

## Argument Structure: 3

### *Lesson 3: Case as Agree Marker*

- (1) *Burzio's Generalization* Burzio (1986:178)  
All and only the verbs that can assign a  $\theta$ -role to the subject can assign accusative case to an object.
- (2) *The Sibling Correlation* (Sigurðsson 2005:97)  
A relational/'structural' accusative is possible only in the presence of a nominative, whereas the opposite does not hold true.

#### 1. Burzian Accusatives

In this section I will show that the distribution of structural cases, i.e. nominative and accusative, can be described as a simple instruction to PF how to spell out particular instances of Agree, assuming with Sigurðsson (2003, 2005, 2006) that the Nom-Acc distinction is a morphological translation of syntactic structure into the language of PF.

- (3) *Case as Agree Marker (CAM) – first attempt*  
A DP which is in an agree relation with  $v^{\circ}$  marked  $[\tau, u\phi]$  is spelled out with accusative case (in languages having the nominative–accusative distinction), and a DP which is in an agree relation with  $T^{\circ}$  is spelled out with nominative case. If a DP is agreeing both with  $v^{\circ}$  and  $T^{\circ}$ , it is spelled out with nominative case. Other DPs are spelled out with dative or genitive case.

CAM is here and in the following formulated for nominative–accusative languages, especially for Icelandic.

CAM as formulated in (3) obviously gives the correct result for ordinary transitives, unaccusatives, passives and unergatives:

- (4) a. John kissed her /\*she. (*her* is probed by  $v$ , i.e. accusative)  
b. She / \*her arrived late. (*She* is probed both by  $T$  and  $v$ , i.e. nominative)  
c. She / \*her was kissed. (*She* is probed both by  $T$  and  $v$ , i.e. nominative)  
d. She/\*her sang a song. (*She* is probed by  $T$ , i.e. nominative)

In the following sections we will see how CAM can be used to predict accusatives that are not normally considered to be structural (or relational) in nature. The underlying assumption is that all instances of accusative (and nominative) case can be subsumed under CAM, and hence in some way characterized as structural.

#### 2. Non-Burzian Accusatives

##### 2.1. Path adverbials in accusative and the New Passive

- (5) Hún synti heilan kilometra /\*heill kilometri.  
she swam whole.ACC kilometer.ACC/\*NOM

Path adverbials of this sort show up in the nominative in passives. However, accusative is retained in impersonal passives, as shown in (6); the example from Sigurðsson (2005):

- (6) <sup>(?)</sup>Það er/var gengið þessa sömu leið til baka daginn eftir.  
it is/was walked this same route.ACC back day.the after

According to CAM, the accusative *þessa sömu leið* in (6) cannot be probed by  $T$ , since it shows up in accusative. This is similar to what is observed for the so called “New Passive” in Icelandic; see Maling & Sigurjónsdóttir (2002), and the example in (7):

- (7) Það var lamið stúlkuna.  
it was hit.n.sg girl.the.ACC

In an ordinary passive, the DP must be in the nominative, indefinite, and agreeing with the past participle, as in (8):

- (8) Það var lamin stúlka.  
it was hit.f.NOM.sg girl.f.NOM

Given CAM a difference between (6) and (7) is that the final DP must be probed both by  $v$  and T in (8), but only by  $v$  in (7). Maling & Sigurjónsdóttir (2002) argue for the presence of an invisible external argument in (7). Adopting this analysis CAM predicts the outcome in (7): the accusative *stúlkuna* ‘girl.the.ACC’ is probed by  $v^\circ$ , and the invisible DP in Spec-vP is probed by T. Consequently, T cannot probe into vP, forcing accusative according to CAM.

Whatever prevents T from probing the DP in the complement of V in (7) must be present in (6) as well, hence we will assume an invisible DP in Spec-vP in (6). The presence of such a DP in Spec-vP is supported by Maling & Sigurjónsdóttir by two types of data: this invisible DP binds a reflexive in the construction (9a), and it can bind a participial adjunct (9b):

- (9) a. Svo var bara drifið sig á ball.  
then was just hurried.n.sg. REFL.ACC to dance  
b. Það var lesið minningargreinina grátandi.  
it was read.n.sg. obituary.the.ACC crying.

