

# The Emergence of Oblique Subjects: Oblique-Case Substitution and Shift in Anticausative Strategy in Modern Icelandic

Sigríður Sæunn Sigurðardóttir  
*Yale University*

Thórhallur Eythórsson  
*University of Iceland*

## Abstract

Oblique subjects can emerge at any point in a language like Icelandic. We focus here on two such changes, Oblique-Case Substitution (OCS) and Shift in Anticausative Strategy (SAS). OCS is a change in case marking where an oblique experiencer replaces a nominative subject. OCS goes against the Case Directionality Hypothesis, by which marked (lexical) case is replaced by unmarked (structural) case. SAS, on the other hand, is independent of the Case Directionality Hypothesis as it involves a shift from one anticausative strategy to another, and not a replacement of one case by another. The anticausative strategy that gives rise to new oblique subjects is that of Case-Preserving Anticausativization. Interestingly, neither OCS nor SAS target just a single NP, but rather both the subject and the predicate. Thus, even though most case changes in Icelandic follow the Case Directionality Hypothesis, exceptions to the general rule occur under identifiable conditions.

**Keywords:** anticausative, case marking, case preservation, diachronic syntax, Icelandic, language change, oblique case, oblique subject

## 1 Introduction

Icelandic is well known for having oblique subjects (Andrews 1976, 1982, and many others; for an overview and discussion, see Thráinsson 2007:146–150 and *passim*). Some of the predicates which take oblique subjects have parallels in other Germanic languages, especially German, as well as Old Germanic languages such as Old English. Others are limited to North Germanic, including older stages of Mainland Scandinavian and Modern Faroese, in addition to Icelandic, while others still seem to be limited to Icelandic. Although several observations have been made in the literature on the emergence and development of oblique subjects and their predicates in Icelandic (e.g., Eythórsson 2002, 2015a, 2015b), this topic has never been investigated systematically.<sup>1</sup> The goal of this paper is to make up for this neglect and present our findings on how oblique subjects emerge.

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<sup>1</sup> Diachronic studies on oblique subject (or “impersonal”) constructions have concentrated on showing that such phenomena represent an archaic layer in the languages in which they occur (Barðdal et al. 2020, Eythórsson & Barðdal 2005, Bauer 2000). Nevertheless, it has been recognized that predicate-specific oblique subjects have emerged at different times in various languages (e.g., Pooth et al. 2019).

Assuming the traditional periodization of the Icelandic language, as divided into two parts, Old Icelandic (1150–1540) and Modern Icelandic (1540 to the present), we focus on the period within Modern Icelandic spanning from the late 18th century to the early 21st century. We observe that some verbs that took a nominative subject in earlier times are now found with an oblique subject. This fact gives us a valuable opportunity to study the emergence of oblique subjects. Two examples of recent oblique subject constructions in Icelandic are shown in (1) and (2); the a-examples show the original variant, whereas the b–c examples represent the innovation.<sup>2</sup>

- (1) a. **Stelpan** hlakkar til jólanna.  
the.girl-N looks.forward to Christmas  
b. **Stelpuna** hlakkar til jólanna.  
the.girl-A looks.forward to Christmas  
c. **Stelpunni** hlakkar til jólanna.  
the.girl-D looks.forward to Christmas  
'The girl looks forward to Christmas.'
- (2) a. **Fuglarnir** fjölga.  
the.birds-N.PL multiply-3.PL  
b. **Fuglunum** fjölgar.  
the.birds-D.PL multiply-3.SG  
'The birds increase in number.'

Interestingly, the emergence of new oblique subjects in Modern Icelandic goes against other changes in case marking such as the more common Nominative Substitution (NS), shown in (3b); the older pattern, attested since Old Icelandic, is shown in (3a).

- (3) a. **Bátinn** rekur til lands.  
the.boat-A drifts to land  
b. **Báturinn** rekur til lands.  
the.boat-N drifts to land  
'The boat is drifting towards land.'

NS is in accordance with the Case Directionality Hypothesis (Eythórssón 2002, 2015a, 2015b, Eythórssón & Thráinsson 2017) which states that marked (lexical) case yields to unmarked (structural) case. This hypothesis was primarily set forth on the basis of evidence in Icelandic and Faroese.

- (4) Case Directionality Hypothesis:  
marked (lexical) case → unmarked (structural) case

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<sup>2</sup> For convenience, the examples in (1) and (2) are constructed on the basis of authentic examples that have been discussed in the literature (see, e.g., Svavarsdóttir 1982, Halldórsson 1982, Eythórssón 2002, Jónsson & Eythórssón 2003, 2005, Jónsson 1997–98, 2003, 2017, Thráinsson 2007:146–248).

While it may be tempting to assume that oblique case is the unmarked option for subjects of experiencer predicates, this is not so. The majority of subjects in Icelandic, including experiencer subjects, exhibit nominative case, e.g. the subjects of the experiencer verbs *elska* ‘love’, *hata* ‘hate’, *skynja* ‘sense’, *vera svangur* ‘be hungry’, and *þjást* ‘suffer’ (see Jónsson 2003 for a discussion of experiencers with a nominative subject). Thus, the emergence of subjects with oblique case marking goes against the Case Directionality Hypothesis given that they are considered marked (lexical) vis-à-vis unmarked (structural) nominative subjects.

As we demonstrate in Section 3, oblique subjects can emerge in different ways. Specifically, we argue that recent oblique subjects in Modern Icelandic emerge through two types of changes. The first of these is Oblique-Case Substitution (OCS), which only affects a handful of predicates and involves a change in case marking from nominative to accusative or dative (Section 3.2). The second type of change involves a Shift in Anticausative Strategy (SAS for short), where an older anticausative structure is replaced by a new one. The new oblique subject can be attributed to a choice of a strategy termed Case-Preserving Anticausativization (CPA).<sup>3</sup> In CPA, the subject of the intransitive (anticausative) structure preserves the case of the object of the transitive structure. Importantly, only OCS goes against the Case Directionality Hypothesis. The creation of oblique subjects via CPA is a more complex process. While CPA as such does not violate the Case Directionality Hypothesis, the choice of CPA over other strategies with a nominative subject does.

The paper is structured as follows. In Section 2 we briefly discuss subject case in Icelandic, focusing on predicates taking an oblique subject, and we review some changes in subject case marking in light of the Case Directionality Hypothesis. In Section 3 we elaborate on the two types of change which give rise to oblique subjects, carefully documenting some cases which have so far not received much attention in studies of Icelandic syntax. We first discuss OCS (3.2), focusing in particular on the predicate *hlakka til* ‘look forward to’. Next, we provide an overview of anticausativization strategies in the history of Icelandic (3.3), including CPA, before turning to SAS (3.4), where we disentangle the complex manifestations of this phenomenon. Section 4 contains a summary and some final remarks on the emergence of oblique subjects.

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<sup>3</sup> A number of terms have been used for this phenomenon. The term case-preserving anticausativization is mentioned by Schäfer (2008:291), although his analysis does not assume that the structures in question really are anticausatives. Rather, Schäfer (2008) assumes that the oblique NPs are “stray accusatives” and “stray datives”, respectively, following Haider (2001). Sigurðsson (2006) applies the terms “fate accusative” and “accusative unaccusative”. Cennamo et al. (2015) talk about “oblique case preserving anticausative strategy”, whereas Barðdal et al. (2020) use the term “oblique anticausatives/anticausativization”. We, however, use the label Case-Preserving Anticausativization because we consider it more accurate than the others on the market as it captures the “preservation” of the oblique case of the object of a transitive structure in the matching anticausative structure.

## 2 Case marking in Icelandic

### 2.1 The case of subjects

In Icelandic, arguments in subject position can be in any of the four cases: nominative, accusative, dative or genitive. Of these, nominative is by far the most common subject case, and also the most productive one. New predicates entering the language (as borrowings, calques, or neologisms) usually take a subject in the nominative case (Barðdal 2001 and later work). As for the oblique cases, some 700 predicates take dative subjects in Modern Icelandic; accusative subjects occur with about 200 predicates, and genitive subjects with only about ten predicates (Jónsson 1997–98, Barðdal & Eythórsson 2009, among others).<sup>4</sup> While nominative subjects are unspecified for lexical semantics, dative subjects typically denote experiencers and goals (including beneficiaries and recipients), whereas accusative subjects denote experiencers and themes (and patients). As for genitive subjects, the relation between case and semantic role is less clear. Importantly, only nominative subjects can denote agents (Jónsson 1997–98; for a more fine-grained semantic analysis, see Barðdal 2001 and later work).

### 2.2 Oblique subjects: origins and characteristics

Ever since Andrews (1976, 1982), there has been a general consensus that Modern Icelandic has oblique subjects. Although oblique subjects are in some respects different from nominative ones, for instance in not showing agreement with the predicate, they nevertheless pass numerous reliable subject tests which have been proposed for Icelandic. Such tests include control infinitives (PRO-infinitives), conjunction reduction, raising to object (ECM or “AcI”), raising to subject, and reflexivization (both clause-bound and long-distance reflexivization). For an overview of oblique subjects in Icelandic, the application of the subject tests, and exhaustive references, see in particular Thráinsson (2007:161–167).

