

The Alternating Predicate Puzzle: Comparing Icelandic and German

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Overview

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- Definition
- Subject Behavior in Icelandic
 - Comparison between Alternating Dat-Nom/Nom-Dat Predicates and Non-Alternating Dat-Nom Predicates
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- Comparison between Alternating Dat-Nom/Nom-Dat Predicates across Icelandic and German
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Definition

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- Alternating Dat-Nom/Nom-Dat predicates are predicates which occur in the Dat-Nom and the Nom-Dat case frame, and both represent an equally “neutral” word order. That is, one is not a topicalization of the other.

Mér fellur þessi bók vel í geð. Dat-Nom
me.dat falls this.nom book.nom well in liking
'I like this book.'

Þessi bók fellur mér vel í geð. Nom-Dat
this.nom book.nom falls me.dat well in liking
'This book pleases me.'

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Subject Behavior in Icelandic (Andrews 1976, Thráinsson 1979, Zaenen, Maling & Thráinsson 1985, Sigurðsson 1989, Jónsson 1996, inter alia)

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- First Position in Declarative Clauses
- Subject-Verb Inversion
- First Position in Subordinate Clauses
- Conjunction Reduction
- Clause-Bound Reflexivization
- Long-Distance Reflexivization
- Subject-to-Object Raising
- Subject-to-Subject Raising
- Control Infinitives

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First Position in Declarative Clauses

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• **Alternating Dat-Nom/Nom-Dat**

Mér hefur alltaf fallið **þessi bók** vel í geð. Dat-Nom

me.dat has always fallen this.nom book.nom well in liking
'I have always liked this book.'

Þessi bók hefur alltaf fallið *mér* vel í geð. Nom-Dat

this.nom book.nom has always fallen me.dat well in liking
'This book has always pleased me.'

• **Non-Alternating Dat-Nom**

Mér hefur alltaf líkað **þessi bók** vel. Dat-Nom

me.dat has always liked this.nom book.nom well
'I have always liked this book.'

***Þessi bók** hefur alltaf líkað *mér* vel. *Nom-Dat

this.nom book.nom has always liked me.dat well
'This book has always pleased me.'



Subject-Verb Inversion

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• **Alternating Dat-Nom/Nom-Dat**

Hefur **þér** alltaf fallið **þessi bók** vel í geð? Dat-Nom

has you.dat always fallen this.nom book.nom well in liking
'Have you always liked this book?'

Hefur **þessi bók** alltaf fallið **þér** vel í geð? Nom-Dat

has this.nom book.nom always fallen you.dat well in liking
'Has this book always pleased you?'

• **Non-Alternating Dat-Nom**

Hefur **þér** hefur alltaf líkað **þessi bók** vel? Dat-Nom

has you.dat always liked this.nom book.nom well
'Have you always liked this book?'

*Hefur **þessi bók** alltaf líkað **þér** vel? *Nom-Dat

has this.nom book.nom always liked you.dat well
'Has this book always pleased you?'



Conjunction Reduction

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• **Alternating Dat-Nom/Nom-Dat**

Ég kynnist fólkinu, og ___ hefur fallið **það** vel í geð. Dat-Nom

I got-to-know people-the and pro.dat has fallen it.nom well in liking
'I got to know the people and have liked them.'

Þona verkefni eru nauðsynleg og ___ hafa fallið **okkur** vel í geð. Nom-Dat

such projects are necessary and pro.nom have fallen us.dat well in liking
'Such projects are necessary and have been to our liking.'

• **Non-Alternating Dat-Nom**

Ég kynnist fólkinu, og ___ hefur líkað **það** vel. Dat-Nom

I got-to-know people-the and pro.dat has liked it.nom well
'I got to know the people and have like them.'

*Þona verkefni eru nauðsynleg og ___ hafa líkað **okkur** vel. *Nom-Dat

such projects are necessary and pro.nom has liked us.dat well
'Such projects are necessary and have been to our liking.'



Clause-Bound Reflexivization

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• **Alternating Dat-Nom/Nom-Dat**

Konunni, hefur fallið bókina **sín**, vel í geð. Dat-Nom

woman-the.dat has fallen book-the.nom hers.nom well in liking
'The woman has been pleased with her book.'