Compare (10), where the same tests are applied to constructions with path adverbials:

- (10) a. <sup>??</sup>Það er/var alltaf gengið sína eigin leið.  
it is/was always walked his.REFL. own route.ACC.  
b. <sup>?</sup>Það var gengið þessa sömu leið til baka í gær viljandi.  
it was walked this sameroute.ACC back y’day on purpose

## 2.2. Accusative complements of prepositions

Another type of non-Burzionian accusative, easy to integrate under CAM is accusative complements of prepositions. Pesetsky & Torrego (2004a) suggest that P like T and  $v$  may have the features  $[\tau, u\varphi]$ . Adopting this idea, CAM must be generalized in the following way to capture prepositionally governed accusatives:

### (11) *Case as Agree Marker (CAM) – second attempt*

A DP which is in an agree relation with a probe (other than T) marked  $[\tau, u\varphi]$  is spelled out with accusative case (in languages having the nominative – accusative distinction), and a DP which is in an agree relation with  $T^\circ$  is spelled out with nominative case. If a DP is agreeing both with T and another probe marked  $[\tau, u\varphi]$ , it is spelled out with nominative case. Other DPs are spelled out with dative or genitive case.

- (12) a. PP  
P DP  
[ $\tau, u\varphi$ ] [ $u\tau, \varphi$ ]
- b. PP  
P DP  
[ $u\varphi$ ] [ $\varphi$ ]

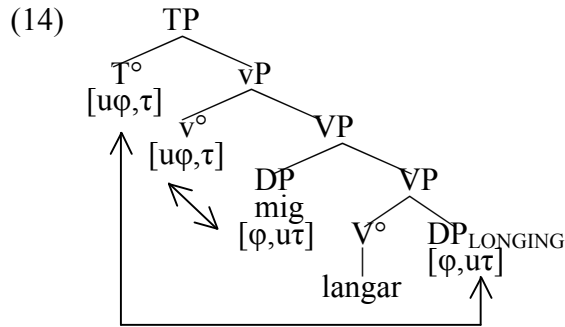
## 3. Quirky Accusatives

### 3.1. The Accusative is an Experiencer

Quirky accusatives are accusatives usually analyzed as inherent or lexical case. Such accusatives may be captured by CAM.

- (13) Mig langar heim.  
me.ACC long home  
I want to go home.

Accusative *mig* is an Experiencer, and thus UTAH predicts it is merged in Spec-VP, where it is probed by  $v^\circ$ . Since *mig* retains accusative, it cannot be involved in the elimination of  $[u\varphi]$  in  $T^\circ$ ; hence there must be an empty DP within VP for T to probe, indicated by the paraphrase “I have a longing for going home”.

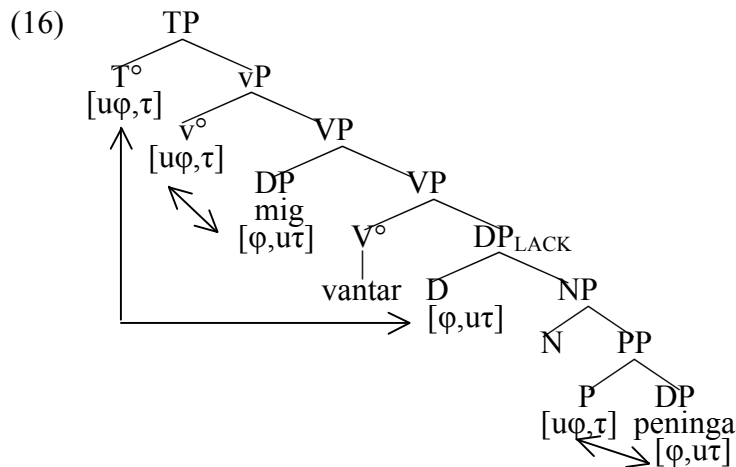


This analysis does not account for the subjecthood of *mig*. We assume the existence of an edge-feature on T that will force movement to Spec-TP of the closest element within the c-command domain of T with phonological material, i.e. *mig*.

Cases with two accusatives are more tricky. Consider the example in (15):

- (15) Mig vantar peninga.  
me.ACC lacks money.ACC

Since there is no nominative, CAM predicts that there is no visible DP in the structure that is probed by T; *mig* is presumably moved to Spec-TP as a result of an edge-feature on T. Furthermore, since there are two accusative DPs, we expect one of the DPs to be probed by  $v^\circ$  and the other by a preposition (see 3.2.2. above). The paraphrase “there is a lack of money at me” indicates a structure compatible with CAM.