While tests for subjecthood are fairly well established for Modern Icelandic, they have proven more difficult to apply at older stages of the language. Nevertheless, it has been proposed with some solid arguments that Old Icelandic had oblique subjects (Rögnvaldsson 1995, 1996, Barðdal & Eythórsson 2003, contra Faarlund 2001, Askedal 2001). In a wider context, it has also been claimed that Old Germanic had oblique subjects, in particular Old English, as has been carefully argued by Allen (1986, 1995). The situation is less clear in other Old Germanic languages (see, however, Eythórsson & Barðdal 2005 and other work). Finally, oblique subjects have been argued to occur outside Germanic, both in Indo-European and non-Indo-European languages.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Barðdal (2001:180; cf. also Thráinsson 2007:156) reports on a statistical analysis of selected texts, according to which roughly 94% of subjects in Modern Icelandic occur in nominative case, about 4% occur in dative, around 1% in accusative and less than 1% in genitive. Barðdal’s study also estimates that the percentages for Old Icelandic are similar.

<sup>5</sup> It has been suggested that oblique subjects in old and modern Indo-European languages are a common inheritance from Proto-Indo-European and are not due to a separate development in the individual branches. This matter is the subject of ongoing research (e.g., Eythórsson & Barðdal 2005, Barðdal et al. 2020).

Those predicates in Modern Icelandic that take oblique subjects can be divided into three categories, based on their historical origins. The first category contains predicates whose oblique case patterns can be traced back to Proto-Germanic. These include *hungra* ‘hunger’ and *þyrsta* ‘thirst’, which take a single argument in the accusative case, and *líka* ‘like’ which takes two arguments, a dative and a nominative (e.g., Barðdal & Eythórsson 2012:370).<sup>6</sup> Whether or not the oblique argument had the status of a subject in Proto-Germanic is not crucial for our present purposes. What matters is that the *case pattern* of the oblique NPs occurring with the predicates under discussion is old.

The second category contains predicates whose oblique case pattern is attested only within North Germanic, in at least two of the following languages: Old Norse-Icelandic, Old Swedish, Old Danish, and Modern Faroese, for instance *minna* (Icel.), *minnast* (Far.), *minnas* (OSwed.) ‘remember (vaguely)’ (e.g., Jónsson & Eythórsson 2011:234, Falk 1997:54).

The third category contains predicates whose oblique case pattern seems to be unique to Icelandic. These predicates can be further subdivided into two groups: (i) predicates that are found with oblique subjects since their earliest attestation in Old Icelandic, e.g., *reka* ‘drift’,<sup>7</sup> and (ii) predicates that originally took a nominative subject but at some point shifted to an oblique subject. The focus of this paper is on the second group. However, we first review the types of documented changes in subject-case marking in Icelandic.

### 2.3 Changes in subject case marking

Several types of changes in case marking can be observed in the history of Icelandic. A common change in subject case marking is Nominative Substitution, i.e. the replacement of oblique case by nominative. This type of change typically affects oblique theme subjects.<sup>8</sup> A second type of change involves Dative Substitution, sometimes referred to as “Dative Sickness”, whereby dative case replaces accusative case, i.e. one type of oblique case is substituted for another. Dative Substitution exclusively affects experiencer subjects.<sup>9</sup> A third type of change involves Genitive Avoidance, i.e. the replacement of genitive with another case, usually dative. Although Genitive Avoidance tends to primarily affect objects, a few examples involving subjects have been reported (Jónsson 2017).

<sup>6</sup> The cognates of these Icelandic verbs include the Gothic accusative verbs *huggrian* ‘hunger’ and *þaurisian* ‘thirst’ and the dative–nominative verb *ga-leikan* ‘like, please’, and related verbs in Old English, Old Saxon, and Old High German (cf. Eythórsson & Barðdal 2005, Barðdal & Eythórsson 2012, Barðdal et al. 2016). Verbs which take a single argument in the dative case are found in individual Germanic languages, but cognate verbs with dative only do not seem to be attested across Germanic.

<sup>7</sup> For a comprehensive list of predicates occurring with accusative subjects, see Jónsson & Eythórsson (2011:236–237). Some of the predicates that are attested with an oblique subject in Old Icelandic also occur with a nominative, including *langa* ‘want’.

<sup>8</sup> Another way to lose oblique subject is lexical substitution, by which the relevant lexical item is marginalized and then lost (e.g., the accusative subject verb *hungra* ‘hunger’ in Modern Icelandic has largely been replaced by *vera svangur* ‘be hungry’ which takes a nominative subject).

<sup>9</sup> The term Dative Substitution has sometimes also been used to refer to a change from nominative to dative with experiencer subjects (e.g., Jónsson 1997–1998:29, 2003:155). However, we believe the two changes – accusative to dative, on the one hand, and nominative to oblique, on the other hand – should be kept distinct, and regard the term Oblique Case Substitution as being more appropriate for the latter change (see e.g., Eythórsson 2000:198–199).

The three changes can be schematized as follows:

- (i) Nominative Substitution: oblique → nominative
- (ii) Dative Substitution: accusative → dative
- (iii) Genitive Avoidance: genitive → dative, accusative or nominative

An example of Nominative Substitution affecting accusative was shown (3b) above, whereas Nominative Substitution affecting dative is given in (5b). Dative Substitution is exemplified in (6b), and Genitive Avoidance in (7b).

- (5) a. **Bátnum** hvolfdi.  
the.boat-D capsized
- b. **Báturinn** hvolfdi.  
the.boat-N capsized  
'The boat capsized.'
- (6) a. **Mig** langar í nammi.  
me-A wants in candy
- b. **Mér** langar í nammi.  
me-D wants in candy  
'I want candy.'
- (7) a. **Þeirra** bíður erfitt verkefni...  
them-G awaits difficult-N project-N
- b. **Þeim** bíður erfitt verkefni...  
them-D awaits difficult-N project-N  
'A difficult task awaits them...'

(<https://www.vf.is/frettir/umfn-tharf-ad-sigra-keflavik>)

It has been proposed that these changes can be captured by the Case Directionality Hypothesis, stated in (4), according to which unmarked case is generalized at the expense of marked case (Eythórsson 2002, 2015a, 2015b, Eythórsson & Thráinsson 2017). In accordance with the Case Directionality Hypothesis, Nominative Substitution involves a change from a marked to an unmarked subject case, whereas Dative Substitution and Genitive Avoidance involve a change from a highly marked ("idiosyncratic lexical") case (accusative) to a less marked ("regular lexical") case (dative).<sup>10</sup>

However, there are exceptional cases that go against the general direction of the Case Directionality Hypothesis.<sup>11</sup> The most salient of these is the converse of Nominative Substitution, which we term Oblique-Case Substitution (OCS): the nominative case is replaced by an oblique case. OCS has received much less attention than the other changes mentioned

<sup>10</sup> The division of lexical case into regular (thematic) lexical case and idiosyncratic lexical case was proposed for Icelandic by Yip, Maling & Jackendoff (1987); see also Jónsson (1997–98, 2003) and Eythórsson (2002).

<sup>11</sup> An unexpected directionality in changes in subject case marking is the topic of a more recent study by Guðmundsdóttir et al. (2019).

above; one reason for this may be that it is attested for very few predicates (see Section 3.2. below), including *hlakka til* ‘look forward to’ and *kvíða fyrir* ‘be anxious about’. Importantly, all of these take an experiencer subject.

Another phenomenon which might at first glance seem to resemble OCS was exemplified in (2) above, repeated here as (8) and (9). In Modern Icelandic the intransitive verb *ffölga* ‘increase, multiply’ takes a dative subject:

- (8) **Fuglunum** fjölgaði.  
 the.birds-D multiplied  
 ‘The birds increased in number.’

However, the corresponding verb in Old(er) Icelandic occurred with a nominative subject, as in (9) (cf. Jónsdóttir 2015b).

- (9) **Fuglarnir** fjölguðu.  
 the.birds-N multiplied  
 ‘The birds increased in number.’

Although the difference between the examples in (9) and (8) may look like OCS, there being a nominative subject at an older stage and an oblique subject at a later stage, this is not the case. In fact, the dative in (8) is not an experiencer and did not directly replace the nominative in (9). Rather, a new oblique subject arose through Shift in Anticausativization Strategy (SAS), following the process of Case-Preserving Anticausativization (CPA), as discussed in 3.3.

### 3 How oblique subjects emerge

#### 3.1 A note on methodology

As stated above we deal here with two types of changes: Oblique-Case Substitution (OCS) and Shift in Anticausativization Strategy (SAS) in favor of Case-Preserving Anticausativization (CPA).<sup>12</sup>

By OCS a nominative subject is replaced by an oblique subject with experiencer predicates. By SAS, on the other hand, anticausative structures with a nominative subject are replaced by anticausative structures with an oblique subject. Note that the predicates affected by OCS are always experiencers, whereas in SAS they are not. For a more detailed discussion of these changes, see 3.2 and 3.3, respectively.

