Ditransitives in Faroese: The Distribution of IO/DO and PP*

Cherlon Ussery and Hjalmar Petersen
Carleton College, University of the Faroe Islands

0 Introduction

This paper examines ditransitives in Faroese and attempts to gauge the acceptability of double object constructions such as (1)a versus the acceptability of prepositional constructions such as (1)b.

(1) a. ...at geva fiskimonnum skattalætta
   Double Object (IO/DO) Construction
   ‘to give fishermen.Dat tax-relief.Acc’

   b. ...at geva skattalætta til fiskimenn
   Prepositional Construction
   ‘to give tax-relief.Acc to fishermen.Acc’.

The examples in (1) are the title of Fiebig’s (2012) thesis, which reports the findings of extensive corpus research on the distribution of these two patterns in Faroese. As documented in Fiebig’s (2012) work and other research, the double object construction is widespread, but the prevalence of the prepositional construction is not readily apparent. Thráinsson et al. (2004/2012) report that the prepositional frame is marginal to ungrammatical with verbs that have certain semantic properties, such as a “giving” interpretation. Other work reports that the prepositional frame is acceptable and depends on a variety of factors (Henriksen 2000; Petersen 2010; Fiebig 2012). We aim to build on this previous literature and to provide both a description of the distribution of each frame and a discussion of the theoretical implications.

We report the findings of a judgment survey conducted in December 2017 at the University of the Faroe Islands. As such, the conclusions we draw are limited to speakers who are 18-25 years old.

* We would like to thank the following people for assistance with this article: Jóhannes Gísli Jónsson at the University of Iceland for helpful conversations; Einar Freyr Sigurðsson at the Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies for generous feedback; Kate Richardson, Kyra Wilson, and Lazar Zamurovic at Carleton College for data entry; Alec Shaw at the University of Iceland for assistance with data analysis; two anonymous reviewers for thoughtful feedback; and especially, the students at the University of the Faroe Islands who participated in the survey. All errors are ours.
Given the discussion in previous work regarding the factors that might condition the use of one frame over the other, we tested the acceptability of double object and prepositional constructions across a variety of semantic categories and with indirect objects of varying phrasal length. This paper reports four main findings. First, speakers rate the double object construction higher than the prepositional construction across the board. The difference between the aggregate rating for the double object construction and the prepositional construction is statistically significant (p < .01) within each of the five semantic categories tested – benefactive, communication, giving, future having, and sending. Even though our overall findings suggest that speakers prefer the double object construction, the prepositional construction is still rated as acceptable. In fact, no speakers completely rejected the prepositional construction. Our findings are, thus, consistent with Henriksen (2000), who also reports that PPs are found in younger speakers’ speech.

Second, our findings suggest that the prepositional construction is more so associated with a caused motion interpretation than the double object construction is, which supports a portion of the Alternative Projection approach to ditransitives (found in Collins & Thráinsson 1996, Harley 2002, Beck & Johnson 2004, Bruening 2010a/b, Harley & Jung 2015, Bruening 2018, a.o.). This strand of analysis argues for a frame to meaning correspondence: the double object frame encodes caused possession and the prepositional frame encodes caused motion. This proposal predicts that giving, future having, and benefactive verbs (all of the benefactives we tested have a possession interpretation) are most acceptable with the double object frame and verbs of sending are most acceptable with the PP frame. We show that sending verbs are, indeed, generally rated higher with the PP frame and that the difference between the average rating for sending verbs versus verbs of communication, giving, and future having is significant (p < .01). The findings for the double object frame, however, are inconclusive. When compared against communication and sending verbs, the difference between the average rating for giving, future having, and benefactive verbs is not necessarily significant.

The third finding relates to phonological heaviness. Fiebig’s (2012) corpus examination of written Faroese potentially reveals a heavy-late effect: within the prepositional frame, phonologically heavy goal NPs are found. However, our findings do not directly support a heavy-late effect. Prepositional phrases with heavy NPs are not rated significantly better than smaller (non-pronominal) NPs in any semantic category. However, we do find that speakers generally dislike a heavy indirect object in the double object construction. For every semantic category except communication, speakers rated double object constructions with heavy indirect objects at a statistically lower acceptability rate. Further, we find that speakers disprefer
pronouns with the PP construction. Within each semantic category, double objects with pronominal indirect objects are rated significantly higher than prepositional constructions with pronouns. Yet, the latter kind of construction is not rejected, which is in accord with Petersen’s (2010) finding that pronouns are used with the PP construction. While our findings do not provide positive support for a heavy-late effect, they do suggest that speakers have a dispreference for a heavy phrase in a sentence-medial position and a dispreference for a phonologically light item in a sentence-final position.

Investigating ditransitives in Faroese is important because of its relationship with both the other Insular Scandinavian language, Icelandic, and its relationship with the mainland Scandinavian language Danish. In the syntactic literature, Icelandic is often discussed alongside Faroese because the two languages share many properties. However, as the Faroe Islands remain a Danish territory, there continues to be sustained contact between Danish and Faroese, as discussed in detail in Petersen (2010). With respect to ditransitives, Faroese sits between Icelandic and Danish. Icelandic has retained rich case morphology and has restrictions on the availability of the PP frame based on both case pattern and semantic interpretation. Danish, on the other hand, does not have case (except on pronouns) and fairly freely allows the prepositional frame (Hansen and Heltoft 2011: 1315). While no longer as robust as in Icelandic, case morphology remains in Faroese. Even though the restrictions on the PP construction are not as rigid as in Icelandic, that construction is not as freely available in Faroese as it is in relatively case-less Danish – or in relatively case-less English.