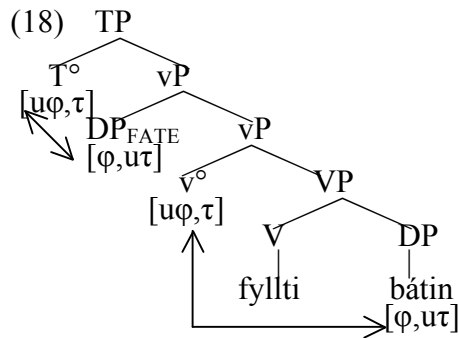


### 3.2. The accusative is Theme or Patient

There is a second type of quirky accusative subjects in Icelandic, where the quirky subject is a Theme or a Patient, as illustrated in the following examples (Zaenen & Maling 1984):

- (17) a. Okkur rak að landi.  
us.ACC droveto land  
b. Bátinn fyllti á augabragði.  
boat.the.ACC filled in flash  
The boat swamped immediately  
c. Mig tók út.  
me.ACC took out  
I was swept overboard.

The accusative object in the complement of V will be probed by  $v^\circ$  and hence assigned accusative according to CAM in (11). Since accusative means that it cannot be probed by T, there must be something else in the sentence for T to probe. Such a hidden argument has been observed by Ottósson (1988) and Sigurðsson (2005), who talks about a fate reading or a natural force. Compare the discussion of the New Passive and constructions with path adverbials above. We will represent this element as  $DP_{\text{FATE}}$ , leading to the following analysis of (17b):



The edge-feature on T forces *bátin* to raise to subject position.

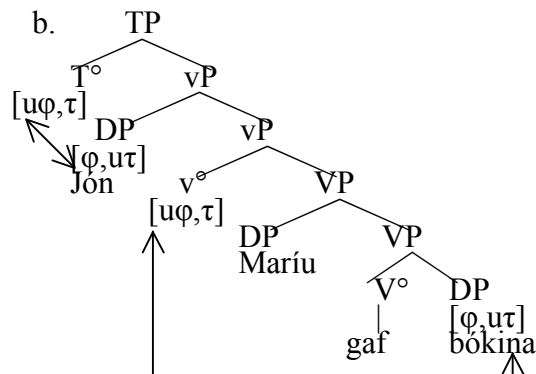
#### 4. Datives

So far, little has been said about dative case and genitive case, apart from the claim that these cases do not spell out Agree-relations based on the features  $[\phi]$  and  $[\tau]$ . We will remain ignorant about the genitive, but say something of datives.

##### 4.1. Ditransitive Verbs

We will first apply the account in Platzack (2005a) to ordinary DAT-ACC double objects in Icelandic. When the verb is di-transitive, like *give*, there is an extra argument within VP. Since the number of probes is constant (T and v), the extra argument cannot have a full feature set up, or one uninterpretable feature will not be valued and eliminated. Platzack (2005a) suggests that an argument DP lacking features visible to the probes T and v is spelled out as dative.

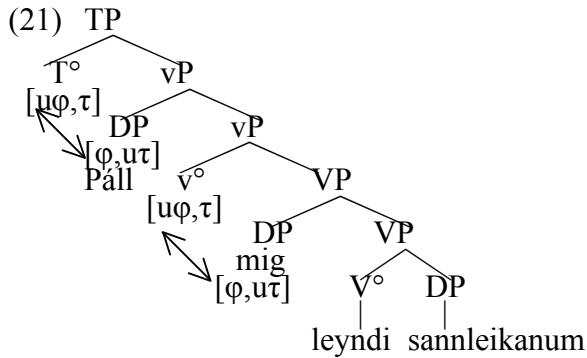
- (19) a. Jón gaf Maríu bókina.  
John.NOM gave Mary.DAT book.the.ACC



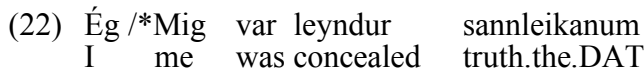
Whereas DAT-ACC is the most common case distribution in Icelandic double object constructions, there are several other options. Disregarding the alternatives with genitive case, we have in addition to DAT-ACC also ACC-DAT (20a) and DAT-DAT (20b):

- (20) a. Páll leyndi mig sannleikanum.  
Paul.NOM concealed me.ACC truth.the.DAT  
Paul concealed the truth from me.  
b. Páll lofaði mér peningum.  
Paul.NOM promised me.DAT money.DAT  
Paul promised me the money.