Before proceeding further, let us comment briefly on our methodological approach in this paper. Variation in subject case marking has been shown to occur with certain predicates in Modern Icelandic. In some cases, the variation in question is quite old, such as with the predicate *langa* ‘want’, which is documented in Old Icelandic (c. 1100–1540) with both a

<sup>12</sup> A third type is Argument Swapping (ARS), found only in Old Icelandic, which we discuss separately in a forthcoming paper.

nominative and accusative subject. In other cases, the variation is more recent and arose in Modern Icelandic (c. 1540 – today, although we use the term Present-Day Icelandic to refer to current situation in the language). We focus here on predicates that have started to show variation in case marking in recent times, i.e., within the last 200 years or so, and where the original case marking can be determined to have been nominative. We categorize these predicates depending on how the new case marking emerged, i.e., whether it arose through SAS where a CPA strategy was chosen, or whether it is an instance of OCS. We mainly rely on sources that cover the period from the 17th to the 21st century, occasionally using Google to find “new” examples. The sources used are listed in Table 1:

**Table 1:** List of sources used to find examples of relevant constructions

| <b>SOURCE</b>  | <b>MATERIAL TYPE</b>   | <b>PERIOD COVERED</b>   |
|--|--|---|
| The Gigaword Corpus  | A tagged corpus containing various texts from news media, social media, journals, books, and parliamentary speeches. | Modern Icelandic, mostly material from 2000–2022  |
| Timarit.is   | A digital library containing millions of pages from periodicals, newspapers, and other printed material              | Modern Icelandic from 1696 – present  |
| Íslenskt textasafn   | Whole texts of various types, including novels, blogs, periodicals, cookbooks, biographies, and law texts            | Mostly material from the 6 <sup>th</sup> century to the present although some Old Norse/Icelandic |
| Ritmálssafn Orðabókar Háskólans (ROH)                      | Collection of examples of word usage in written Icelandic  | 16 <sup>th</sup> century – 20 <sup>th</sup> century   |
| An Icelandic-English Dictionary (Cleasby & Vigfússon 1874) | Dictionary with examples and explanations  | Old Norse/Icelandic, some Modern Icelandic  |
| Ordbog over det norrøne prosasprog (ONP)                   | Dictionary of Old Norse/Icelandic prose with attested examples of word usage in written material                     | Old Norse/Icelandic   |
| Ordbog over det gamle norske sprog (Fritzner 1954–1972)    | Dictionary of Old Norse  | Old Norse/Icelandic   |
| Íslensk orðabók (ÍOB)                                      | Dictionary of Icelandic  | Modern Icelandic with occasional examples from older language                                     |



In addition to the sources listed in Table 1, the following dictionary portals were consulted: snara.is, málið.is and arnastofnun.is. We also cite examples from journal articles and squibs by various scholars (in particular, Jónsdóttir 2015a, 2015b, 2018, Friðjónsson 1993). In cases where scholars are not cited, the examples were found using the above-mentioned sources.

Providing a complete statistical overview of subject-case marking with each predicate was not necessary for our purposes, and would in any case go beyond the scope of this paper. Rather, the goal is simply to locate the oldest attested examples of the new case marking with the particular predicates and relate them to the two types of changes (OCS and SAS) under investigation here.

Finally, it should be noted that individual predicates vary somewhat with respect to their change in case marking. While novel case marking of subjects is regularly encountered in both written and spoken material with some predicates, it may appear only sporadically with others, sometimes attested less than ten times in written corpora. Thus, for example, the predicate *hlakka til* ‘look forward to’ frequently occurs with an oblique subject, while *beygja* ‘bend’ does so sporadically. Rather than dismissing sporadic occurrences of novel case marking as errors, we take them seriously, in as much as they occur in reliable sources and are supported by comparable evidence with other lexical items. Given these premises we take such examples to reflect a tendency which has a certain directionality and should be viewed in light of a general pattern in case marking.

### 3.2 Oblique-Case Substitution

Oblique-Case Substitution (OCS) involves a change in case marking, going directly from nominative to oblique case. Thus, at one point in the history of Icelandic the subject occurs in the nominative with the relevant predicate, and at a later point it occurs in the accusative or dative. Such a change has been reported for the following experiencer predicates (see for instance Friðjónsson 1989:13):<sup>13</sup>

- (10) a. *hlakka til* ‘look forward to’ (prepositional verb)  
 b. *kvíða (fyrir)* ‘be anxious about’ (both a simple verb and a prepositional verb)  
 c. *finna til* ‘feel pain’ and *kenna til* ‘feel pain’ (particle verbs)  
 d. *kenna í brjósti um* ‘feel sorry for’ (a collocation with a verb taking a PP complement)  
 e. *skjöplast* ‘be mistaken’, *girnast* ‘desire’ (*st*-verbs)

It should be emphasized that the predicates in (10) exhibit variation in case-marking to a different extent. While oblique case is dominant with *skjöplast* and common with *hlakka til* and *kvíða (fyrir)*, it is rare with *kenna til*, *kenna í brjósti um*, *finna til* and *girnast*.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> We take experiencer predicates to be a broad category consisting of subcategories such as verbs of emotion, e.g., *fýsa* ‘want’, *langa* ‘want’, *lengja eftir* ‘long for’ and *lysta* ‘desire’, and verbs of bodily function such as *verkja* ‘feel pain’ and *hrylla við* ‘be disgusted by’ (see, e.g., Jónsson 1997–8, Barðdal 2001).

<sup>14</sup> The predicates *hlakka til* and *kvíða fyrir* are frequently used in Present-Day Icelandic, with over 30.000 and 3.000 attested examples in the Gigaword corpus, respectively. Thráinsson et al. (2015:40) report that there is

In what follows we illustrate OCS by focusing on the origin and development of the predicates in (10), relying on data gathered from the sources discussed in 3.1.

We first discuss the prepositional verb *hlakka til* ‘look forward to’, which historically takes a nominative subject, as shown in (11).

- (11) **Ég** hlakka til jóla.  
 I-N look.forward to Christmas  
 ‘I look forward to Christmas.’

In Present-Day Icelandic this predicate also occurs with an accusative and a dative subject (12). Intra-speaker case variation is also possible, such that the same speaker may alternate between two or more cases (see e.g., Nowenstein 2014, 2017).

- (12) a. **Mig** hlakkar til jóla.  
 me-A look.forward to Christmas  
 ‘I look forward to Christmas.’  
 b. **Mér** hlakkar til jóla.  
 me-D look.forward to Christmas  
 ‘I look forward to Christmas.’

The use of accusative with *hlakka til* is first attested towards the end of the 19th century (13).

- (13) **Mig** hlakkar til, að fá að verða félagi þinn  
 me-A look.forward to to get to be partner your  
 og sessunautur.  
 and companion  
 ‘I look forward to be allowed to be your partner and companion.’

(*Þjóðólfur* 1892(1):13)

The oldest documented example where *hlakka til* is used with a dative is from 1941, and funnily enough it appears in a short article titled *Verndum móðurmálið* ‘Let us protect the mother tongue’. In the article, an 11-year-old girl named Sigríður Löve complains about people speaking incorrect Icelandic, encouraging her readers (presumably mostly children like herself) to mind their own language, with the aim to preserve it in as pristine a form as possible. The example is given in (14).

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considerable variation in subject case marking with these predicates, as shown in extensive surveys conducted in Iceland in 2005–2008. In one of these surveys, involving 772 participants, *hlakka til* occurred in nominative case with 48.6% of the participants, in accusative case with 59.7% of the participants and in dative with 44.2% of the participants. In the same survey, 63.8% of the participants preferred oblique case with *kviða fyrir*, with 36.6% opting for accusative and 27.2% for dative, while 36.2% opted for nominative. – The verb *skjöplast* occurs little less than 400 times in the Gigaword corpus, almost exclusively with a dative subject. Finally, *kenna til*, *kenna í brjósti um*, *finna til* and *girnast* mostly occur with a nominate subject, and only occasionally with an oblique subject.

- (14) Einnig hefi ég heyrð suma segja: „**Mér** hlakkar  
 furthermore have I heard some say I-D look.forward  
 svo mikið til að komast í berjatúrinn.“  
 so much to INF come to berry.picking.tour  
 ‘Furthermore, I have heard some people say: “I look so much forward to being able to go on the berry-picking tour”’ (*Unga Ísland* 1941(1):3)

Following the earliest attested examples with accusative and dative subject, we get a slow increase in the number of cases where *hlakka til* occurs with accusative or dative.<sup>15</sup> The diffusion of the accusative and dative at the expense of nominative with *hlakka til* has been documented in several surveys (Svavarsdóttir 1982, Jónsson & Eythórsson 2003, 2005, Thráinsson et al. 2015:40). Nowadays, the use of these cases with *hlakka til* seems dominant in colloquial Icelandic, whereas nominative still appears the norm in formal language and proofread texts.

The transition from nominative to accusative and dative represents a change that is quite unexpected given that subjects in Icelandic most commonly occur in the nominative case (see the statistical overview provided by Barðdal 2001, cited in fn. 4). To be sure, this change goes against the general trend captured by the Case Directionality Hypothesis, as discussed in 2.3 above. However, this development is understandable in light of the fact that a relatively large subset of experiencer subjects in Icelandic are in an oblique case (cf. Section 2.1). Among the predicates exhibiting accusative subject as far back as records go are the ones in (15a),<sup>16</sup> and among the verbs with dative case we find those shown in (15b) (see the relevant entries in Cleasby & Vigfússon 1874).

- (15) a. Predicates with accusative  
*langa* ‘want’, *vanta* ‘need’, *verkja* ‘feel pain’ and *hrylla við* ‘be disgusted by’  
 b. Predicates with dative  
*bjóða við* ‘be disgusted by’, *blöskra* ‘be shocked/horrified’ and *sárna* ‘be hurt’

Clearly, *hlakka til* has similar semantics as these experiencer verbs, and it is plausible to regard the particular semantics as a precondition for the change in case marking. On this view, *hlakka til* starts patterning with verbs in the same semantic domain which take oblique subjects.

Before discussing the motivation of changes from nominative to oblique case with subjects we must first consider the development of the predicates in question, for which there

<sup>15</sup> A search on timarit.is for the phrase *mig hlakkar* reveals that in the period 1890–1899 there is only one attested example. Two decades later, in 1920–1929 there are three attested examples and in 1950–1959 five. In most of these cases the examples occur in prescriptive articles on “correct” Icelandic. The reason that the examples being so few might be linked to the fact that non-standard language typically does not appear in published material which has been subject to proofreading and standardization.

