reduction is sensitive to the identify of grammatical functions, (26) would be an argument for the subject status of a dative noun phrases in [Spec,FinP] in Icelandic. In contrast, (27) fails to be grammatical, which would show that German [Spec,FinP] does not host quirky subjects under the assumption that coordination reduction presupposes an identify of grammatical functions.

- (27) * der Mann mag die Bibel und ~~dem~~ Mann gefällt der Koran
 the.NOM man likes the bible and the.DAT man pleases the koran.
 ‘The man likes the bible, and the koran pleases him’

Should we indeed formulate the theory of conjunction reduction in such a way that the identity of grammatical functions is the major factor? The answer must be negative, since Faroese has problems with (26), too, as (28b) taken from Barnes (1986) (=his (75) and (80)), illustrates. Faroese shares the other evidence for quirky subjects with Icelandic. If (26) is a criterion for the subject status of an oblique noun phrase in [Spec, FinP], only Icelandic possesses quirky subjects, and “subject” would be term relevant for coordination reduction only.

- (28) a. henni dámdi vael at lesa og _ nýttist ekki sjónvarp
 her.DAT liked well to read and _ needed not television
 ‘She liked to read a lot, and needed no television’
 b. ?? honum leiddist við lívið og ___ tveitti seg á bláman
 him.DAT weared of life and ---NOM threw self in ocean
 ‘He was weared of life and threw himself into the ocean’

An explanation for the contrast between (26) and (27) can be found quite easily in the domain of identity requirements for Case, however.¹⁶ German object-initial structures may be reduced only if the Cases of the two objects match, as the contrast between (29a,b) and (29c) illustrates. This suggests that Case identity is a necessary condition for coordination reduction in German.

- (29) a. Den Arzt unterstützt Hans und ~~den Arzt~~ behindert Maria
 the.ACC doctor supports Hans and the. doctor impedes Maria
 ‘Hans supports the doctor, and Mary impedes him’
 b. Dem Arzt hilft Hans und ~~dem Arzt~~ assistiert Maria
 the.DAT doctor helps Hans and the doctor assists Maria
 ‘Hans helps the doctor, and Mary assists him’
 c. * Dem Arzt hilft Hans und ~~den Arzt~~ unterstützt Maria
 the.DAT doctor helps Hans and the.ACC doctor supports Maria
 ‘Hans helps the doctor, and Mary supports him’

For obvious reasons, pairs of dative and nominative noun phrases in [Spec,FinP] as in (27) fail to meet the Case identity requirement, so the contrast between (26) and (27) is accounted for without any reference to subjecthood if we assume that Icelandic does not impose a Case identity requirement. There is independent evidence for this claim, as (30) shows.¹⁷ The two objects bear different Cases in (30a). They can be topicalized simultaneously (30b). The deletion of the second object yields marginal results (30c), but the structure improves considerably when the identical subject is left out as well, as in (30d). (30d) suffices to establish that Case identity is in general *not* a requirement for the well-formedness of coordination reduction in Icelandic. What we observe in (30) for Icelandic contrasts with the facts in (29), and the pertinent difference is also responsible for the contrast between (26) and (27) on obvious grounds.

- (30) a. Við ælum að kjósa þennan forseta og við viljum treysta
 we intend to elect this.ACC president and we want trust
 þessum forseta.
 this.DAT president
 b. Þennan forseta ælum við að kjósa og þessum forseta viljum við treysta.
 c. ??Þennan forseta ælum við að kjósa og viljum við treysta.
 d. (?)Þennan forseta ælum við að kjósa og viljum treysta.
 ‘We intend to elect this president, and we want to trust this president’

The coordination reduction criterion therefore cannot tell us anything about the subject status of a phrase.

16. Wunderlich (2001) suggests that a high-ranked visibility requirement for dative Case is responsible for the ungrammaticality of (27). However, **dem Mann gefällt der Koran und ___ mag die Bibel* ‘the man.DAT pleases the koran and _ likes the bible’ is as ungrammatical as (27), although the dative Case now finds a visible representation.