Faroese also diverges from Icelandic and Danish with respect to benefactives, and this brings us to our fourth finding. In our study, benefactive constructions receive the highest rating for the prepositional frame and the second highest rating for the double object frame. The results are statistically significant for PPs (p < .05) but not for double objects, and this overall pattern supports previous work which has noted the prevalence of benefactives in Faroese as compared to Icelandic (Holmberg & Platzack 1995 and Thráinsson 2007: 230) and as compared to Danish (Hansen & Heltoft 2011: 1313-1314).

This paper is organized as follows. Section 1 provides background context on ditransitives in Insular Scandinavian. Section 2 discusses the previous research and observations that have been made about the double object and the prepositional frames in Faroese. In Section 3 we present the findings of our study. Section 4 explores possible influences from English and Danish. In particular, we discuss various analyses of English ditransitives and comment on the degree to which our findings support predictions made by those analyses. Section 5 concludes and outlines future directions for our research.
1 Ditransitives in Insular Scandinavian

In the syntactic literature Faroese is usually classified together with Icelandic as an Insular Scandinavian language, in contrast to the Mainland Scandinavian languages Danish, Norwegian and Swedish. Among the syntactic features Insular Scandinavian share in contrast to Mainland Scandinavian is that the former have been reported to not allow the prepositional complement with verbs of the geva-‘give’ class (Holmberg & Platzack 1995: 12). While the situation in Faroese is more complex, this observation holds in Icelandic (Thráinsson 2007).

The prepositional frame is quite restricted in Icelandic. While the subject in a ditransitive is always nominative, the direct and indirect objects appear in various combinations of dative, accusative, and genitive case – with the cross-linguistic canonical order of a dative indirect object followed by an accusative direct object being the predominate pattern. The range of case patterns is shown below and according to Jónsson (2000), the distribution of each pattern is the following, with the numbers in parentheses indicating the total number of verbs: NDA (>220); NAD (37); NDD (29); NDG (28); NAG (21).¹

(2) a. Ég sagði þér söguna. NDA
   I told you.Dat the story.Acc
   ‘I told you the story.’

b. Þeir leyndu Ólaf sannleikanum. NAD
   they concealed Olaf.Acc the truth.Dat
   ‘They concealed the truth from Olaf.

c. Ólafur lofaði Mariu þessum hring. NDD
   Olaf promised Mary.Dat this ring.Dat
   ‘Olaf promised Mary this ring.

d. María óskaði Ólafí alls góðs. NDG
   Maria wished Olaf.Dat everything good.Gen
   ‘Mary wished Olaf everything good.’

e. Jón bað mig bænar. NAG
   John asked me.Acc a favor.Gen
   ‘John asked me a favor.’ (Zaenen, Maling, Thráinsson 1985, ex 37)

¹ See the appendix in Jónsson 2000 for the complete list of ditransitive verbs that comprise these categories. This list is based on verbs listed in dictionaries and handbooks of both Modern and Old Icelandic.
Only verbs that have the NDA or NDD case pattern allow for the prepositional frame with *til* ‘to’, and even then, it is generally restricted to verbs that express physical motion of the direct object, as shown by the contrast between (3)b and (4)b and between (5)b and (6)b.

(3) a. Haraldur sendi mér ost.  
Harold sent me.Dat cheese.Acc  
‘Harold sent me (some) cheese.’

b. Haraldur sendi ost til mín.  
Harold sent cheese.Acc to me.Gen  
‘Harold sent (some) cheese to me.’

(4) a. María gaf Haraldi bókina.  
Mary gave Harold.Dat the book.Acc  
‘Mary gave Harold the book.’

b. *María gaf bókina til Haraldar.  
M gave the book.Acc to Harold.Gen  
‘Mary gave the book to Harold.’  
(Thráinsson 2007: 173-174)

(5) a. Hún skilaði mér bókinni.  
she.Nom returned me.Dat the book.Dat  
‘She returned the book to me.’

b. Hún skilaði bókinni til mín.  
she returned the book.Dat to me.Gen  
‘She returned the book to me.’

(6) a. Ég lofaði henni því.  
I.Nom promised her.Dat it.Dat  
‘I promised her it.’

b. *Ég lofaði því til hennar.  
I.Nom promised it to her.Gen  
‘I promised it to her.’  
(Thráinsson 2007: 177-178)

Much more research is needed, but given that the PP frame encodes motion, Icelandic seems to fit into theoretical approaches that argue for a frame to meaning correspondence, such as the Alternative Projection approach discussed in the introduction (though we would need to confirm that the double object construction encodes caused possession).

Even though Faroese does not display the same restrictions as Icelandic, the double object construction is still preferred to the prepositional construction.

Though case morphology is less robust than in Icelandic, Faroese has three productive cases - nominative, accusative, and dative. There are relics of the genitive which exist only in a limited range of constructions, as with pronominal objects of *til*. In the ballad language, there are vestiges of the genitive, e.g. *njóta guls og landa* ‘enjoy gold-GEN.sg. and contries-GEN.pl’ (Weyhe 2011: 92), but the accusative (and sometimes the dative) is found in place of the genitive, as shown by Weyhe (ibid.) and Jónsson (2017). However, while Icelandic has genitive direct objects with some ditransitive verbs and some transitive verbs, no verb in modern

---

2 See Ussery 2017 and Ussery 2018 for a discussion of case and word order patterns in Icelandic ditransitives.
Faroese has a genitive object. For instance, the historical construction *bíða mín* wait me-GEN has changed to *bíða mær* – wait me-DAT or *bíða eftir mær* – wait after me-DAT ‘wait for me’.

Of the productive cases, the dative has been losing ground to the accusative in comparatives and as the object of some transitive verbs and some prepositions (for an overview of dative loss see, among others, Petersen 2017: 127, and references therein). The contrast between Faroese and Icelandic in comparatives is illustrated below.