<sup>16</sup> Although *langa* is attested with an accusative as far back as Old Icelandic, there are few sporadic examples with a nominative (see Halldórsson 1982:171). As for *vanta* and *verkja*, they occur with accusative in Old Icelandic but are occasionally attested with a nominative at later stages (Halldórsson 1982:177–180). The use of nominative seems to be caused by Nominative Substitution. Here we gloss over more recent occurrences of some of these verbs with a dative subject, due to Dative Substitution.

are reasonably good historical records. Let us start with *hlakka til* ‘look forward to’, which is the most common of those predicates.

The verb *hlakka til* ‘look forward to’ is made up of the simple verb *hlakka* and the preposition *til* ‘to’. The verb *hlakka*, which is virtually obsolete in Modern Icelandic, was originally used as a verb of sound emission to describe the expression of the call produced by birds of prey (Cleasby & Vigfússon 1874:269). Nouns derived from this verb include *hlakk* ‘sound of a bird of prey, jubilation (at the misfortunes of others)’, *hlakkan/hlökkun* ‘a screaming with joy’ and *tilhlakkan/tilhlökkun* ‘joyous expectation’. Cognates to *hlakka* exist in related languages such as Old English (*hlacerian* ‘deride, mock’), Latin (*clangō* ‘clang, sound’, with an *n*-infix) and Greek (*klázō* ‘make a sharp piercing sound (scream, bay, clash)’) (Cleasby & Vigfússon 1874:269, Magnússon 1989:337).

In its original use, the verb *hlakka* ‘cry (used of birds of prey)’ appears with an agentive nominative subject NP involving the animal that emits this particular sound. This use is attested in Old Icelandic. In (16), *ari* ‘eagle’ is the subject of the verb *hlakka*.

- (16) Ormur knýr unnir  
worm turns waves  
en **ari** **hlakkar**...  
but eagle cries (Völuspá 50, Kristjánsson & Ólason 2014)  
‘The serpent churns the waves, the eagle shrieks in anticipation...’  
(transl., Larrington 1996:10)

The simple verb *hlakka* can combine with the following three prepositions: *í* ‘in’, *yfir* ‘over’ and *til* ‘to’ to create a derived, often more abstract, meaning. The predicate *hlakka í* is used impersonally with an expletive in the meaning ‘chuckle (i.e., laugh quietly or inwardly)’ (17).

- (17) Það hlakkaði í honum við tilhugsunina.  
EXPL chuckled in him with the.thought  
‘He chuckled at the thought (lit. It chuckled in him at the thought).’

When someone chuckles they may be producing a sound that is reminiscent of the cry made by birds of prey, or they may simply be laughing inwardly. It is unlikely that *hlakka í* (17) still has a connection to the very rare simple verb in the minds of contemporary individuals. A similar expression, also derived from a bird sound (e.g., of a pigeon, a ptarmigan, or an eider), is *kurra í* ‘coo’.

- (18) Það kurraði í honum.  
EXPL cooed in him  
‘He murmured.’ (lit. ‘It cooed in him.’)

A second prepositional verb is *hlakka yfir* meaning ‘emit a cry over prey’, found in an example from 1838, shown in (19).

- (19) **Klógulir** **ernir** yfir veiði hlakka.  
 claw.yellow-N eagles-N over pray cry  
 ‘Claw-yellow eagles make a cry over their pray.’  
 (Gunnarshólmi, Jónas Hallgrímsson, <https://jonashallgrimsson.is/>)

In Modern Icelandic this expression means ‘exult over a thing, as an eagle over its prey’ (Cleasby & Vigfússon 1874:269), which can have a meaning close to ‘gloat over’. It is mainly used when someone experiences delight over the misfortune of others, as in (20).

- (20) **Einræðisherrann** hlakkaði yfir óförum óvinanna.  
 the.dictator-N gloated over the.misfortunes of the enemies  
 ‘The dictator gloated over the misfortunes of the enemies.’

Finally, *hlakka* can combine with the preposition *til*. Similarly to *hlakka í* and *hlakka yfir*, the original meaning of *hlakka til* was probably construed around the meaning of the simplex verb *hlakka*, yielding ‘make a joyous sound at or in the prospect of something’ (cf. Cleasby & Vigfússon 1874:269, who provide the meaning ‘one screams with joy at or in prospect of a thing (of children, young people)’).<sup>17</sup> We assume that this meaning gave rise to the metaphorical meaning ‘experience excitement at or in the prospect of something’, eventually resulting in ‘look forward to something’. Thus, as with *hlakka í* and *hlakka yfir*, the development is from an agentive to an experiencer verb. The metaphorical meaning is the only one possible of *hlakka til* in the modern language, and speakers never seem to associate it with ‘cry (of birds of prey)’ expressed by the simple verb *hlakka*. A parallel metaphorical development may be observed in English *look forward to*, where the original construction involved a literal meaning of ‘looking forward’ but later gained the derived meaning of ‘being excited, showing excitement in the prospect of something’. In both cases the literal meaning has given way to the metaphorical one.

Other verbs in Icelandic which have undergone OCS include *kvíða fyrir* ‘be anxious about’, *kenna til* ‘feel pain’, *finna til* ‘feel pain’, and *skjöplast* ‘be mistaken’. These verbs have gone through a similar development as *hlakka til*; they are experiencer verbs that were derived from simple verbs, apparently with an agentive subject. For instance, *kvíða fyrir* is based on the simple verb *kvíða* ‘be anxious about’ which occurs already in Old Icelandic. Originally this verb seems to have meant ‘complain’, a meaning which is not attested Icelandic, but is found in related languages, including Old English *cwīðan* ‘complain’, Old Saxon *quīthean* ‘wail, whine’ and old and modern Nordic languages (Magnússon 1989:527). A semantic shift has occurred in the prehistory of Icelandic, where ‘complain’ became associated with the fear of being in a situation that can be complained about, thus coming to mean ‘be anxious about’. The simple verb *kvíða* with nominative subject occurred earlier with a dative object, as in (21) from Old Icelandic, and it still does in Modern Icelandic, as in (22), although it may have a somewhat formal flavor.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> The combination of the simple verb *hlakka* with the preposition *til* is attested once in Old Icelandic. However, the meaning is not ‘look forward to’ as in Modern Icelandic, but rather ‘seek after’, translating Latin *expetare* ‘desire, seek after’ (ONP s.v. *hlakka*).

<sup>18</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the verb *kvíða*, see Jónsdóttir (2015a), which we rely on here.

- (21) Ekki kvíði **eg** því að eg geti eigi haldið  
 not am.anxious I-N it-D that I can not hold  
 mér réttum fyrir Hrúti og sonum hans.  
 me right before Hrútur and sons his  
 ‘I’m not anxious about not being able to stand on my rights against Hrútur and his sons.’  
 (*Laxdæla saga*, ch. 38)

- (22) **Ég** kvíði **því** að fara í vinnuna vegna  
 I-N am.anxious it-D that go to work because  
 stöðugra Covid slagsmála  
 constant Covid fights  
 ‘I’m anxious about going to work because of constant Covid fights.’  
 (*DV*, 18th January 2021)

In Modern Icelandic *kvíða* is occasionally attested with an oblique subject, either accusative (23a) or dative (23b).

- (23) a. **Hana** kvíðir þó ekki að takast á við  
 her-A is.anxious yet not to take on with  
 forvaldið.  
 the.preliminary.election  
 ‘Yet, she is not anxious to come to grips with the preliminary election.’  
 (<https://www.visir.is/g/2009248851d>)
- b. Tengdó og mákona mín fara á morgun og  
 mom-in-law and sister-in-law my go tomorrow and  
**mér** kvíðir því dálítið.  
 me-D is.anxious that-D somewhat  
 ‘My mom-in-law and sister-in-law leave tomorrow, and I am somewhat  
 anxious about that.’ (<https://bland.is/umraeda/ae-omurlegur-dagur-/438242/>)

However, in Modern Icelandic this verb is typically found with the preposition *fyrir* (Jónsdóttir 2015a:45, fn. 3), as in (24).<sup>19</sup> While nominative case is the recommended form in the standard language oblique subjects (accusative or dative) appear frequently (Thráinsson et al. 2015).

- (24) a. **Ég** kvíði fyrir prófinu.  
 I-N am.anxious for the.exam  
 b. **Mig** kvíður fyrir prófinu.  
 me-A is.anxious for the.exam

<sup>19</sup> In Older Icelandic *kvíða* was also construed with the preposition *við* ‘with’, as in (i). This usage disappeared in the 19th century (Jónsdóttir 2015a:283).

(i) Ekki kvíði **eg** við dauða mínum.  
 not am.anxious I-N with death my  
 ‘I am not anxious about my death.’ (*Sturlunga saga – Þorgils saga skarða*, ch. 16)

- c. **Mér** kvíður fyrir prófinu.  
me-D is.anxious for the.exam  
'I am anxious about the exam.'

The verb *kvíða* was originally a weak verb but later it began to inflect as a strong verb; Jónsdóttir (2015a:285–286) notes that the earliest examples of *kvíða* as a strong verb appear in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. In the past tense the strong inflection (*kveið*) predominates while the weak inflection (*kvíddi*) rarely occurs (the form *kveið* occurs 1129 times in the Icelandic Gigaword Corpus while *kvíddi* appears only twice). In the present tense both inflections are attested. However, the choice of inflection seemingly affects the choice of case, as nominative case is more common than oblique case with weak inflection in the present tense, and vice versa: oblique case is more common with strong inflection. (24b, c).<sup>20</sup> This suggests that OCS does not target individual NPs but rather the construction as a whole, the predicate and its subject NP (see also section 3.3 below).