17. Thanks to Halldór Sigurðsson for providing me with the relevant examples.

5.2 Infinitives I: Raising

Another crucial property of Icelandic and Faroese [Spec,FinP]-phrases is their behavior in Raising-to-Object contexts. In a normal Raising-to-Object/ Exceptional Case Marking (ECM) construction such as *I expect her to come early*, the subject of the infinitive receives a Case assigned by the matrix verb. In the Faroese counterpart of such constructions, the quirky Case of a noun phrase in [Spec,FinP] is overwritten by the accusative Case assigned by the *believe*-matrix-verb, as (31) taken from Barnes (1986) (his (38) and (39)) illustrates.

- (31) a. Jógvani tærvaði ein nýggjan bil
 Jogvann.DAT needed a new car
 ‘Jogvann needed a new car’
 b. Eg helt Jógvan tærva ein nýggjan bil
 I believed Jogvann.ACC to need a new car
 ‘I think Jogvann needs a new car’

Faroese allows the replacement of an oblique Case by a structural one in a number of further contexts: the dative assigned by some verbs falls victim to nominative Case assignment by Infl in the passive, and many (though not all) oblique noun phrases in [Spec,FinP] may also be realised with nominative Case. (Barnes 1986:33)

- (32) Maer dámar vael hasa bókina
 me.DAT likes well that book.ACC
 Eg dámi vael hasa bókina
 I.NOM like well that book
 ‘I like that book very much’

Icelandic shows constructions comparable to (31b) as well, but we do not observe the Case shift typical of Faroese in these (and the other) contexts, see (33). (34) shows that the highest argument of the embedded clause may appear in front of a matrix clause adverb (*í barnaskap mínum*) in the *believe*-construction. This fact strongly suggests that (33) and (34) involve a raising construction in the strict sense: the highest argument of the infinitive is extracted from it, and placed into a position in the matrix clause. If so, there is no need to make the (possibly problematic) assumption that the raising infinitive is a FinP itself. (35) taken from Zaenen et al. (1985: 448) is most telling in this respect: the complement clause element appearing in the matrix clause may be a PP as well. The position targeted by movement is thus category-insensitive.

- (33) Ég tel henni hafa alltaf þótt Ólafur leiðinlegur
 I believe her.DAT have always thought Olaf.NOM boring.NOM
 ‘I believe her always to have found Olaf boring’
 (34) Ég taldi Guðrúnu í barnaskap mínum sakna
 I believed Gudrun.ACC in foolishness my miss
 ‘In my foolishness, I believed Gudrun to miss Harald’

- (35) Ég taldi undir rúminu í barnaskap mínum vera góðan
 I believed under bed.the in foolishness my to be good
 felustað
 hiding place
 ‘In my foolishness, I believed that a good hiding place would be under the bed’

Which categories move to the relevant position in the matrix clause seems entirely determined by the Minimal Link Condition. Reference to the subject status of what is attracted is superfluous.

The same holds for Raising-to-Subject constructions. It must be guaranteed that only the highest argument of the embedded infinitive can move to the [Spec,Fin] position of the matrix clause in constructions like Icelandic (36), but that is already an automatic consequence of the Minimal Link Condition. Nothing more needs to be said in this context, in particular, no reference to subject status is necessary.

- (36) Ólafi virtist hafa leiðst
 Olaf.DAT seemed to-have be bored

German differs substantially from Icelandic and Faroese in the domain under consideration. There is no Raising-to-Object construction at all. *Believe*-type verbs enter control constructions, and Case is assigned directly into perception verb and causative complements (see den Besten 1985). Verbs like *scheinen* ‘seem’ trigger clause union obligatorily, so one cannot check for the presence or absence of raising. The differences between German and Icelandic are, therefore, again due to quite independent factors. The subject status of a phrase in [Spec,FinP] is not involved.

5.3 Infinitives II: Control

Both in Icelandic (37) and in Faroese (38), oblique noun phrases may be realized as PRO in a control infinitive. This is clearly impossible in German (39).