(7) a. seks ferðir stórri enn Faroese
    six times.Acc larger than
b. sex sinnum stærri en Icelandic
    six times.Dat larger than
        (Petersen 2017, ex 4a)

Though the dative case is still used for the direct object of a specific set of transitive verbs, Jónsson (2009), Thráinsson (2015), and Petersen (2017) have shown that it is not productive in this context anymore, and that variation can be found between the dative and the accusative. Accusative replaces the dative especially as a complement of motion verbs such as *lyfta* ‘raise, lift up’ and *vika* ‘move’. With respect to prepositions, though many still govern dative complements, there exists variation and an incipient change from lexical dative to structural accusative. For instance, some speakers use an accusative object after *nærhendis* ‘near to’ even though this preposition originally governed the dative (Petersen 2019). It appears that structural case is prevailing in Faroese, contrasted with the state of affairs found in Icelandic. Barðdal (2001, 2008) has shown that many new verbs in Icelandic take dative objects if they fall into the appropriate semantic class or if there is a roughly synonymous dative-governing verb already in the language (see also Jónsson 2009 and Svenonius 2002).

However, the situation is not perfectly clear cut in Faroese: structural accusative does not always supersede the dative. Dative is still basically the preferred case for the complement of prepositions that have historically governed the dative, although some changes are occurring here as well. Petersen (2019) argues that there is a change from idiosyncratic accusative to thematic dative with PPs headed by *-fyr* ‘for’, especially with the NP complement of *frammanfyr* ‘in front of’. These prepositions originally took accusative complements, even though they have a locative interpretation. Thus, the dative is expected, as in *í bátinum* ‘in the

---

3 See Jónsson 2000: 83-84 for suggestions about why there are no genitive indirect objects in Icelandic.
4 Also see Maling (2002) for an extensive discussion of verbs that govern dative objects in Icelandic.
boat.Dat’. Indeed, prepositions such as *frammanfyri* ‘in front of’ + ACC are changing to *frammanfyri* + DAT.

Our study, as well as others (Petersen 2010; Fiebig 2012; Malmsten 2015), reveal that the dative stands strong in double object constructions. Unlike parallel constructions in Icelandic, Faroese allows almost exclusively the NDA case frame, as shown in (8) - (10).

(8) a. Freya sendi sjeikinum eina gávu.
Freya sent boyfriend.the.Dat a gift.Acc
b. Freya sendi eina gávu til sjeikin.
Freya sent a gift.Acc to boyfriend.the.Acc

(9) a. Mamman lovaði henni ein kjóla.
Mother. promised her.Dat a dress.Acc
b. Mamman lovaði ein kjóla til hennara.
the mother promised a dress.Acc to her.Gen.

(10) a. Uni fortaldi gentuni eina søgu.
Uni told the girl.Dat a story.Acc
b. Uni fortaldi eina søgu fyri gentuni.
Uni told a story.Acc before/in front of the girl.Dat

There are several points that are of particular interest. The first is that, unlike Icelandic, accusative has replaced genitive as the case for non-pronominal objects of *til*; only (9)b has the genitive. This change also marks an instance of structural accusative increasingly making its way into Faroese. The second point is that Faroese clearly differs from Icelandic in that Faroese allows the PP frame with verbs that do not express physical movement. The sentences in (9)b/(10)b would be ungrammatical in Icelandic. Icelandic does allow the PP frame with some non-movement verbs, but a preposition other than *til* ‘to’ is often used, as shown in (11)/(12).

---

5 In addition to the typical NDA case pattern in Faroese, Henriksen (2000: 80) mentions the NAA case frame, shown in (i), in which the latter object is semantically related to the verb.

(i) a. Hon kysti hann so sótan koss.
     she kissed him.Acc so sweet kiss.Acc
b. Eg bíði teg eina bon afturat.
    I ask you.Acc one request.Acc more
(Henriksen 2000: 79)

According to Henriksen (2000: 80) only four verbs occur in the NAA case frame in Faroese - *kyssa* ‘to kiss’, *læra* ‘teach’, *bíða* ‘ask’, *spyra* ‘ask’, with the indirect object having the thematic role of theme as in (i)a, or source in (i)b (‘you’ is the source of whatever is requested).
Additionally, in Icelandic the semantic interpretation is not always parallel to the standard PP frame. For instance, the direct object in (12)a cannot be the object of the preposition in (12)b.

(11) a. þeir leyndu hana sannleikanum. Icelandic
   they.Nom concealed her.Acc the truth.Dat

   b. þeir leyndu sannleikanum fyrir henni.
   they.Nom concealed the truth.Dat from/for her.Dat
   ‘They concealed the truth from her.’ (Thráinsson 2007: 175)

(12) a. Hann krafði hana sagna. Icelandic
   he demanded her.Acc stories.Gen
   ‘He asked her to reveal the information.’

   b. Hann krafði hana um peningana/ *um sagnirnar
   he demanded her.Acc about the money.Acc/*about the stories.Acc
   ‘He demanded the money from her.’
   *‘He demanded the stories from her.’ (Thráinsson 2007:177)

We see that fyrir ‘for’ is also used in the Faroese example in (10)b, while til ‘to’ is used in (9)b. In his discussion of fyrir ‘before; in front of’, Barnes (2001[1981]) suggests that there is a semantic role PRESENCE associated with this preposition, in which the object of the preposition is animate and the activity is done in the physical company of and directed at the animate object. Therefore, (10)b has an interpretation in which the telling of the story is done in the presence of the girl and is directed at her.