Hann, hefur fallið konunni **sinni**, vel í geð. Nom-Dat

he.nom has fallen wife-the.dat his.dat well in liking
'He has been pleasing to his wife.'

• **Non-Alternating Dat-Nom**

Konunni, hefur líkað bókina **sín**, vel. Dat-Nom

woman-the.dat has liked book-the.nom hers.nom well
'The woman has been pleased with her book.'

***Hann**, hefur líkað konunni **sinni**, vel. *Nom-Dat

he.nom has liked wife-the.dat his.dat well in liking
'He has been pleasing to his wife.'



Clause-Bound Reflexivization (Variation) 1

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• **Subject vs. Object Binding**

Hann_i heyrði sögur af **sér_i**/***honum_i** Subject Binding

he.nom heard stories.acc of himself.dat/him.dat

'He heard stories of himself.'

Ég sagði **honum_i** sögurnar af **sér_i**/***honum_i** Object Binding

I.nom told him.dat stories.acc of himself/him

'I told him stories of himself.'



Clause-Bound Reflexivization (Variation) 2

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• **Alternating Dat-Nom/Nom-Dat**

Konunni_i hefur fallið bókina um **sig_i**/***hana_i** vel í geð. Dat-Nom

woman-the.dat has fallen book-the.nom on self.acc/her.acc well in liking

'The woman has been pleased with the book on herself.'

Hann_i hefur fallið konunni **sinni_i**/***hans_i** vel í geð. Nom-Dat

he.nom has fallen wife-the.dat self.dat/his.dat well in liking

'He has been pleasing to his wife.'

• **Non-Alternating Dat-Nom**

Konunni_i hefur líkað bókina um **sig_i**/***hana_i** vel. Dat-Nom

woman-the.dat has liked book-the.nom on self.acc/her.acc well

'The woman has been pleased with with the book on herself.'

Hann_i** hefur líkað konunni **sinni_i**/hans_i** vel. *Nom-Dat

he.nom has liked wife-the.dat self.dat/his.dat well in liking

'He has been pleasing to his wife.'



Subject-to-Object Raising

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• **Alternating Dat-Nom/Nom-Dat**

Hún telur **sér_i** hafa fallið **bókin_i** vel í geð. Dat-Nom

she.nom assumes herself.dat have.inf fallen book-the.nom well in liking

'She assumes that the book was pleasing to her.'

Hún telur **bókin_i** hafa fallið **sér_i** vel í geð. Nom-Dat

she.nom assumes book-the.acc have.inf fallen herself.dat well in liking

'She assumes that the book was pleasing to her.'

• **Non-Alternating Dat-Nom**

Hún telur **sér_i** hafa líkað **bókin_i** vel. Dat-Nom

she.nom assumes herself.dat have.inf liked book-the.nom well

'She assumes that the book was pleasing to her.'

*Hún telur **bókin_i** hafa líkað **sér_i** vel. *Nom-Dat

she.nom assumes book-the.acc have.inf liked herself.dat well

'She assumes that the book was pleasing to her.'



Subject-to-Subject Raising

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• **Alternating Dat-Nom/Nom-Dat**

Henni_i virðist hafa fallið **bókin_i** vel í geð. Dat-Nom

she.nom seems have.inf fallen book-the.nom well in liking

'She seems to have been pleased with the book.'

Bókin_i virðist hafa fallið **henni_i** vel í geð. Nom-Dat

book-the.nom seems have.inf fallen herself.dat well in liking

'The book seems to have been pleasing to her.'

• **Non-Alternating Dat-Nom**

Henni_i virðist hafa líkað **bókin_i** vel. Dat-Nom

she.nom seems have.inf liked book-the.nom well

'She seems to have been pleased with the book.'

***Bókin_i** virðist hafa líkað **henni_i** vel. *Nom-Dat

book-the.nom seems have.inf liked herself.dat well

'The book seems to have been pleasing to her.'