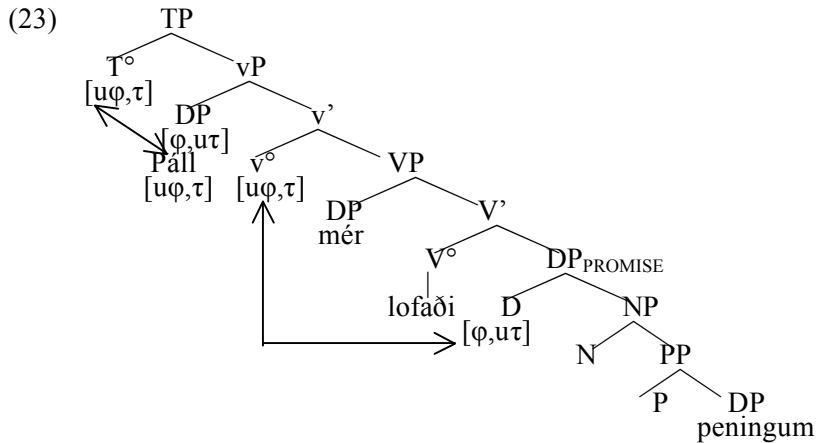
In (20a), *mig* ‘me.ACC’ is the indirect object, expressing a thematic role that seems to be a Malefactor or Receiver, hence a role compatible with Spec-VP, given UTAH. The direct object in dative case, *sannleikanum* ‘the truth’, is the not transmitted theme. Hence, both syntax and semantics indicate the following structure, where CAM predicts the distribution of cases:



The analysis in (21) correctly predicts that the accusative indirect object will turn up in nominative in the corresponding passive:

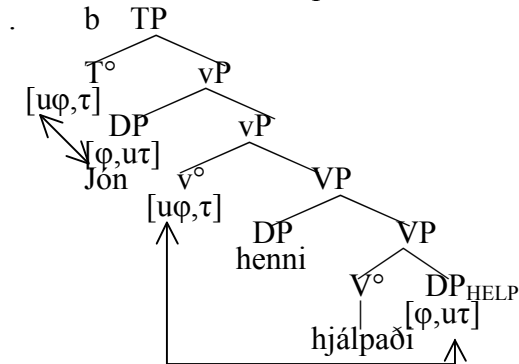
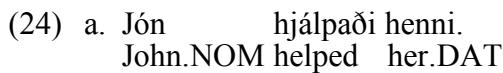


Consider next the case with two datives (20b). Since accusative is lacking, there must be a concealed argument for  $v^\circ$  to probe. With *mér* ‘me.DAT’ in Spec-VP, this is most probable the complement of V, which we will represent as  $DP_{PROMISE}$ , see Hale & Keyser (2002). *Peningum* ‘money.DAT’, must be part of this invisible DP in some way, as in the possible paraphrase “Paul gave me a promise about money”.



#### 4.2. Verbs with Dative Objects

My account predicts that all mono-transitive verbs taking a dative object in addition must have an invisible object with the features  $[\phi, u\tau]$ . In many cases, these verbs have a complement that is identified by the verb. The dative object of *help*, e.g., is the Benefactor (the receiver of help), and thus according to UTAH represented in Spec-VP. The invisible complement can be represented as  $DP_{HELP}$ , compare the synonymous *to help A = to give A help*.



There are verbs with similar meanings that take accusative objects, like *aðstoða* ‘help, assist’.

- (25) Get ég aðstoðað þig?  
may I assist you.ACC

The obvious account, given CAM, would be to have the same structure as in (24), but with an accusative in Spec-VP; this is motivated by UTAH, since the accusative object seems to be just as much of a Benefactor as the dative object in (24). This analysis is supported by the fact that the accusative object is promoted to nominative subject in passive, as shown in (36):

- (26) Þú/\*Þig varst aðstoðuð / aðstoðaður.  
you.NOM/\*ACC were assisted.FEM / MASK

Being accusative, the object must be probed by  $v^\circ$ , hence this DP has the features  $[\phi, \text{u}\tau]$ . However, with this analysis the invisible complement,  $\text{DP}_{\text{HELP}}$ , cannot have any features, since there is no available probe. Hence, the difference between *hjálpa* and *aðstoða* is purely lexical: *hjálpa*, but not *aðstoða* must take a complement with the feature set up  $[\phi, \text{u}\tau]$ .