- (37) Ég vonaðist til að PRO verða hjálpað
 I hoped for to PRO.DAT be helped
 ‘I hope that one helps me’
- (38) Eg kann ikki torga PRO at vantar pengar
 I.NOM can not bear PRO.DAT to lack money
 ‘I cannot bear lacking money’
- (39) * Ich versuche, PRO nicht Geld zu fehlen
 I try PRO.DAT not money to lack
 ‘I try to not lack money’

Infinitive tests often figure prominently among the criteria for subjecthood, so we may be confronted with the decisive -and only- subject-related difference between German and Icelandic. Note that such a result would be a meagre one, because subject-status could then *only* predict differences concerning infinitives.

Note that the special status which “subjects” seem play in control infinitives is not really captured by the theory of syntax, if one wants to go beyond a restatement of the facts. Chomsky (1981) assumes that non-finite Infl cannot assign Case. For noun phrases that have to rely on Infl for their being able to satisfy a requirement such as the Case Filter (All visible noun phrases must have Case), Chomsky’s conjecture implies that they cannot show up in infinitives. The subject of an infinitive therefore must lack a phonetic matrix, it has to be PRO. Clausal subjects that might show up in infinitives because CPs do not need Case pose an obvious problem. Even if this difficulty can be circumvented, the problem created by oblique noun phrases remains. The only argument in a passive construction of *helfen* ‘help’ does not depend on Infl for its Case, it receives dative Case from the verb in German (and also in Icelandic). For the presence of such a dative noun phrase, the Case marking potential of Infl should not really matter. Thus, one should expect to find something like (40) as an infinitive for verbs combining with oblique noun phrases in *both* languages – but we do not do so in either!

- (40) * Ich versuche mir geholfen zu werden
 I try me.DAT helped to be
 ‘I try to be helped’

In more recent work, Chomsky (1995) assumes that a special null Case can and must be assigned in infinitives. If this ‘null’ Case cannot be realized on noun phrases with a phonetic matrix, and if it *must* be assigned to some noun phrase in a control infinitive, it follows that one noun phrase position must be left unrealized phonetically in an infinitive. Alternatively, one can simply say that a control infinitive corresponds to a one-place predicate, semantically, as Wunderlich (2001) does with his NOPROP-constraint: “An infinitive clause must have an open argument role”. Both approaches correctly imply that one argument position must be left unrealized phonetically in an infinitive. The ungrammaticality of (40) is thus explained in a straightforward way: all argument places in the infinitive are realized, in contrast to what the null Case idea or a constraint like NOPROP imply.

(41), on the other hand, is incompatible with fundamental facts of Case realization. Chomsky (1981) observes that the idiosyncratic Cases assigned by individual lexical items must not be replaced by structural Cases in a passive construction or a nominalization.¹⁸ If the null Case of Chomsky (1995) is a structural one that must be assigned to PRO in (41), and if the dative Case governed by *helfen* must not be left unrealized, the ungrammaticality of (41) is explained if null and dative Case may not co-occur on the same noun phrase: either null or dative Case would have to be left unassigned, but both options violate a principle of grammar.

- (41) * Ich versuche PRO geholfen zu werden
 I try helped to be
 ‘I try to be helped’

18. This corresponds to Wunderlich’s (2001) visibility condition for lexical Case.

The wellformedness of (37) and (38) presupposes, then, that lexically governed Cases can be replaced by structural ones (or be left unrealized) in Faroese and Icelandic. (31) and (32) have already established this for Faroese. The wellformedness of (38) is thus accounted for.

Icelandic keeps idiosyncratic Cases when they compete with accusative Case assigned by an ECM verb, or nominative Case assigned by Infl, but there are contexts in which idiosyncratic Case gives way to structural Case. Thus, whenever semantic conditions as identified by Maling (2001) allow it, lexically governed dative objects *can* be mapped onto genitive noun phrases in nominalizations (quite in contrast to German), as (42) taken from Maling (2001:449) shows.