Control Infinitives

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• **Alternating Dat-Nom/Nom-Dat**

að vera haldinn þrælslund til að __ falla í geð slík fásinna. Dat-Nom
 to be held severe.servility for to PRO.dat fall.inf in liking such craziness.nom
 'to be equipped with severe servility to like such craziness'

Umræður ... geta verið erfiðar vegna löngunar til að __ falla félögum í geð Nom-Dat
 discussions can be difficult because.of longing for to PRO.nom fall.inf friends-the.dat in liking
 'Discussions ... can be difficult because of their need to be to their peers' liking'

• **Non-Alternating Dat-Nom**

að vera haldinn þrælslund til að __ líka slík fásinna. Dat-Nom
 to be held severe.servility for to PRO.dat like.inf such craziness.nom
 'to be equipped with severe servility to like such craziness'

**Umræður ... geta verið erfiðar vegna löngunar til að __ líka félögum* *Nom-Dat
 discussions can be difficult because.of longing for to PRO.nom like.inf friends-the.dat
 'Discussions ... can be difficult because of their need to be to their peers' liking'



Interim Summary

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- Alternating Dat-Nom/Nom-Dat predicates behave systematically such that the first argument takes on the syntactic behavior of subject, be it the dative of Dat-Nom or the nominative of Nom-Dat.
- In contrast, Non-Alternating Dat-Nom predicates behave such that only the dative argument takes on the syntactic behavior of subject. The nominative argument, can, under no circumstances, take on the syntactic behavior of subject.



Alternating Predicates in the History of Germanic

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- **Icelandic** (Bernóðsson 1982, Jónsson 1997–98, Barðdal 2001, Eythórsson & Barðdal 2005)
- **Faroese** (Barnes 1986)
- **History of English** (Allen 1995)
- **History of Mainland Scandinavian** (Barðdal 1998)
- **German** (Eythórsson & Barðdal 2005)



The Icelandic–German Dichotomy

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- The standard story is that there is a categorical difference between Icelandic and German, in that Icelandic has Oblique Subjects, while German does not (Zaenen, Maling & Thráinsson 1985, Sigurðsson 1989, Fischer & Blaszczak 2001, Haspelmath 2001, Fanselow 2002, Bayer 2004, Haider 2005, Wunderlich 2009).
- In Barðdal & Eythórsson (2003), Eythórsson & Barðdal (2005), Barðdal (2006) and Barðdal & Eythórsson (2006) we show that, despite claims to the contrary in the literature, subject-like obliques in German may be left unexpressed in control infinitives:



Control Infinitives in German

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- **Dative Passive** (Modern German)
 - Der ewig läufige Richard Kimble, der dicke Captain Kirk, der fledermäusige Flatterheini Batman—sie alle kamen zurück. Sogar den ollen Zossen Black Beauty liess man letztens noch einmal ein paar Pferdeäpfel auf die Leinwand abseilen, bevor er zu seiner letzten Autogrammstunde in die Freibank trabte. Aber warum klappt das TV-Recycling ei[g]entlich nur im Ausland? “Mission: Impossible” wird ein Mega-Hit auf der ganzen Welt—aber wo bleibt zum Beispiel “MS-Franziska—Der Film”? Oder “Manni, der Libero, returns”? Haben wir Deutschen etwa keine weggeworfenen Serien, die es wert wären, wiederverwertet und nostalgisch **gehuldigt zu werden**?



Control Infinitives in German

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- **Dative Passive** (Early Modern German)
 - Denn ein Teil dieser Erkenntnisse, die mathematischen, ist im alten Besitze der Zuverlässigkeit, und gibt dadurch eine günstige Erwartung auch für andere, ob diese gleich von ganz verschiedener Natur sein mögen. Überdem, wenn man über den Kreis der Erfahrung hinaus ist, so ist man sicher, durch Erfahrung nicht **widersprochen zu werden**. (I. Kant *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* [earlier edition] 1781)