A solution like the one just given should not be available when the same verb takes an object either in dative or in accusative; to claim that the invisible complement of the verb have features or not, depending on what appears higher up in the structure, would be a flagrant violation of the look-ahead restriction. Cases of this type will be discussed in the next section.

### 4.3. Verbs Taking Either a Dative or an Accusative Object

Some Icelandic verbs take either a dative or an accusative object, as illustrated in (27) – (29):

- (27) a. María klóraði Jón í andlitið. (Barðdal (1993))  
Mary scratched John.ACC in face.the  
b. María klóraði Jóni á bakinu.  
Mary scratched John.DAT on back.the
- (28) a. Kristín þvoði handklæðið.  
Christine washed towel.the.ACC  
b. Kristín þvoði barninu.  
Christine washed baby.the.DAT
- (29) a. Hann mokar sand.  
he shovels sand.ACC  
b. Hann mokar sandinum burt.  
he shovels sand.the.DAT away

(27) to (29) are all analyzed in the same way: the dative/accusative alternation corresponds to a thematic difference, preventing a fatal look-ahead analysis. Example (27a) with accusative object indicates that Mary attacks John, whereas in (27b), where the object is dative, John is helped by being scratched, he is a Benefactor. UTAH would predict an invisible complement related to scratch with the features  $[\phi, \text{u}\tau]$  in the dative case, whereas the object would be the complement of the verb in the accusative case.

In (28), we have a case where Icelandic uses accusative for dead things and dative for living creatures, especially humans. Once again, a solution in terms of different positions of the dative and the accusative object lies near at hand.

In (29), finally, Barðdal (1993) notes that the dative example emphasizes on the motion that the verb expresses, whereas in the accusative example, the emphasis is merely on the action expressed by the verb. Compare with the verb *kasta* ‘throw’:

- (30) Kristján kastaði sleggjunni.  
Kristjan threw hammer.the.DAT

As for (27b) and (28b), we suggest an analysis where the dative in (29b) is in Spec-VP with an invisible DP marked  $[\phi, \text{u}\tau]$  in the complement of the verb. Concerning the accusative object in (29a), this is presumably merged in the complement of the verb.

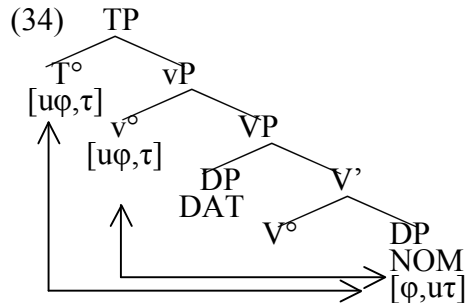
### 4.4. Quirky Datives

Quirky datives are DPs moved to Spec-TP due to some edge feature in T, following Holmberg (2000). Being datives, these DPs are not probed, which means that there must be other DPs in the structure so that T and  $v$  can get rid of their uninterpretable features.

- (31) Stráknum voru gefnar gjafirnar.

- (32) boy.the.DAT were given.PL gifts.the.NOM  
 Hefur þér alltaf líkað Guðmundur?  
 have you.DAT always liked Gudmund.NOM
- (33) Henni var hjálpað.  
 she.DAT was helped

From the point of view of case, identical structures underlie all three cases (NOM=invisible DP<sub>HELP</sub> in (33)).