The simple predicates *kenna* and *finna*, which can have the meaning ‘recognize, find’ form the basis of *kenna í brjósti um* ‘feel sorry for’ (25), as well as *kenna til* and *finna til*, both meaning ‘feel pain’. The latter two originally took a PP with *til* ‘to’ followed by a genitive NP, but the preposition was evidently reanalyzed as a particle.

- (25) a. **Ég** kenni í brjósti um Úkraínubúa.  
I-N feel in breast about Ukrainians  
'I feel sorry for the Ukrainians.'
- b. **Okkur** kennir í brjósti um Gyðingana.  
us-A/D feels in breast about Jews  
'We feel sorry for the Jews.' (*Morgunblaðið* 1946(52):7)

The predicate *kenna til* standardly appears with a nominative experiencer subject, as in (26a) from the mid-19th century, but is occasionally found with either an accusative, (26b) also from the mid-19th century, or a dative subject, of which the earliest example we have found is from the 20th century (26c).

- (26) a. **Eg** kénni til sakir þín, bródir minn Jónatan!  
I-N feel to because you brother mine Jonatan  
'I feel pain because of you, Jonatan my brother.' (*Viðeyjarbiblían* 2S 1, 26)
- b. Kenni [...] kenni til, **mig** kennir til, pro eg kenni til.  
feel feel to me-A feel to for I-N feel to  
'Feel [...] feel pain, me feels (i.e., I feel) pain for I feel pain.'  
(ROH, s.v. *kenna*, Dr. H Scheving)
- c. ýmislegt bendir til að **fiskum** geti kennt til.  
various points to that fish-D.PL can feel to  
'Many things point towards fishes being able to feel pain.' (*Ægir* 1928(10):227)

<sup>20</sup> The statistics is based on a search in the Gigaword Corpus.

The predicate *finna til* usually takes a nominative subject. The earliest example we have found where the meaning is ‘feel pain’ and *til* is a particle and not a preposition dates from the mid-19th century (27).<sup>21</sup> Although the example involves a relative clause, the covert subject, referring back to *brjóstum* ‘breasts’ must be nominative given that the finite verb *geta* ‘can’ agrees with it in number.

- (27) ...beztu blómin gróa / í brjóstum, sem að geta fundið til.  
 best flowers grow in breasts which can feel-pl to  
 ‘...the best flowers grow in hearts that have feel pain.’  
 (Vísur Íslendinga, Jónas Hallgrímsson, <https://jonashallgrimsson.is/>)

In any case, this construction is very common in Modern Icelandic, occurring over 28.000 times in the Gigaword corpus, where *til* is clearly a verbal particle. The occurrence of this verb with an oblique subject, either an accusative, as in (28a), or a dative, as in (28b), can, for example, be found in contemporary internet blogs and message boards displaying informal language, although it is rare in the standard variety.

- (28) a. **Mig** finnur til í hjartanu.  
 me-A feels to in the.heart  
 ‘My heart hurts.’ (skjolid.blog.is)
- b. ...**henni** finnur til í hálsinum.  
 her-D feels to in the.throat  
 ‘... her throat hurts.’ (bland.is)

Finally, the verb *skjöplast* was originally associated with the meaning ‘bring into disorder, be unstable’. In Faroese *skepla* means ‘confuse, bring into disorder’ and in Neo-Norwegian *skjeplast* means ‘be brought into disorder’ (Magnússon 1989:852). In older Icelandic *skjöplast* originally meant ‘fail’ (29a), and occurred with a nominative subject. Diachronically, it seems there was a shift from the more concrete meaning, ‘fail’, seen in the other Nordic languages, to a more abstract meaning, ‘be mistaken’, seen in (29b). Importantly, in Modern Icelandic the verb only occurs with a dative experiencer subject meaning ‘be wrong, be mistaken’ (cf. Jón Friðjónsson 2021).<sup>22</sup>

- (29) a. ...og seg svo frændum Vigfúss að þeir  
 and tell so kinsmen of Vigfús that they-N  
 skjöplist eigi meir í liðveislunni móti Snorra goða.  
 fail-SUBJ not more in the.help against Snorri chieftain  
 ‘... and tell the kinsmen of Vigfús that they should not fail in helping against  
 Chieftain Snorri.’ (*Eyrbyggja Saga*, ch 27)

<sup>21</sup> The verb *finna til* in the poem in (27) is unlikely to mean ‘feel’ in a general sense. Rather, the context calls for the experience of a negative emotion, i.e. pain.

<sup>22</sup> The oldest example with an oblique subject that we know of is from the first part of the 18th century. However, an example showing the old meaning and a nominative subject is attested as late as 1892 (cf. <http://ritmalssafn.arnastofnun.is/daemi/421588>).



- b. I þessum atriðum var sízt hætt við,  
 in these topics was least liable  
 að **fræðimönnum** ættarinnar mundi skjöplast...  
 that scholars-D the.family-G would be.mistaken-ST  
 ‘In these matters the scholars of the family would be least liable to be  
 mistaken...’ (*Tímarit Hins íslenska bókmentafélags* 1890(11):26)

Concluding this section, predicates that undergo OCS were typically agentive verbs that acquired an experiencer meaning by a semantic change. This applies to all the predicates discussed above: *hlakka til* ‘look forward to’, *kvíða fyrir* ‘be anxious about’, *kenna í brjósti um* ‘feel sorry for’, *kenna til* ‘feel pain’, *finna til* ‘feel pain’ and *skjöplast* ‘be mistaken’.<sup>23</sup> It seems clear that the semantic change is a necessary precondition for the change in case marking. However, there is no guarantee that a change in case marking should be actuated even if the semantic change has occurred. Note that there are numerous predicates in Icelandic whose nominative subject denotes an experiencer. Yet, a change in case marking does not occur with most of these predicates, or, if it does, it is at any rate much more sporadic than with the predicates listed in (10) above.

It should be emphasized that the change of case only occurs with subjects whose thematic role has changed from an agent (or a theme) to an experiencer; nominative subjects that historically has denoted experiencers seemingly resist such change. To account for this difference, one may assume that the thematic role of the subject is not the driving force for the change in case marking. Alternatively, the thematic role might be a driving force for the change of case, but something prevents the change from happening with other predicates. Since it is unclear (to us) what would prevent regular experiencer predicates from changing their subject from the nominative to an oblique case, we propose an answer in which being an experiencer is a precondition for change but something else sets it in motion. Interestingly, the predicates whose subject case has changed to an oblique all used to take an agentive subject. The old agentive predicates survived alongside the new experiencer predicates. It may be surmised that the change in case marking with the experiencer predicates, i.e. OCS, occurred as a side effect of an attempt to mark them as being distinct from the agentive ones.

Once OCS has taken place, it should in theory be possible for it to be reversed by Nominative Substitution, in accordance with the Case Directionality Hypothesis. The Case Directionality Hypothesis operates irrespective of the lexical semantics of the relevant NP. However, Nominative Substitution is observed more frequently with predicates that take theme arguments than with experiencer subjects. This fact suggests that there are other forces at work, preventing experiencer subjects from acquiring nominative case.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, there seems to be a conditioned resistance to OCS with the verbs *hlakka til* ‘look forward to’ and *kvíða fyrir* ‘be anxious about’ (Svavarsdóttir, Pálsson & Thórlindsson 1984, Jónsson & Eythórsson 2003:24), especially with the 1p. singular which is often the focus of prescriptive grammar

<sup>23</sup> Note that the semantics of these predicates presumably did not change all at once; the semantics of some predicates would have changed earlier than others and in some cases, the older meanings would coexist beside the more recent ones.

<sup>24</sup> Among notable exceptions to this general trend is the verb *dreyma* ‘dream’, originally taking an accusative subject but sometimes found with a nominative subject in Modern Icelandic (e.g., Svavarsdóttir 1982).

teaching (Svavarsdóttir 1982:37, 2013:107-108, Óladóttir 2017:251). In some cases, the same speaker may alternate between the use of nominative and oblique (dative or accusative); see in particular Nowenstein (2014, 2017) and Óladóttir (2017:236-254).

### 3.3 Anticausative strategies in Icelandic

The second way in which oblique subjects can arise involves the process of Case-Preserving Anticausativization (CPA). To properly understand CPA it is important to note that Icelandic has various different patterns of transitive-intransitive verb pairs (sometimes called ergative pairs), where the (accusative, dative or genitive) object of the transitive variant corresponds to the subject of the intransitive variant. It is common for the intransitive variant in a transitive-intransitive (or ergative) pair to be referred to as *anticausative*, and the process of forming anticausatives is termed *anticausativization* (for an Icelandic-specific discussion of anticausativity, see, e.g., Bernóðsson 1982:19–22, Zaenen & Maling 1984:145, Ottósson 1986, 1988, Ottósson 2013, Sigurðsson 1989:216–83, Maling 1991, Jónsson 1997–98, Svenonius 2006, Sandal 2011, Barðdal 2015a, 2015b, Cennamo et al. 2015, Jónsdóttir 2015b, 2018, Eythórsson & Sigurðardóttir 2016, Sigurðardóttir & Eythórsson 2016, 2019, Barðdal et al. 2020; see more generally, e.g., Haspelmath 1987, Koontz-Garboden 2009, Ottósson 2013). We adopt a definition of the term anticausativization according to which it involves the omission of the external argument of a transitive construction, promoting the object (or one of the objects) to a subject position (e.g., Schäfer 2008:9).