Control Infinitives in German

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- **Dative ‘be’ ADJ** (Early Modern German)
 - Hier sind wir noch halb sinnlich, und es ist äusserst naturwidrig, hier alles verleugnen wollen, was Gott dem physischen Menschen zum Labsal und zur Erfrischung hie und da am Pfäde unserer Wallfarth aufgetischt hat: aber den Lebensweg darum pilgern, um an diesen Erquickungsorten zu schmausen, das ist so verächtlich, dass man das Auge davon abwenden muss, um nicht **übel zu werden**.
(J.H. Jung-Stilling *Rede über den Werth der Leiden*, 1789)



Alternating Dat-Nom/Nom-Dat Predicates in Icelandic and German

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- First Position in Declarative Clauses
- Subject-Verb Inversion
- Conjunction Reduction
- Clause-Bound Reflexivization
- Subject-to-Object Raising
- Subject-to-Subject Raising
- Control Infinitives



First Position in Declarative Clauses

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• Icelandic:

Mér hefur alltaf fallið þessi bók vel í geð. Dat-Nom
 me.dat has always fallen this.nom book.nom well in liking
 'I have always liked this book.'

Þessi bók hefur alltaf fallið mér vel í geð. Nom-Dat
 this.nom book.nom has always fallen me.dat well in liking
 'This book has always pleased me.'

• German:

Mir hat das Hotel gut gefallen. Dat-Nom
 me.dat has this.nom hotel.nom well ge-fallen
 'I liked this hotel.'

Dieses Haus hat mir letztes Jahr schon so gut gefallen. Nom-Dat
 this.nom house.nom has me.dat last year already so well ge-fall
 'This house was already pleasing to me last year.'



Subject-Verb Inversion

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• Icelandic

Hefur þér alltaf fallið þessi bók vel í geð? Dat-Nom
 has you.dat always fallen this.nom book.nom well in liking
 'Have you always liked this book?'

Hefur þessi bók alltaf fallið þér vel í geð? Nom-Dat
 has this.nom book.nom always fallen you.dat well in liking
 'This book has always pleased me?'

• German:

Hat dir das Hotel gut gefallen? Dat-Nom
 has you.dat this.nom hotel.nom well ge-fallen
 'Did you like this hotel then?'

Hat dieses Haus dir letztes Jahr schon so gut gefallen? Nom-Dat
 has this.nom house.nom you.dat last year already so well ge-fall
 'Was this house already pleasing to you last year?'



Conjunction Reduction

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• Icelandic

Ég kynntist fólkinu, og ___ hefur fallið það vel í geð. Dat-Nom
 I got-to-know people-the and pro.dat has fallen it.nom well in liking
 'I got to know the people and have liked them.'

Stona verkefni eru nauðsynleg og ___ hafa fallið okkur vel í geð. Nom-Dat
 such projects are necessary and pro.nom have fallen us.dat well in liking
 'Such projects are necessary and have been to our liking.'

• German

Doch wer wird siegen, wer wird überleben, und ___ wird es gelingen ... ? Dat-Nom
 though who will conquer who will survive and will it succeed
 'Though who will conquer, who will survive, and succeed with it ... ?'

das er ein falsches Spiel mit der Familie ... getrieben hat und ___ wird es gelingen Dat-Nom
 that he a false game with the family ... ran has and will it succeed
 'that he's been running a scam ... on the family and is getting away with it.'

Das Zimmer ist gross und ___ hat mir gut gefallen. Nom-Dat
 the room.nom is big and has me.dat well ge-fallen
 'The room is big and has been to my liking.'



Clause-Bound Reflexivization (Variation) I

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• Subject vs. Object Binding

• **Icelandic**
*Hann, heyrði sögur af sér/*ihn, gehört.* Subject Binding
 he.nom heard stories.acc of himself.dat/him.dat
 'He heard stories of himself.'

Ég sagði honum, sögurnar af sér/honum, Object Binding
 I.nom told him.dat stories.acc of himself/him
 'I told him stories of himself.'

• German

*Er hat Geschichten über sich/*ihn, gehört.* Subject Binding
 he.nom has stories.acc of himself.acc/him.acc heard
 'He heard stories of himself.'

Ich habe ihm, Geschichten über sich/ihn, erzählt. Object Binding
 I.nom have him.dat stories.acc of himself.acc/him.acc told
 'I told him stories of himself.'