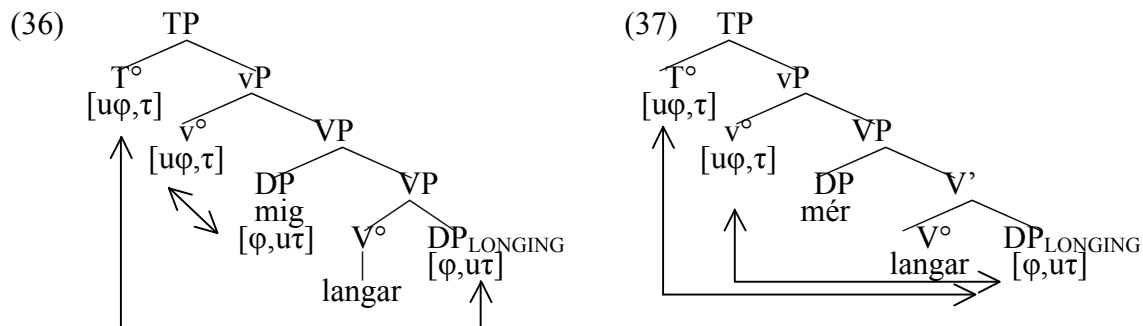


#### 4.5. Dative Sickness

There is a tendency in modern Icelandic to replace quirky accusative subjects with quirky dative subjects, see e.g. Svavarsdóttir (1982), Smith (1984) and Eythórsson (2000).

- (35) a. Mig langar heim.  
 me.ACCLong home  
 b. Mér langar heim.  
 me.DATLong home  
 I want to go home.

Given CAM and the structural assumptions used in this paper, the replacement of accusative subject with dative subject reflects a change from (36) to (37),



Dative Sickness can be seen as a structural adjustment of quirky accusatives to a structure that typically underlies the more frequent cases with quirky datives.

#### 5. Nominative Objects in ECM Constructions

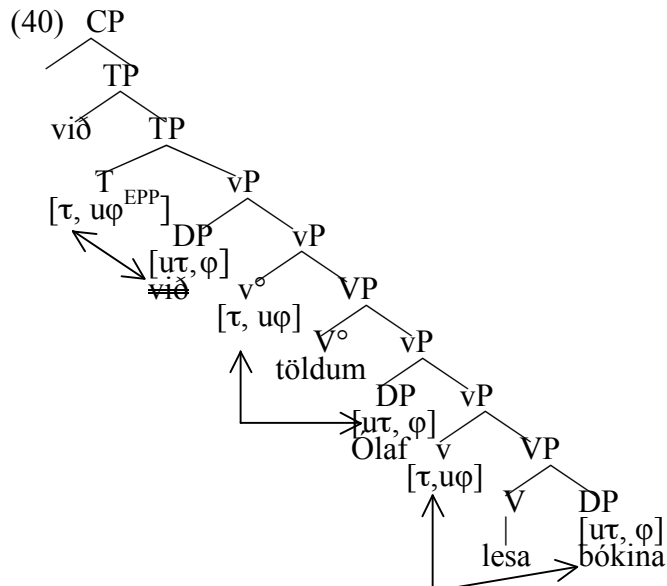
CAM as formulated in (11) does not account for the nominative object in (38):

- (38) Við töldum henni hafa leiðst strákarnir.  
 we believed her.DAT have.INF found-boring boys.the.NOM

T in the matrix clause cannot be responsible for this instance of nominative case, and the ECM small clause cannot contain T, since that would predict nominative *Ólafur* in (39) instead of accusative *Ólaf*:

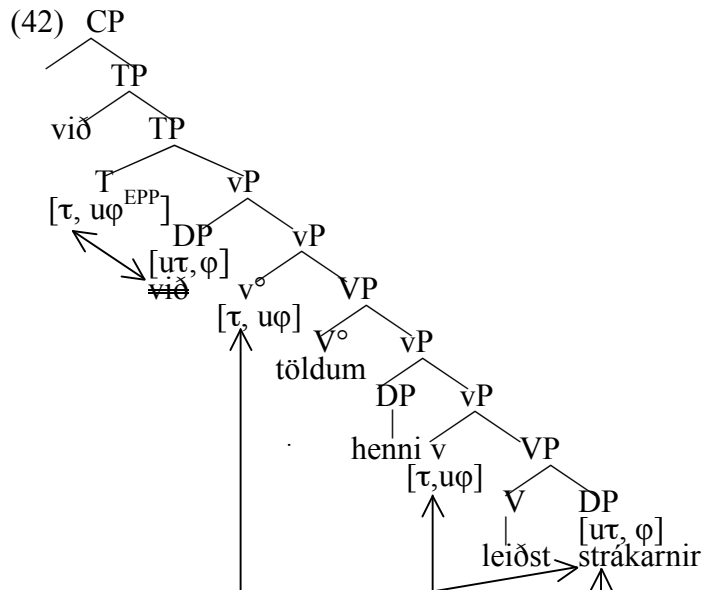
- (39) Við töldum Ólaf lesa bókina.  
 webelieved Ólaf.ACC read.INF book.the.ACC

The ECM “subject” must be probed by the matrix  $v^\circ$ , as indicated in (40).