The third point of interest is that Icelandic and Faroese differ with respect to benefactives. Benefactives are more widely used in Faroese than in Icelandic, as pointed out by Holmberg & Platzack (1995) and Thráinsson (2007: 230). While the example in (13)a is grammatical in Faroese, it is marginal or even ungrammatical in Icelandic, shown in (13)b:

(13) a. Faroese
   Eg bakaði mammu míni eina kaku.
   I baked mother my.Dat a cake.Acc
   ‘I baked my mother a cake.’

   b. Icelandic
   ??Ég bakaði mömmu minni köku.
   I baked mother.Dat my cake.Acc
   ‘I baked my mother a cake.’

---

Barnes 2001: 37 defines PRESENCE as follows: ‘Presence comprises those examples in which something is uttered or done in the presence of (i.e. before) an animate being (occasionally an inanimate object), originally presumably with the implication, now with the additional sense that what is uttered or done is addressed to or directed at the animate being (or object).’ An example from Barnes 2001 is tíu skuldí heilur lisið hatta brævið fyrir mér hin sorgardagin … ‘you should rather (i.e. it would have been better if you had) read this letter to me [on] that day of sorrow’.
However, if the indirect object is coreferential with the subject, benefactives are possible in Icelandic, as in Ég bakaði mér köku ‘I baked myself a cake’ (Thráinsson 2007: 230). Icelandic allows the PP frame with benefactives, but the preposition handa ‘for’ or fyrr ‘for’ is used. Things are not so straightforward in Faroese benefactives. In (14)b, fyri is used and the sentence has the ‘presence’ interpretation discussed above while til is used in (15)b and has a caused possession interpretation.

(14) a. Lena sang mær ein sang.  
    Lena sang me.Dat a song.Acc  

b. Lena sang ein sang fyri mær.  
    Lena sang a song.Acc for me.Dat

(15) a. Jón keypti konunni ein bil.  
    Jon bought the wife.Dat a car.Acc  

b. Jón keypti ein bil til konuna.  
    Jon bought a car.Acc to the wife.Dat

‘John bought his wife a car.’

All of the benefactives that we tested use til in the prepositional construction. As mentioned in the introduction, our results find that speakers judge benefactives better than most other kinds of verbs in both the double object and the prepositional constructions.

In sum, we see that while Faroese and Icelandic have some common properties, the two languages are not identical when it comes to ditransitives. In particular, Icelandic has a wider range of case patterns and is far more restrictive in its use of the PP frame and Faroese allows a wider range of benefactive constructions in general. In the next section, we summarize some of the previous literature on the availability of the prepositional frame in Faroese.

2 Overview of Previous Observations about Faroese

Though the literature is far from extensive, there have been some observations reported about the use of the double object frame versus the prepositional frame in Faroese. Thráinsson et al. (2004/2012: 261) report that the double object frame is the default for verbs meaning ‘sell, lend, give, send’ and rule prepositional sentences with these types of verbs as marginal to ungrammatical, as shown below.

(16) *hon gav telduna til gentuna  
    she.Nom gave the computer.Acc to the girl.Acc  

A large text-based study (an examination of written essays) by Malmsten (2015) confirms that the double object construction stands strong in Modern Faroese. However, Henriksen (2000:
68) writes in his syntax of Faroese that PP complements are possible in the speech of the younger generations, and he gives the following example:

(17) a. Kongur skrivaði honum bræv.
   king wrote him. Dat letter. Acc
   ‘The king wrote him a letter.’

   b. Kongur skrivaði bræv til hansara.
   king wrote letter. Acc to his. Gen
   ‘The king wrote a letter to him.’ (Henriksen 2000: 68)

As we will later report, our findings are consistent with Henriksen’s; our participants were younger speakers and they allow PP complements (though, as discussed below, Petersen 2010a reports that older speakers do, in fact, also accept the PP frame).

The most extensive work on ditransitives in Faroese to date is Fiebig’s (2012) MA thesis. Her corpus study examined all the issues of the newspaper Dimmalætting from 1998, and her main conclusion is that the PP frame does exist in Faroese, even with geva ‘to give’, but that the double object frame is still the most common pattern, as also pointed out by Malmsten (2015). Fiebig (2012) categorizes verbs according to the semantic classes in Barðal, Kristoffersen and Sveen (2011: 67). These macro-categories include verbs of: actual transfer (geva ‘give’), intention (lova ‘promise’), creation (gera sær ‘make something for oneself’), mode of communication (skriva ‘write someone something’), enabling (loyva ‘permit’), retaining (banna ‘forbid’), mental processes (fyrigeva ‘forgive’), and possession (goyma sær ‘save something for oneself’).7/8

The results of Fiebig’s (2012) study show that the PP construction exists throughout a variety of semantic categories. In particular, the “actual transfer” class, which includes geva, usually takes the double object form, but PPs are not completely ruled out. Additionally, Fiebig (2012) reports that PPs are found with other semantic classes as well. In the “intention” class, PPs are found with the verbs at játta ‘grant’ and at ætla ‘intend’. Prepositions are also robustly found in the “communication” category with verbs such as boða ‘announce’, forklára ‘explain’, fortelja ‘tell’, siga ‘tell’, skriva ‘write’ and vísa ‘show’ and in the “possession” category with spara ‘to save.’ Within the “retaining” category, prepositions were only found

---

7 Fiebig also has a category for opaque or unclear distransitives such as kyssa ‘kiss’.
8 It should be noted that Barðal, Kristoffersen and Sveen (2011) provide a finer grained subcategorization for some of the macrocategories. For example, the Actual Transfer category is comprised of verbs of giving/delivering, lending, paying, sending, bringing, obtaining. However, the Intention categoy is only comprised of the verbs of future transfer.
within the “constraining” subcategory, e.g. seta e-m e-t ‘to give someone an order’. In the “creation” class, PPs are found with reisa ‘to raise,’ skapa ‘to create,’ and útvega ‘get’. No prepositions were found in the “enabling” and “mental processes” categories. The prepositional construction is also found with prepositions other than til. For instance, in the “communication” category, bidja ‘ask’ uses the preposition um ‘about.’