- (42) a. þeir björguðu sjómanninum
 they rescued sailor.DEF.DAT
 ‘they rescued the sailor’
 b. Björgun sjómannsins
 rescue.DEF sailor.DEF.DAT
 ‘the rescue of the sailor’

In Icelandic free relative clauses (see Vogel, 2002), the relative pronoun must bear the Case assigned by the matrix verb. There is no matching requirement. Consequently, the Case assigned by the complement verb to the relative pronoun is suppressed, even if it is a lexically governed dative, as in (43).

- (43) a. Ég elska *þeim/ þann sem ég hjálpa
 I like those.DAT/ those.ACC that I help
 ‘I like those that I help’
 b. ?Ég elska *hverjum/ hvern (sem) ég hjálpa
 I like *who-DAT/ who-ACC (that) I help
 ‘I like whoever I help’

Under conditions different from those of Faroese, lexical Cases need not be realized in Icelandic either, so that the crucial condition for the grammaticality of (37) can be met. It remains to be explained why it is always the higher argument (irrespective of its Case) that must be realised as PRO in Icelandic. One can assume, for example, that the assignment of null Case is also subject to a Minimal Link Condition effect: it is assigned to the closest NP it can go to. Given that lexical Case need not always be realized in Icelandic, null Case will therefore *always* end up on the highest argument in Icelandic (this is equivalent to the constraint NOHIGH ‘‘The highest argument is not allowed to stay in an infinitive clause’’ of Wunderlich 2001). In German, lexical dative and genitive Case must not be left unexpressed, so that lower noun phrases have a chance of receiving null case when the higher one bears a lexical specification.

This section has established the same point as section 5.1: the differences between German and Icelandic involve the Case system, and not grammatical functions.

5.4 Agreement

In Icelandic and German (as in many other languages), agreement is a relation which the verb enters with *nominative* noun phrase only, and never with oblique noun phrases. Agreement facts could however, establish the subject status of certain oblique noun phrases indirectly - viz., if certain nominative noun phrase cannot (fully) agree with the verb, because they are not subjects.

In German, the verb always shows full agreement with the nominative noun phrase, irrespective of whether the latter is a direct object (as in passive and unaccusative clauses, see Grewendorf 1989) or a subject (i.e., the highest argument of an active transitive predicate). The situation is different in Icelandic. On the one hand, there are two verbs (see Sigurðsson 1996) which may fail to show agreement with their nominative objects, but since the phenomenon is restricted lexically, it does not imply anything concerning grammatical function. On the other hand, agreement is in general *impoverished* with (and only with) postverbal nominative noun phrases (which are, arguably, objects): the verb cannot agree with such a noun phrase when the latter is a 1st or 2nd person pronoun. In such a situation, the relevant content may simply be inexpressible (Sigurðsson 2000b) or the verb may show up in its default 3rd person singular form (Hrafnbjargarson 2001), see (44).

- (44) þér þótti við fyndin
 you.DAT found-3SG. we.NOM amusing
 ‘You found us amusing’

Impoverished agreement depending on position is not restricted to constructions that potentially involve a non-nominative subject. Samek-Lodovici (2002) gives an overview of agreement impoverishment in various Italian and Arabic dialects, in which the verb shows full agreement in SV-order, but only partial agreement or no agreement at all in VS-constructions. Since no other phrase needs to occur preverbally in the VS-case in Italian and Arabic, one can at most conclude that postverbal nominative noun phrases are not full subjects (whatever merits that proposal may have). It would not be justified to derive this from the assumption that another noun phrase has taken over the subject function.

Several solutions for impoverished agreement have been developed (Alexiadou 2001, Hrafnbjargarson 2001, Samek-Lodovici 2001) which explain the phenomenon in terms of the hierarchical position the nominative NP occupies – “subject” status plays no role.