A number of strategies to form anticausatives are attested in Icelandic. These are listed in Table 2.

**Table 2:** List of anticausative strategies in Icelandic

| ANTICAUS. STRATEGY                           | VERB MORPHOLOGY   | SUBJECT OF ANTICAUS.  |
|--|---|---|
| 1. Labile verbs                              | The transitive and intransitive variants use the same verb form                               | Nominative case on subjects of anticausatives                               |
| 2. Strong-weak alternation                   | Strong inflection for the anticausative, weak inflection for the transitive                   | Nominative case on subjects of anticausatives                               |
| 3. <i>na</i> -verbs                          | Suffix <i>-na-</i> with anticausatives, strong inflection (active morphology) with transitive | Nominative case on subjects of anticausatives                               |
| 4. <i>st</i> -predicates                     | Suffix <i>-st</i> with anticausatives, active verbal morphology on transitive                 | Nominative case on subjects of anticausatives                               |
| 5. Case-Preserving Anticausativization (CPA) | The transitive and intransitive variants use the same verb form                               | Oblique (accusative, dative or genitive) case on subjects of anticausatives |

We now briefly discuss each of these strategies in turn.

One of the transitive-intransitive patterns involves an unmarked intransitive (anticausative) variant, which has the same verb form as the transitive variant and the subject is always in nominative case, as in (30). The type of verb where there is no morphological difference between the transitive and the intransitive variant is sometimes called “labile” (Kulikov & Lavidas 2014) and hence we refer to this as the labile-strategy.

- (30) a. **Gunna** stækkaði sumarbústaðinn.  
 Gunna extended the.summer.cottage-A  
 ‘Gunna extended the summer cottage.’  
 b. **Sumarbústaðurinn** stækkaði.  
 the.summer.cottage-N extended  
 ‘The summer cottage was extended.’

It is, however, more common for the intransitive to be morphologically marked in some way, the marking typically occurring on the verb (e.g., Ottosson 2013). The examples in (31)–(33) show transitive-intransitive pairs where the predicates are not formally identical. In (31) an alternation is observed between the weak verb *sökkva* ‘(cause something to) sink’, used in the transitive variant, and the strong verb *sökkva* ‘sink’, in the intransitive variant.

- (31) a. Kalli sökkti **bátnum**.  
 Kalli-N sank the.boat-A  
 ‘Kalli sank the boat.’  
 b. **Báturinn** sökk.  
 the.boat-A sank  
 ‘The boat sank.’

In (32) the transitive strong verb *brjóta* ‘break’ is unmarked whereas the intransitive weak verb has a *na*-suffix *brotna* ‘break’.<sup>25</sup>

- (32) a. Gunnar braut **rúðuna**.  
 Gunnar broke the.window-A  
 ‘Gunnar broke the window.’

<sup>25</sup> Sometimes more than one strategy can be used to create an anticausative variant. Thus, for example, the verb *brjóta* has another intransitive variant, which has a strong past tense *braut* and occurs with an accusative subject (i). This is the type of anticausativization shown in (34)–(35) in the main text.

(i) Bátinn braut í spón.  
 the.boat-A broke in pieces  
 ‘The boat broke to pieces.’

Moreover, in child language there are examples like *brotmast* where an additional *st*-morpheme has been added to the existing *na*-anticausative *brotna* (Jónsdóttir 2018). This is reminiscent of “double” plural marking on some nouns in English, e.g., *sheeps* (for *sheep*), *childrens* (for *children*).

- b. **Rúðan** brotnaði.  
the.window-N broke  
'The window broke.'

Finally, in (33) the weak transitive (*laga* 'fix') is unmarked but the weak intransitive verb has an *st*-suffix (*lagast* 'fix'), marked by *-ST* in the glosses.<sup>26</sup> In all the examples in (30)–(33) the subject is in the nominative case, and in the transitive variants the object is in the accusative.

- (33) a. Forstjórinn lagaði **framkomu** sína, eftir að hann  
the.director-N improved behavior-A his after that he  
talaði við sálfræðing.  
talked to psychologist  
'The director improved his behavior after talking to a psychologist.'
- b. **Framkoma** forstjórans lagaðist eftir að hann  
the.behavior-N director-GEN improved-ST after that he  
talaði við sálfræðing.  
talked to psychologist  
'The behavior of the director improved after talking to a psychologist.'

In addition to having intransitive variants with morphological marking on the verb, Icelandic also has intransitives where the verb form is unmarked but the case of the object of the corresponding transitive variant is "preserved" on the subject of the intransitive (see, e.g., Bernóðsson 1982, Zaenen & Maling 1984). Examples of such pairs are shown in (34)–(35).

- (34) a. Stormurinn blés **strompinn** af húsinu.  
the.storm-N blew chimney-A of the.house  
'The storm blew the chimney off the house.'
- b. **Strompinn** blés af húsinu.  
the.chimney-A blew of the.house  
'The chimney blew off the house.' (Zaenen & Maling 1984:145)
- (35) a. Höfundurinn lauk **sögunni**.  
the.author-N finished the.story-D  
'The author finished the story.'
- b. **Sögunni** lauk.  
the.story-D finished  
'The story finished.'

Note that a similar type of pattern also exists for some ditransitives which become monotransitive (Barðdal 2015:406), as exemplified in (36). (36a) shows a ditransitive structure with a nominative subject (represented here with the noun *gæfan* 'the luck'), an indirect object

<sup>26</sup> Although *-st* is commonly used to derive anticausative, it should be emphasized that *st*-predicates can have various other functions, including reflexive, reciprocal and passive (e.g., Ottosson 2008, 2013).

(a dative recipient) and a direct object in the accusative. In the intransitive variant in (36b) the dative recipient occurs in subject position while the direct accusative object remains in situ.<sup>27</sup>

- (36) a. Cantona gaf þeim byr...  
 Cantona-N gave them-D wind-A  
 ‘Cantona gave them (favorable) wind (i.e., urged them on).’  
 (<https://fotbolti.net/fullStory.php?id=7068>)
- b. Þeim gaf byr.  
 them-D gave wind-A  
 ‘They received wind.’

In cases where the subject of the anticausative variant retains the case-marking of the object in the transitive variant we use the label Case-Preserving Anticausativization (CPA).<sup>28</sup> The intransitives in (34)–(35) above are created through the process of CPA. According to Barðdal et al. (2020), the synchronic connections between the transitive and anticausative variants of this type are “semantically opaque” in Modern Icelandic. Barðdal et al. (2020:421) claim that while the intransitive (anticausative) structures have a metaphorical meaning, the corresponding transitive ones do not; thus, there would not be a derivational relationship between the intransitive and the transitive construction synchronically, since the transitive non-metaphorical structure must be older historically. We argue against this view, claiming that the connection between the transitive and intransitive variants must still be transparent as new instances of CPA would otherwise not be expected, as we illustrate below.

CPA is in some ways reminiscent of case preservation in Icelandic passives. The case of the objects in active structures is “preserved” on the subjects of passives if it is in the dative or genitive case (37). For discussion and references, see Thráinsson (2007:249–308).

- (37) a. María hjálpaði Önnu.  
 Mary-N helped Anna-D  
 ‘Mary helped Anna.’
- b. Önnu var hjálpað.  
 Anna-D was helped  
 ‘Anna was helped.’

If, however, the object in the active structure is in the accusative, the case is not preserved on the subject of the passive; rather, the subject receives a nominative case (38). This is unlike CPAs where preservation of the accusative is also possible, as in (34b) above.

<sup>27</sup> The fact that transitive structures like (36a) occur in Modern Icelandic is a sign of the expression being transparent and the structure productive. Although we recognize the anachronicity of the correspondence between the specific examples given in (36), our point here is merely to show that the derivational relationship between a transitive structure and an anticausative structure is still perceived as productive in Modern Icelandic.

<sup>28</sup> The structures we consider created by CPA are analyzed differently by some authors, arguing that the relevant intransitive predicates are in fact a special type of transitives, with a covert element corresponding to the subject (e.g. Schäfer 2008, Wood 2014).

- (38) a. Jón las **bókina**.  
 John-N read the.book-A  
 ‘John read the book.’
- b. **Bókin** var lesin (af Jóni).  
 the.book-N was read-N (by John-D)  
 ‘The book was read (by John).’

Another characteristic distinguishing CPAs from passives is that in passives an agent can be added by means of a *by*-phrase (Icelandic *af* ‘by’).<sup>29</sup>

- (39) a. Önnu var hjálpað **af Maríu**.  
 Anna-N was helped by Mary-D  
 ‘Anna was helped by Mary.’
- b. \*Sögunni lauk **af höfundinum**.  
 the.story-D finished by the.author-D

In this respect, CPAs pattern with other anticausatives where *by*-phrases result in ungrammatical structures, as shown in (40).

- (40) a. Sumarbústaðurinn stækkaði (\*af Gunnu).  
 the.summer.cottage-N extended (by Gunna-D)  
 ‘The summer cottage was extended (\*by Gunna).’
- b. Rúðan brotnaði (\*af Gunnari).  
 the.window.pane-N broke (by Gunnar-D)  
 ‘The window broke (\*by Gunnar).’
- c. Stóllinn eyðilagðist (\*af barninu).  
 the.chair-N fell.apart (by the.child-D)  
 ‘The chair was fell apart (\*by the child).’

In the corresponding passives a *by*-phrase is grammatical (41).