Even though the PP construction appears to be fairly widespread, Fiebig (2012) reports that there are additional factors at work, in particular phonological heaviness (Fiebig 2012: 82ff). PPs are generally not found if the complement to the preposition is a pronoun. However, if the NP is a bare noun, a noun that is modified in some way, or is phonologically heavy, a PP is possible. As we will discuss in Section 3, participants in our study rated PP constructions with a pronominal prepositional object worse than constructions with a regular NP and worse than constructions with a heavy NP. However, the relative absence of the preposition plus pronoun pairing from the corpus does not perfectly map to acceptability; pronouns are not completely ruled out with PPs.

Additionally, argument structure interacts with the availability of the double object and the prepositional frames in Faroese. Fiebig (2012) reports that PPs are not found with constructions in which the indirect object is a reflexive, as shown in (18).9 However, we note that reflexives are allowed with the PP variant of verbs of sending, as in (19). (We suspect that this contrast is due to verbal semantics, and perhaps pragmatic factors.)

(18) a. Hann átti sær hús í Danmark.
   he owned SELF.Dat house in Denmark

b. *Hann átti hús til sín in Denmark.
   he owned house to SELF in Denmark

(19) a. Hann sendi sær sjálvum ein teldupost
   he sent SELF.Dat an e-mail
b. Hann sendi ein teldupost til sín sjálvan
   he sent an email to SELF.Acc

Further, PPs were not found to co-occur with verbs that are only ditransitive, and never appear as monotransitive, that is verbs such as ímynda ‘imagine’, misunna ‘envy’ and unna ‘not envy’. This is not surprising, given that in Faroese, ditransitive verbs generally have monotransitive

---

9 In fact, a subset of verbs of “obtaining” and “creation” in Faroese (and Icelandic) are only felicitous with a reflexive indirect object, shown in (ii), and the PP frame is not allowed. Barðdal, Kristoffersen and Sveen (2011) also discuss similar V+REFL+NP examples in Norwegian.

(ii) a. Hann tók sær altíð eina ól eftir arbeiðið.
     he took SELF(dat.) always a beer(acc.) after work (Petersen, 2018: 160)
variants and all of the verbs that we examined have that property, some of which are illustrated in (20).

(20) a. Jón lænti ein bil.
   ‘John.Nom borrowed a car.Acc

b. Forhoysleðarin loyvi ein stðð.
   the interrogator.Nom allowed a break.Acc

c. Jóna fortaldi eina sögu.
   Jóna.Nom told a story.Acc

d. Freya sendi eina gávu.
   Freya.Nom sent a gift.Acc

e. Jón keypti ein bil.
   John.Nom bought a car.Acc

While Fiebig’s work is based on written Faroese, a judgment study conducted by Petersen (2010a: 120-129)\(^\text{10}\) shows similar findings. There he shows that some speakers accept sentences such as Jón gevir bökkina til mín ‘John gives book-the.Acc to me.Gen’ where the complement to the preposition is a pronoun. There were two primary findings. First, there was a significant difference (\(p < 0.05\)) between the generations in general. Second, the oldest male and female speakers accept the PP constructions most readily, while the young female speakers and the mid-age male speakers are more reluctant. The young male informants accepted PPs 52.2% of the time. It might be surprising to see that the oldest speakers are those who accept the construction with the PP most readily, as it is usually young speakers who initiate language change. Given the background the older speakers have, it is however, not such a surprise. These speakers had an extensive amount of exposure to Danish in their youth; all their school books were in Danish, for instance. Today the younger speakers are certainly also exposed to Danish (and English), but they may show some bias against the PP construction as a result of teaching in schools: the PP construction is taught as prescriptively incorrect in Faroese. We return to a discussion of possible Danish influence in Section 4.

To summarize, the prepositional construction is not totally ruled out in Faroese and is acceptable with verbs in a variety of semantic classes. Even though PPs are more acceptable

---

\(^{10}\) The judgment test was administered to 198 informants, male and female from three generations (15-35; 36-55 and 56+). They came from different parts of the Faroe Islands, more specific from Vágar, Eysturoy-Nordoyggjum, Suðuroy and Tórshavn. In the case of a reflexive indirect object, PPs are ruled out, according to Fiebig (2012).
when the complement is phonologically heavy, PPs are allowed even with pronouns. The results of the judgment survey discussed in the following section lend additional support to some of these observations and challenge others.

3 Method and Results

Method
In order to assess speakers’ preferences, we designed a Likert scale survey that was administered in two parts in December 2017. Participants were 50 students at the Teachers’ College at the University of the Faroe Islands (Námsvisindadeildin) and were between 18 and 25 years old. Verbs were divided into five semantic categories – giving, future having, communication, sending, and benefactive – based generally on the categorization in Rappaport Hovav and Levin 2008. There were three verbs in each category and six different conditions for each verb, for a total of 90 examples under investigation. The verbs are listed in (21).

(21)  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Verbs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Giving</td>
<td>geva ‘give,’ læna ‘lend,’ selja ‘sell’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future having</td>
<td>bjóða ‘offer,’ lova ‘promise,’ loyva ‘allow’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>forklára ‘explain,’ fortelja ‘tell,’ visa ‘show’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sending</td>
<td>maila ‘mail,’ senda ‘send,’ smsa ‘sms/text’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefactive</td>
<td>baka ‘bake,’ binda ‘knit,’ keypa, ‘buy’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For both the double object and the PP frames, there was a condition in which the goal NP was a pronoun, a full (but small) NP, and a phonologically heavy NP which contained a relative clause. The six conditions are illustrated for geva ‘give’ below in (22) and senda ‘send’ in (23). For each double object (IO) example, the case frame is NDA and for each prepositional example, the subject is Nom and the direct object is Acc. Pronominal objects of the prepositional til are Gen, as in (22)b; otherwise the object of til is Acc.