5.5 Islandhood

The contrast in (45)-(46) (see Zaenen et al. 1985:451-2) is a further piece of evidence that might establish the subject status of oblique noun phrases in the specifier position of a FinP. Long distance *wh*-movement is grammatical in Icelandic, as (45b) illustrates. Topicalization within a complement clause as in (45c) makes that clause an island for

extraction. The grammaticality of (46a) implies thus that *henni* has not been topicalized, while the nominative noun phrase *Ólafur* in (46b) cannot simply occupy the subject position.

- (45) a. Jón telur að María hafi kysst Harald í gaer
 John believes that Mary has kissed Harald yesterday
 ‘John believes that Mary kissed Harald yesterday’
 b. Hvenær telur Jón að María hafi kysst Harald
 when believes John that Mary has kissed Harald
 ‘When does John believe that Mary kissed Harold?’
 c. *Hvenær telur Jón að Harald hafi María kysst
- (46) a.. Hvenær telur Jón að henni hafi þótt Ólafur leiðinlegur?
 when believes John that her.DAT has found Olaf.NOM boring
 ‘When does John believe that she found Olaf boring?’
 b. *Hvenær telur Jón að Ólafur hafi henni þótt leiðinlegur?

The contrast certainly shows that there is a difference between the two complement clauses in (45c) and (46a), in spite of the fact that both begin with an oblique noun phrase. In order to account for the island status of the complement clause in (45c), it suffices to say that no other operator position may intervene between the trace and the target position of an operator movement. *Harald* has moved to such an operator position in (45c), and exerts a blocking effect for further extraction. (46a) is grammatical if *henni* does not occupy an operator position. Nothing requires that the slot it is sitting in is a subject position.

5.6 Summary

The present section has reiterated a point frequently made (e.g., by Sigurðsson 2000a): German and Icelandic noun phrases in [Spec,FinP] differ in a number of respects (coordination, control and raising infinitives). It also stresses a point that is rarely made: they cannot but differ from each other, because independently motivated differences in the domain of conjunction reduction, the realization of lexical Case or the availability of constructions like Raising to Object imply that phrases in [Spec,FinP] must show a different behavior in the two languages.

6. Consequences for Grammar

The first detailed arguments for the analysis of Icelandic oblique clause initial noun phrases as quirky subjects were formulated in contributions to Lexical Functional Grammar (LFG). That this should be so comes as no surprise. In this model, grammatical functions are the basic units of grammatical analysis, so the peculiar behavior of (1a) repeated here as (47a) more or less had to be analysed in terms of subject status.

- (47) a. Honum var hjalpáð (Icelandic)
 him.DAT was helped
- b. Ihm wurde geholfen (German)
 him.DAT was helped
 ‘he was helped’

Just like Wunderlich (2001), the present paper shows that one would have to analyse the clause initial phrase of German (47b) as a quirky subject, too: whatever differences there are between the two languages must be accounted for in terms of the grammatical behavior of Case. In addition, the parallelisms in the behavior of clause initial oblique phrases such as the ones in (47) can be shown to follow from the hierarchy of arguments. The notion “subject” is not necessary at any point in the analysis of the construction.

This insight is in line with independent developments in the theory of grammar. In standard GB-theory (Chomsky 1981), grammatical functions played no official role, but there was a subject position, viz. [Spec,IP], that was quite distinct in grammatical behavior from other structural slots for arguments. Thus, its presence was forced by a specific principle (the Extended Projection Principle), it was considered argumental even if it did not receive a thematic role, it received Case in a different way (by agreement with Infl rather than by government), etc. Gradually, specific assumptions concerning [Spec,IP] were eliminated. For example, the Case of all noun phrases can nowadays be assigned/checked in a specifier-head relation. Furthermore, more than one functional projection seems justified between the verbal projection and the Complementizer layer. In a minimalist account of syntax, there is thus no position left that one might call a subject position. All we are left with is distinctions of Case and hierarchy. This is much reminiscent of what is also assumed in Lexical Decomposition Grammar (Wunderlich 1997), although details differ.

In the light of such overall developments, it would be quite surprising if the concept “quirky subject” would be more than a purely descriptive label. The present paper has shown that this is in line with the empirical facts.

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