- (41) a. Sumarbústaðurinn var stækkaður (af Gunnu).  
 the.summer.cottage was extended (by Gunna-D)  
 ‘The summer cottage was extended (by Gunna).’
- b. Rúðan var brotin (af Gunnari).  
 the.window.pane was broken (by Gunnar-D)
- c. Stóllinn var eyðilagður (af barninu).  
 the.chair was damaged (by the.child-D)

<sup>29</sup> In English, a similar pattern is found. An agent in an active sentence (*The author finished the story*) can be included in a *by*-phrase in the corresponding passive (*The story was finished by the author*); however, in an anticausative/intransitive variant adding a *by*-phrase results in an ungrammatical sentence (*\*The story finished by the author*).

Despite some similarities between passives and CPA, the difference between them suggests that the underlying structure is not identical. First, passive allows *by*-phrases while CPA does not, and second, accusative is preserved in CPA but not in passive.<sup>30</sup>

Although many oblique subjects formed by CPA have existed in Icelandic since ancient times, there are recent additions to this category. While the new anticausative structure can be shown to be derived from a transitive structure containing the same predicate, an exact match containing the same lexical NP arguments as the CPA structure may not always be attested. This also applies to older CPA structures. An exact transitive match containing the same NP argument as the anticausative structure in (42a) happens to be attested, as shown in (42b).

- (42) a. **Eldingu** laust í rafmagnsstaur.  
lightning-D struck PREP electricity.pole  
'A lightning struck an electricity pole.'
- b. Seifur laust hann **eldingu**.  
Zeus-N struck him lightning-D  
'Zeus struck him with lightning.'
- (<https://www.geimurinn.is/stjornuskodun/stjornumerkin/tviburarnir/>)

Moreover, structures corresponding to (42b) are well attested with other lexical items, as in the following example.

- (43) tók hann þá handöxi ... laust hamrinum á hausinn...  
took he then hatchet struck the.hammer on the.head  
'Then he took a hatchet... and struck the head with the hammer...' (Egils saga, ch 89)

### 3.4 Shift in Anticausative Strategy

Sometimes more than one anticausative strategy can be used to create an intransitive structure. In these cases, we maintain that one strategy is historically older for the relevant predicate and that a "newer" strategy may coexist with it and eventually replace it. We refer to this (gradual) replacement of one strategy in favor of another as Shift in Anticausative Strategy (SAS). We are primarily interested in SAS where an older strategy is replaced by a CPA strategy, giving rise to new oblique subject structures. Interestingly, the CPA strategy as such does not violate the Case Directionality Hypothesis since it involves a relationship between transitive and intransitive structures and not the replacement of nominative by an oblique. However, the selection of CPA by SAS to the detriment of a strategy with a nominative subject is unexpected given the Case Directionality Hypothesis. The shifts in anticausative strategy favoring CPA can be divided into three groups (Groups I–III), depending on the original strategy and its case marking and verb morphology.

<sup>30</sup> Icelandic also has a so-called "new passive" where accusative is preserved (e.g., Maling & Sigurjónsdóttir 2002, Eythórsson 2008, Jónsson 2009, Sigurðsson 2017).

Group I contains examples where an intransitive construction with a nominative subject is replaced by a construction with an accusative; in both instances the verb is morphologically unmarked. Examples of this type include constructions with the predicates *taka niðri* (*niður*) ‘touch the ground (lit., take down)’ and *setja ofan* ‘suffer a setback (lit., put from above)’. In (44) and (45) the original intransitive constructions with *taka niðri* and *setja ofan* are shown. The predicates *taka* and *setja* can both be used transitively, see (44b) and (45b), although the transitive variant is not attested with the same lexical items as the intransitive, i.e., with the particles *niðri* and *ofan*. However, we assume that it is from such a transitive stage that we assume the new intransitive variant, (44c) and (45c), to have been formed, through the strategy of CPA.<sup>31</sup> Thus we see that SAS involves the shift from an anticausative strategy with a nominative subject to a strategy involving CPA.

- (44) a. **Báturinn** tók niðri.  
the.boat-N took down  
‘The boat touched the ground.’
- b. Einhver tók **bátinn**.  
someone-N took the.boat-A  
‘Someone took the boat.’
- c. **Bátinn** tók niðri.  
the.boat-A took down  
‘The boat touched the ground.’
- (45) a. **Við allir** setjum ofan.  
we-N all-N puts down  
‘We all suffer a setback.’
- b. Einhver setur **okkur alla** (eitthvert).  
someone puts us-A all-A somewhere  
‘Someone puts us all (somewhere).’
- c. **Okkur alla** setur ofan.  
we-A all-A puts down  
‘We all suffer a setback.’

Some authentic examples with *taka niðri* ‘touch the ground’ and *setja ofan* ‘suffer a setback’ with an accusative subject are provided in (46) and (47).

<sup>31</sup> An especially complex case of this type involves the metaphorical construction *skórinn kreppir* ‘the shoe pinches’ used to express the meaning ‘there are difficulties’. Instead of the older nominative *skórinn* we observe an innovative accusative *skóinn* among many speakers. The change arguably involves the creation of a new oblique-subject construction through the CPA, where a transitive variant is actually attested. We discuss this particular construction in detail elsewhere.



- (46) Hann gerði sér þó grein fyrir að **bátinn** var  
 he did REFL though difference for that the.boat-A was  
 að taka niðri.  
 INF take down  
 ‘He realized that the boat was touching the ground.’  
 (Dagblaðið Vísir DV 2007(108):14)

- (47) **Þig** setur ofan...  
 you-A puts down  
 ‘You suffer a setback...’  
 (<https://sigmar6.blog.is/blog/sigmar6/entry/892555/>, 8.6.2009)

Group II involves constructions where a nominative subject and a morphologically unmarked intransitive predicate is replaced by a comparable construction with a dative subject. Examples of this type include structures with the predicates *ffölga* ‘increase, multiply’ and *fækka* ‘decrease’ (Jónsdóttir 2015b, Rögnvaldsson 2020). There is a twist to the story of the creation of verbs like intransitive *ffölga* with a dative subject, namely that it is preconditioned by another change.<sup>32</sup> In Old Icelandic *ffölga* took an accusative object when used transitively (the earliest example is attested from 1360–1370). However, at the beginning of the 18th century the transitive started appearing with a dative object (48a). On the basis of these facts we argue that an intransitive structure with a dative subject (the earliest example of *fækka* dating from 1726 and of *ffölga* from 1859) was created by CPA from the transitive variant with a dative object. In short, the case of the object of the transitive verb changed from accusative (48a) to dative (49a), and subsequently the intransitive variant with a dative subject (49b) replaced the one with a nominative subject (48b).

- (48) a. NP fjölgaði **fuglana**.  
 NP-N increased the.birds-A  
 b. **Fuglarnir** fjölguðu.  
 the.birds-N increased
- (49) a. NP fjölgaði **fuglunum**.  
 NP-N increased the.birds-D  
 b. **Fuglunum** fjölgaði.  
 the.birds-D increased

The oldest attested examples of the anticausative variant of *ffölga* with a nominative subject and dative subject are provided in (50) and (51), respectively. In Modern Icelandic, intransitive *ffölga* is only found with dative; the nominative variant had disappeared by the early 20th century.

<sup>32</sup> For documentation and dating of the examples of *ffölga* and *fækka* we draw on valuable empirical research by Jónsdóttir (2015b).

- (50) af nokkrum vondum bókum svo sem **margar** ...  
 of some evil books such as many-N  
 fjölga daglega.  
 increase-3PL every.day  
 ‘Of some evil books, which become more numerous every day.’  
 (Jónsdóttir 2015b:192, example (14b), 1541–1550)
- (51) **sauðpeningi** hefir fjölgað hér norðanlands.  
 sheep-D have.3SG increased here in.the.North  
 ‘Sheep have increased here in the North.’ (Jónsdóttir 2015b:189, example (9b), 1859)

The facts concerning the verb *fjölga* are actually even more complicated than the above discussion indicates. It turns out that there are also cases of accusative subjects with the intransitive (anticausative) variant attested in the period 1584–1738, of the type in (52), as established by Jónsdóttir (2015b:187).

- (52) **Fuglana** fjölgaði.  
 the.birds-A increased  
 ‘The number of the birds increased.’

The earliest documented example of an accusative subject with *fjölga* is shown in (53):

- (53) Og þá ed **mennina** tók að fjölga á jörðu.  
 and then when the.people-A began to multiply on earth  
 ‘And when people began to multiply on the Earth.’  
 (Jónsdóttir 2015b:187, example (6a), 1584)

In her discussion of this complex situation, Jónsdóttir (2015b) suggests that the construction with accusative subject is older than the one with nominative subject. On her account, the original accusative subject in the anticausative variant was first replaced by nominative by NS. Later, the nominative subject was replaced by dative for reasons that are not clearly stated. However, a development from accusative via nominative to dative is doubtful for two reasons. First, according to Jónsdóttir’s (2015b:187) own research, the examples with nominative are older than those with accusative and hence it is very implausible that the accusative was ousted by NS. Second, the sequence of the changes is better motivated from the perspective of known historical tendencies on the assumption that the accusative emerged later than the nominative in this construction. We take the nominative to be the original state of affairs in the anticausative variant with *fjölga*, and propose that the accusative subject was created by CPA from the transitive variant with an accusative object (cf. Group I above). Next, there was a change in case marking in the transitive variant whereby the accusative object was replaced by dative. Subsequently, a new anticausative variant with a dative subject was created by CPA. Note that the emergence of the anticausative structures with accusative and dative subject both involve CPA, i.e. “preservation” of the object case of the transitive in an anticausative structure,

first the accusative and later the dative. On this account there is no need to assume a stage at which NS affected the accusative subject of this construction.