(22)  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Case frame</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. IO: pronoun</td>
<td>Jón gave mær ein hund. John gave me.Dat a dog.Acc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. PP: pronoun</td>
<td>Jón gave ein hund til mín. John gave a dog.Acc to me.Gen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. IO: full NP</td>
<td>Jón gav þornunum bomm. John gave the children.Dat sweets.Acc</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participants were asked to rate each sentence on a scale of 1 (totally good) to 5 (totally bad). Including fillers, there was a total of 148 items, divided between two surveys that were administered two days apart. Each participant took both surveys. For each survey, participants were told that we were interested in their assessment of the examples, and not what they may have been taught about “right” or “wrong” uses of the Faroese language.

Results
As discussed in the introduction, our results reveal four findings. First, even though no speakers completely reject the prepositional construction, the double object construction is preferred for each semantic category. Speakers rated the double object construction higher than the
prepositional construction across the board. Second, benefactive constructions receive the highest rating in both the double object and the prepositional construction. The results are statistically significant for PPs but not for double objects. Third, we find support for the proposal that the prepositional construction is more so associated with a motion interpretation than the double object construction is. Fourth, there is some effect of the heaviness of the indirect object, but not support for a heavy-late effect. While speakers prefer the double object construction, within that macro-category, constructions with a phonologically heavy indirect object are rated least acceptable. Within the PP frame, constructions with a pronominal object of the preposition are least acceptable. We discuss the first two findings in this section and the remaining findings in Section 4.

The chart in (24) shows the average ratings for each kind of construction in each semantic category. As we can see, the double object version is judged better (it has the lower score) than the PP version for every semantic category. This finding is robust: p < .01 for the difference between the indirect object aggregate and the PP aggregate for each kind of verb.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(24) Double Object vs PP: By Verbal Category</th>
<th>Bene-</th>
<th>Communi-</th>
<th>Giving</th>
<th>Future</th>
<th>Sending</th>
<th>aggregate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IO.pronoun=(22)a</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IO.regular NP=(22)c</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>1.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IO.heavy NP=(22)e</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>1.59</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>1.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aggregate</td>
<td>1.51</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PP.pronoun=(22)b</td>
<td>2.41</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>2.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PP.regular NP=(22)d</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>2.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PP.heavy NP=(22)f</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>2.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aggregate</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additionally, when we compared the average rating for the double object construction versus the PP construction for each of the three kinds of NPs, only the difference between heavy NPs with benefactives is not statistically significant. For every other phrasal length and for every other semantic category, the difference is significant. All but one comparison is p < .01 and
one is $p < .05$. This means that the double object construction is generally preferred across semantic categories and across phrasal lengths of the goal NP.

With respect to benefactives, two interesting findings emerge. The first is that, along with the communication category, the double object frame is rated as quite good, with a score of 1.51. The difference between the benefactive rating and the communication rating is not significant. For the PP constructions, benefactives receive a significantly better score than every other category. Recall that we tested only benefactives which use *til*, as shown in (25), so the preposition is not a factor here.

(25) a. IO: pronoun
    Maria bakaði tær eina køku
    Maria baked you.Dat a cake.Acc

b. PP: pronoun
    Maria bakaði eina køku til tín
    Maria baked a cake.Acc to you.Gen

c. IO: full NP
    Maria bakaði soninum eina køku
    Maria baked the son.Dat a cake.Acc

d. PP: full NP
    Maria bakaði eina køku til sonin
    Maria baked a cake.Acc to the son.Acc

e. IO: heavy NP
    Maria bakaði soninum, sum hevði rundan føðingardag, eina køku
    Maria baked the son.Dat who had 'a round birthday' a cake.Acc

f. PP: heavy NP
    Maria bakaði eina køku til sonin, sum hevði rundan føðingardag
    Maria baked a cake.Acc to the son.Acc who had 'a round birthday'

Taken together, these results suggest that speakers find benefactives quite acceptable in both double object and PP constructions. This finding coalesces with the literature which reports that benefactives are for more widespread in Faroese than in Icelandic, as discussed in Section 2. Interestingly, Hansen & Heltoft (2011: 1313-1314) report that the double object frame is not allowed with benefactives in Modern Danish, as shown by the ungrammaticality of (26)a.

(26) a. *Han bagte Lene en kage.
    he baked Lene a cake.

   b. Han bagte en kage til Lene.
    he baked a cake to Lene
This construction was, however, possible in Older Danish (or rather ældre nydansk = lit.: older new Danish) as recent as in the 19th century. When speakers of Danish use benefactives today, Hansen & Heltoft (ibid.) suggest that the usage is in the spirit of the older style, or possibly influenced by English.

As an interim summary, our findings are consistent with some of the previous work which has documented the use of the prepositional frame in Faroese. As in the present study, Henriksen (2000) reports that PPs are found in younger speakers’ speech. Our study is also consistent with work which has noted the widespread presence of benefactives in Faroese (Holmberg & Platzack 1995; Thráinsson 2007: 230). In the next section, we turn to what our findings reveal about how verbal semantics and phonological heaviness interact with the double object and prepositional frames. We also speculate about whether there are possible influences from both Danish and English.