(41) **Case as Agree Marker (CAM) – final attempt**

A DP which is in an agree relation with a probe (other than T) marked  $[\tau, u\phi]$  is spelled out with accusative case (in languages having the nominative – accusative distinction), and a DP which is in an agree relation with  $T^\circ$  is spelled out with nominative case. If a DP is agreeing with two probes marked  $[\tau, u\phi]$ , it is spelled out with nominative case. Other DPs are spelled out with dative or genitive case.



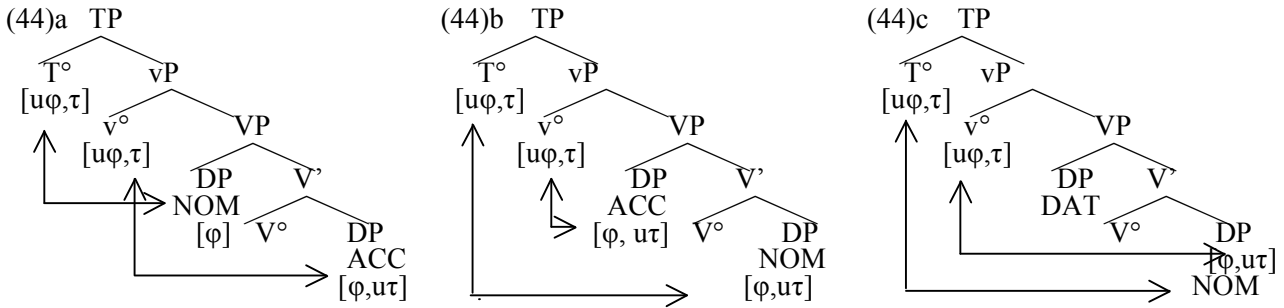
## 6. A Note on Experiencers

Experiencers can be found both as subjects with theme objects, and as objects with theme subjects, as in *John fears dogs* and *Dogs frighten John*. Psych verbs fall into three main classes, here illustrated with Icelandic examples (Platzack 1999):

- (43) a. *Nominative Experiencer, accusative Theme*  
 Jón elskar Maríu.  
 John.NOM loves Mary.ACC
- b. *Nominative Theme, accusative Experiencer*  
 Hundarnir hræða mig.  
 dogs.the.NOM frighten me.ACC
- c. *Nominative Theme, dative Experiencer*  
 Líkar þér Guðmundur? (cf. (42) above)  
 like you.DAT Gudmund.NOM



The structures of (43a,b,c) are given in (44a,b,c):



## 7. Summary and Conclusion

I have suggested a partly new way to look at morphological case. Inspired by Sigurðsson (2005, 2006), I see morphological case as a kind of morphological translation of syntactic structure into the language of PF. For Icelandic, the language I have investigated here, the final version of CAM, i.e. the “translation instruction” for nominative and accusative were given in (41).

The syntactic account presented here is an implementation of recent ideas within the Minimalist program (Chomsky 2001, Pesetsky & Torrego 2001, 2004a). As indicated in the paper, I have used a very simple system of features, a tense feature  $\tau$  that is interpretable in T and v and uninterpretable in DPs, and  $\phi$ -features that are interpretable in DPs but uninterpretable in T and v. In addition, I assume UTAH (Baker 1997). Finally, in line with Hale & Keyser (2002) I assume that V always has a complement, sometimes visible but in other cases without phonological representation.

A first virtue of my account is that abstract Case can be dispensed with; as far as abstract Case is a way to determine where DPs are allowed to occur in a structure, this is replaced by the presence of an uninterpretable tense feature  $\tau$  in DPs. If such a DP appears in a position where  $u\tau$  cannot be eliminated, this DP cannot be licensed in that position.

A second virtue is that my account eliminates the distinction between morphological and abstract case.

A third virtue is that the distinction between lexical and structural accusative is eliminated: both types can be described in terms of CAM.

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