Finally, Group III comprises an intransitive construction where a nominative subject and an *st*-verb is replaced by a construction involving an active (morphologically unmarked) verb with an accusative subject. In short, the CPA strategy replaces the *-st* strategy, although apparently the latter structure continues to be much more common. Examples of this type include the predicate *beygjast* (*st*-verb) and *beygja* (active) ‘bend’.

The facts regarding *beygja* and *beygjast* are somewhat complex. The original anticausative formation may have been a labile one, containing the active form *beygja* and a nominative subject, as in (54a). A variant with an *-st* predicate is also reasonably well attested. Finally, (54c) shows an anticausative variant with an accusative subject; this structure is found only once with *vegur* (the attested example is given below).

- (54) a. **Vegurinn** beygir.  
 the.road-N turns  
 ‘The road turns.’
- b. **Vegurinn** beygist.  
 the.road-N bends  
 ‘The road turns.’
- c. Hann tók ekkert eftir því fyr en **veginn** beygði  
 he noticed not after it until the.road-A bent  
 í hring...  
 in circle  
 ‘I did not notice it until the road curved in a circle.’ (*Vestri* 19. January 1915)

The CPA variant in (54c) was presumably formed on the bases of a transitive structure with *beygja* and an accusative object, as shown in an attested example given in (55).

- (55) ...að verkstjórinn beygði **veginn** svo fram á við...  
 that the.foreman-N bends the.road-A then forward  
 ‘The foreman bent the road forward (i.e., made the road turn forward).’  
 (*Ísafold* 1915(74):2)

In addition to the single example of an intransitive structure with *vegur* ‘road’ as the oblique-subject of *beygja* (54c) we have found a parallel one with *stígur* ‘path’, given in (56).

- (56) Þar sem **stíginn** beygði niður með grenilundinum, blasti  
 there where the.path-A bent down along the.spruce.grove faced  
 húsið vel við.  
 house well with  
 ‘Where the path curved down along the spruce grove, the house could be clearly seen.’ (*Morgunblaðið* 1947(56):14)

Moreover, the *st*-verb *beygjast* occurs in the metaphorical expression *krókurinn beygist* ‘(lit.) the hook bends’, which conveys the information that someone’s interest takes a turn in a certain direction. The metaphorical expression, attested since the 17th century (Friðjónsson 1993), typically occurs in a fixed phrase shown in (57a). The matching transitive structure is attested in (57b) and a new intransitive variant, attested only once, with an accusative subject in (57c).<sup>33</sup> Note that an intransitive variant with an active verb and a nominative subject is not attested in this case.

- (57) a. Snemma beygist **krókurinn**.  
 early bends-ST the.hook-N  
 ‘The hook turns early (i.e. the interest turns early on in a certain direction).’
- b. Það er holt að beygja snemma **krókinn**  
 it is healthy to bend early the.hook  
 að því, sem verða á.  
 to that-D that become must  
 ‘It is good to bend the hook (i.e., turn one’s interest) early in the desired direction.’ (*Nýtt kvennablað* 3, 1954.)
- c. Þannig að **krókinn** hefur tekið að beygja snemma.  
 so that the.hook-A has begun to bend early  
 ‘So [she] developed this interest early in her life.’ (*Fréttablaðið* 2004(264):16)

We envisage that the process of forming a new CPA structure involves two steps. First the *st*-predicate in the anticausative variant *krókurinn beygist* (57a) is semantically associated with transitive *beygja* with a nominative subject and an accusative object (57b). Then, on the basis of the transitive variant, a new anticausative is created (57c) by means of CPA, involving both an active verb and an accusative subject. It furthermore transpires that the structures involving *beygjast* and *beygja* shows that CPA, just like OCS (as discussed in 3.2 above), does not target individual NPs but rather the construction as a whole, both the predicate and its subject NP.

The formation of the new oblique subject constructions by means of CPA, shown in (54c), (56) and (57c) above, is different from the formation of new oblique subject constructions by OCS. As noted at the outset, OCS goes against the Case Directionality Hypothesis as it involves the replacement of an unmarked case by a marked case. The process of CPA, on the other hand, is independent of the Case Directionality Hypothesis as it primarily involves a derivational relationship between transitive and intransitive (anticausative) structures. However, selecting a CPA strategy in favor of one with a nominative subject is unexpected in the light of the Case Directionality Hypothesis. This may seem complicated, but it is in accordance with the observed facts.

Finally, it should be noted that oblique subjects created through CPA may be affected by changes in case marking in accordance with the Case Directionality Hypothesis. Thus, NS may affect the subject of some of these verbs and thus obliterate the consequences of CPA, as

<sup>33</sup> While the examples with an accusative subject with *beygja* ‘bend’ are extremely few, we still believe that they must be taken seriously given that their syntactic structures are identical, although the NPs in each example involve different lexical items.

discussed above. For example, the transitive sentence in (58) contains a dative object, which is traditionally retained with the subject of the anticausative variant (59a). However, most speakers of Modern Icelandic appear to use nominative case instead (Rögnvaldsson 2019), which is likely caused by Nominative Substitution (59b).<sup>34</sup>

(58) Kaupmaðurinn        lokar    **búðinni**.  
 merchant-N                closes the.store-D  
 ‘The Merchant closes the store.’

(59) a.        **Búðinni**        lokar.  
               the-store-D    closes  
 b.        **Búðin**        lokar.  
               the-store-N    closes  
 ‘The store closes.’

In summary, CPA is a different process from OCS in that it creates new oblique subjects with intransitive verbs on the basis of the case pattern of the transitive variant. As we have shown, the connection between the transitive and the intransitive (anticausative) variants must still be transparent as new instances of CPA would otherwise not be expected. This productive process does not violate the Case Directionality Hypothesis because it does not involve a simple change in case marking from nominative to oblique. However, the selection of a strategy that creates new structure with an oblique subject over a nominative subject strategy does violate the Case Directionality Hypothesis. By observing relatively recent examples of CPA we gain a valuable insight into the mechanisms that gave rise to oblique subjects in the prehistory of Icelandic.

## 4 Conclusion

In this paper we have shown that oblique subjects can emerge at any point in a language like Icelandic. Specifically, we discussed two pathways whereby new oblique subject constructions emerge, Oblique-Case Substitution and Case-Preserving Anticausativization.

Oblique-Case Substitution (OCS) involves a change in case marking where an oblique case is substituted for a nominative case with subjects. OCS only affects a handful of experiencer predicates: *hlakka til*, *kvíða fyrir*, *kenna til*, *finna til* and *skjöplast*. OCS goes against the Case Directionality Hypothesis, by which marked (lexical) case is replaced by unmarked (structural) case. OCS is nevertheless understandable given that experiencer predicates often take an oblique subject, and the predicates in question follow their pattern.

As an example of OCS, we focused on the origins and development of *hlakka til* in Icelandic. We showed how this prepositional verb can be traced back to the simple verb *hlakka* meaning ‘cry (used of birds of prey)’ which took an agentive subject in the nominative case.

<sup>34</sup> A search for the phrases *búðinni lokar* and *búðin lokar* on Google suggests that the latter is much more common, occurring more than 400 times, while the former has less than 10 results.

The first step in the development was for *hlakka til* to gain an experiencer meaning. Once the semantic change had happened a change in subject case marking could follow. The other verbs undergoing OCS arguably developed in a similar fashion.

Shift in Anticausative Strategy (SAS) involves a (gradual) replacement of one type of anticausative strategy by another. We focused on a replacement type where the strategy selected is Case-Preserving Anticausativization (CPA). By the CPA strategy an intransitive construction with an oblique subject is created from a corresponding transitive construction. Importantly, the subject of the intransitive matches the object of the transitive, not only with respect to semantics but also case marking. Many oblique-subject predicates in Icelandic were formed in this way at various points in the history of the language. Already in Old Icelandic we find examples like *bátinn rekur* ‘the boat drifts’, with an accusative, and *bátnum hvolfir* ‘the boat capsizes’, with a dative. More recent examples of oblique subjects being formed through CPA are also found. For instance, we occasionally observe an intransitive variant with a nominative subject being replaced by an intransitive variant with an oblique subject, such as *fuglunum fækkar* for older *fuglarnir fækka* (both meaning ‘the number of birds decreases’). At first glance this might look like OCS, a nominative subject case being replaced by an oblique case. However, the nominative case of the subject NP of the old construction does not “change” to accusative or dative. Rather, the entire existing intransitive construction is replaced by a new intransitive one, which in turn is created via CPA on the basis of a transitive construction.

An interesting byproduct of our investigation is the finding that both OCS and CPA do not just target the relevant NP, but rather the construction it is embedded in as a whole, i.e. the subject and the predicate. Thus, it is not only the case marking of the NP that can change, but the form of the predicate can also be affected by the change.

To conclude, even though most case changes are hypothesized to follow the Case Directionality Hypothesis, we nevertheless observe the emergence of new oblique subjects under identifiable conditions. OCS is a countermovement to the Case Directionality Hypothesis whereas SAS is more complex. To be sure, the process of CPA, involving a particular anticausativity strategy and not a change in case marking as such, is independent of the Case Directionality Hypothesis. However, CPA as a result of a Shift in Anticausative Strategy (SAS) is a violation of the Case Directionality Hypothesis since it favors a structure with an oblique subject over a structure with a nominative subject.

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*Sigríður Sæunn Sigurðardóttir*  
*Yale University*  
*sigridur.sigurdardottir@yale.edu*

*Þórhallur Eythórsson*  
*University of Iceland*  
*tolli@hi.is*