4 Possible Influence from Danish and English

English is probably the language for which there is the most literature on ditransitives, and given the increasing contact between English and Faroese, English is worth discussing here. Perhaps the most-debated issue in the literature relates to whether the double object and prepositional frames have unique interpretations that are encoded in the structures. As briefly discussed in the introduction, various accounts (e.g., Harley 2002, Beck and Johnson 2004, Bruening 2010a/b, Harley and Jung 2015, Bruening 2018) adopt the Alternative Projection approach,\(^{11}\) which argues that the double object frame encodes caused possession and the prepositional frame encodes caused motion.\(^ {12}\) On this strand of analysis, the sentence in (27)a is grammatical because Terry comes to possess the headache, while the sentence in (27)b is ungrammatical because there is no physical movement of the headache from the noise to Terry.

(27) a. The noise gave Terry a headache.
   b. *The noise gave a headache to Terry.  (Rappaport Hovav and Levin 2008, ex 5)

With respect to our study, the Alternative Projection proposal predicts that verbs in the giving, future having, and benefactive categories are most compatible with the double object

\(^{11}\) See Collins and Thráinsson (1996) for a similar approach for Icelandic.

\(^{12}\) See also Rappaport Hovav & Levin (2008) for a slightly different approach. Rappaport Hovav & Levin (2008) agree that the double object frame has a possession interpretation, but propose that the verbal root determines whether the PP frame encodes possession or motion.
construction (all of the benefactive sentences that we tested have a ‘future having’ interpretation) and verbs in the sending category are most compatible with the PP construction. There is overall support for the latter prediction. After benefactives (which we discuss above), sending verbs are rated most acceptable with PPs, with an average score of 2.30. When we compared the average rating for the PP condition in the sending category against the PP condition in the communication, giving, and future having categories, the results are significant: p < .01 for each comparison. Benefactives, with a score of 2.08, are rated more acceptable than sending verbs and that difference is significant (p < .05), so benefactives are, indeed, more acceptable with prepositional phrases. For double object constructions, however, when the giving, future having, and benefactive categories were each compared against both the communication and the sending categories, the findings are inconclusive. Some of the comparisons are significant and others are not.\textsuperscript{13} Our study, therefore, does not provide support for the idea that the double object frame encodes caused possession.

Interestingly, our study also does not provide concrete support for a proposal which challenges the Alternative Projection approach. Rappaport Hovav and Levin (2008) argue that there isn’t necessarily a frame to meaning correspondence. They agree that the double object frame has a caused possession interpretation, but propose that the verbal root determines whether the prepositional frame encodes motion or possession. This proposal also predicts that the double object frame is best with giving, future having, and benefactive verbs, which is not supported by our findings.

Another perspective that is in opposition to the Alternative Projection approach is found in work by Bresnan (2007), Bresnan et al. (2007), and Bresnan and Nikitina (2009), which proposes that factors related to pragmatics, information structure, and prototypical use determine whether the double object or the prepositional construction is used. Such factors include givenness, animacy, definiteness, phrasal length, and whether one of the objects is a pronoun or a full NP. One intriguing observation that emerges is that some previously observed restrictions on the prepositional construction vanish when the goal is phonologically heavy. For instance, while (27)b is ungrammatical for many English speakers, the sentence in (28) is just fine.

\textsuperscript{13} In the double object comparison, the difference between benefactive and sending verbs and between future having and communication verbs is p < .01. The difference between giving and communication verbs is p = .05. The differences which are not significant are: benefactive vs communication, giving vs sending, and future having vs sending.
(28) …a stench or smell is diffused over the ship that would give a headache to the most athletic constitution. (Bresnan and Nikitina 2007, ex 15)

The observation in (28) is in line with Fiebig’s (2012) corpus study which finds a heavy-late effect. The prepositional construction is primarily found with phonologically heavy goal objects – that is, nouns that are modified by one or multiple adjectives or modified by a relative clause.

Taken together, the above observations predict that within the PP conditions, our participants should have found the preposition plus heavy noun phrase most acceptable. This is not the case, however. Prepositional phrases with heavy NPs are not rated significantly better than smaller (non-pronominal) NPs in any semantic category. For benefactive and sending verbs, regular NPs are rated best and the difference between regular NPs and heavy NPs is significant (p < .05). For communication, giving, and future having, heavy NPs are actually rated best with PPs, but the difference between heavy NPs and regular NPs is not significant for any of these semantic categories. The overall finding, therefore, is that our results do not provide positive support for a heavy-late analysis of the PP construction.

However, we do find that speakers generally dislike a heavy indirect object in the double object construction. For every semantic category except communication, speakers rated double object constructions with heavy indirect objects at a statistically lower acceptability rate than the smaller NPs. Further, we find that speakers disprefer pronouns with the PP construction. Within each semantic category, double object constructions with pronominal indirect objects are rated significantly higher than prepositional constructions with pronouns. Yet, the latter kind of construction is not rejected, which is in accord with Petersen’s (2010) finding that pronouns are used with the PP construction. While our findings do not provide positive support for a heavy-late effect, they do suggest that speakers have a dispreference for a heavy phrase in a sentence-medial position and a dispreference for a phonologically light item in a sentence-final position.14

Yet another theoretical issue pertains to whether there is one base form for ditransitives with either the double object frame or the prepositional frame being derived from the other. One of the seminal derivational approaches of this type is found in Larson 1988, which argues that the core structure of the prepositional frame is basic and that the double object frame is derived via movement of the indirect object. Though largely abandoned, this line of thinking

---

14 See Indriðadóttir (2017) for a discussion of the contrast between heavy-shifting subjects versus objects in Faroese and Icelandic.
has been resuscitated in more recent work such as Hallman 2015, which argues that the double object frame is basic and that the prepositional frame can either be base generated or derived from the double object frame.

While our current study does not lend to speculation about whether one of the frames is derived from the other, the derivational status of one frame vis-à-vis the other could be tested with an experiment that measured reading time or eye tracking. If subjects took longer to read one kind of construction over the other, this might suggest that the construction with the longer processing time was derived from the construction with the shorter processing time. We leave this exploration for further research.

In the past 10 to 20 years English has become increasingly present on the Faroe Islands, a scenario that is well known from other parts of Scandinavia as well as elsewhere. Very little has been done yet to thoroughly study the use of English on the Faroe Islands, but Lindquist (2018) suggests that a possible language shift may be pending as the result of this contact situation. Meanwhile we see more and more English loanwords entering the language, and young speakers are code-switching between English and Faroese, as in the following sentence.

(29) …konsert hjá ýmiskum sangarum øhm --- celebrities og sangarum og sórit har …concert with different singers – hmm --- celebrities and singers and so on

(Højgaard-Helmsdal 2014: 24)

Convergence with English is also found. Here we understand convergence as:

(30) “…speech by bilinguals that has all the surface level forms from one language, but with parts of the abstract lexical structure that underlies the surface level patterns coming from another language (or languages) [boldface in original]

(Myers-Scotton 2006: 271)

An example from colloquial Faroese is …hann situr handan rattið ‘he sits behind the steering wheel’. In this particular case, all the surface forms are Faroese, but handan rattið is a replication of English behind the wheel. In Faroese handan means ‘on the other side’; if someone sits handan rattið s/he sits on the hood. Speakers have used the abstract lexical structure of English behind the wheel and replicated it as handan rattið in Faroese. While the use of the prepositional construction among older speakers may be attributed to them having been educated in Danish, use of the prepositional construction among young speakers may be attributed to Faroese-English language contact and bilingualism.
With respect to ditransitives, Danish resembles English in some respects. There is not any overt case marking (barring pronouns), and the indirect object precedes the direct object in the double object construction (Mikkelsen 1911: 644; Hansen and Heltoft 2011: 1315). As in English, there is often alternation with the PP version, as shown below.

(31) a. De gave Røde Kors 50.000 kr.
     they gave Red Cross(IO) 50.000 kr.(DO)

   b. De gave 50.000 kr. til Røde Kors.
     they gave 50.000 kr. to Red Cross      (Hansen and Heltoft, 2011: 1347)

Among ditransitive verbs in Danish, one finds give ‘to give’, forære ‘give away’, skænke ‘give; donate; bestow’ and vise ‘show’ (Hansen and Heltoft 2011: 1308).

There has been an intense contact between Faroese and Danish for centuries. Even though Faroese speakers have been bilingual, with Danish as their L2, for centuries, code-switching between Faroese and Danish is rare (Petersen 2010). Yet, Danish influence on the use of the prepositional frame in ditransitives cannot definitely be ruled out, as also discussed in Petersen (2010). Sapir’s (1921: 171-172) notion of drift is well known in historical linguistics as well as in the study of language contact. In our particular case, we suspect that we are dealing with independent parallel development within the same language family, as pointed out by Malkien (1981: 566), and it is plausible that contact is accelerating a change which may originally have been triggered by an inner change. This means that there are PPs co-occurring with verbs such as geva ‘to give’ as well as with senda ‘to send’, and given the bilingual situation, intense contact between Danish and Faroese may be accelerating a change that was already underway.

Possible Danish influence on Faroese is not only seen in the acceleration of a change as in the drift towards analyticity. It is also observed in other parts of the syntax, such as when BE is used as a temporal auxiliary as in (32).

(32) Hann er ofta farin til Boston
     he is often travelled to Boston
     ‘He has often travelled to Boston’.

In Faroese, HAVE is used with all transitive verbs and some intransitive verbs to express the perfect but BE is possible with some unaccusative verbs (as in (32)), where it is a perfect, and not a stative resultative. According to Thráinsson et al. (2004/2012: 72-72) Faroese ‘…may be on its way towards developing a system where vera ‘be’ is used more extensively as an
auxiliary, as it is in Modern Danish’ and Heycock & Petersen (2017) have shown that this is indeed the case.

Language change is not necessarily a linear process, and the acceptability of the prepositional ditransitive in Faroese is a good example of that. Both older speakers and some younger speakers readily accept the PP construction more than middle-age speakers. Much more scrutiny is needed in order to more fully assess the influence of Danish and English on Faroese.

5 Conclusion and Future Directions
This brief paper has shown that while there is a clear preference for the double object construction, the prepositional construction is indeed accepted and has a caused motion interpretation, which the Alternative Projection proposal predicts. Further, we found that even though speakers disprefer a phonologically heavy indirect object in the double object construction and disprefer a pronominal object of a preposition, speakers do not actually prefer a phonologically heavy object of a preposition, contra the predictions made by previous observations. Finally, we found that benefactive constructions are well accepted in both the double object and prepositional frames, in line with previous work which commented on the widespread use of benefactives in Faroese.

Returning to the issue of case, dative is slowly fading in Faroese. For instance, dative subjects are being lost – especially as compared with the robust persistence of dative subjects in Icelandic – and dative is no longer productive as a direct object case. Nonetheless, dative is well-preserved in double object constructions, and remains the preferred frame for ditransitives in Faroese.

While we have made some progress in describing the distribution of the double object frame and the prepositional frame in Faroese, we have also illustrated that there is much work to be done in this area. In addition to research which would explore whether a derivational hypothesis is tenable, an additional line of inquiry includes a complete description and analysis of ditransitives in Faroese which do not alternate between the two frames.
References


Petersen, Hjalmar P. 2018. *Føroysk mállæra II. Syntaks* (manuscript).

Petersen, Hjalmar P. 2019. ”Semantisk og syntaktisk styrede forandringer i færøske præpositionsfraser”. (to appear in *Íslenskt mál*).


Thráinsson see Höskuldur.