Clause-Bound Reflexivization (Variation) 2

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• Icelandic

*Konunni*_i, *hefur fallið* bókin um *sig*/_i*hana_i, *vel í geð*. Dat-Nom

woman-the.dat has fallen book-the.nom on self.acc/her.acc well in liking

'The woman has been pleased with the book on herself.'

*Hann*_i, *hefur fallið* konunni *sinni*/_i*hans_i, *vel í geð*. Nom-Dat

he.nom has fallen wife-the.dat self.dat/his.dat well in liking

He has pleased his wife well.'

• German

*Ihm*_i, *gefallen* Geschichten über *sich*/_i*ihn_i. Dat-Nom

him.dat *ge-fall* stories about self.acc/*him.acc

'He likes stories about himself.'

*Er*_i, *gefällt* *sich*/_i*ihm_i. Nom-Dat

he.nom *ge-falls* self.dat/*him.dat

'He's pleased with himself.'

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Subject-to-Object Raising

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• Icelandic

Hann letur sér ekki nægja *venjulegan síma*. Dat-Nom

he.nom lets self.dat not suffice.inf ordinary.acc phone.acc

'He doesn't let it suffice with an ordinary phone.'

Hann letur venjulegan síma ekki nægja *sér*. Nom-Dat

he.nom lets ordinary.acc phone.acc not suffice.inf self.dat

'He doesn't let it suffice with an ordinary phone.'

• German

Lasse dir nie *etwas* *gefallen* was du nicht willst. Dat-Nom

let you.dat not something.acc *ge-fall*.inf that you not want

'Don't accept anything that you really don't want.'

und er läst es sich *gefallen*. Nom-Dat

and he.nom lets it.acc self.dat *ge-fall*.inf

'and he accepts it.'

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Subject-to-Subject Raising

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• Icelandic

Henni virðist *hafa fallið* bókin *vel í geð*. Dat-Nom

she.nom seems have.inf fallen book-the.nom well in liking

'She seems to have been pleased with the book.'

Bókin virðist *hafa fallið henni* *vel í geð*. Nom-Dat

book-the.nom seems have.inf fallen herself.dat well in liking

The book seems to have been pleasing to her.'

• German

Den Grundeln und den Garnelen *scheint es* *gut zu gefallen*. Dat-Nom

the.dat gobys.dat and the.dat prawns.dat seem it good to *ge-fall*

'The gobys and the prawns seem to be pleased with it.'

Das kalte Spielzeug *scheint ihm* *gut zu gefallen*. Nom-Dat

the.nom cold toy-thing seems him.dat good to *ge-fall*

'The cold toy seems to be pleasing to him.'

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Control Infinitives (1)

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• Icelandic

að vera haldinn þrælslund til að *falla í geð* *slík fásinna*. Dat-Nom

to be held severe.servility for to PRO.dat fall.inf in liking such craziness.nom

'to be equipped with severe servility to like such craziness'

Umteður ... geta verið erfiðar vegna löngunar til að *falla félögum í geð*. Nom-Dat

discussions can be difficult because.of longing for to PRO.nom fall.inf friends-the.dat in

liking

'Discussions ... can be difficult because of their need to be to their peers' liking'

• German

Also tut er es, um ihr zu gefallen. Nom-Dat

therefore does he it PRO.nom in-order her.dat to *ge-fall*

'So he does it to please her.'

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Control Infinitives (2)

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• German

... den Unterschied zwischen dem Meister und dem Lehrling nicht respektiert, er hat Dat-Nom

the difference between the master and the disciple not respected he had

größer werden wollen, aber er hatte nicht die Weisheit, **um zu gelingen.**

greater become wanted but he had not the wisdom PRO.dat in-order to succeed.inf

'... didn't respect the difference between a master and a disciple, he wanted

to be greater, but he didn't have the wisdom to succeed.'

Ich will wohlterwogene Risiken eingehen, um darüber zu träumen und darauf Dat-Nom

I will well-considered risk in-come in-order there-about to dream and there-upon

zu bauen, **um zu mißlingen** und erfolgreich zu sein.

to build PRO.dat in-order to fail.inf and successful to be

'I will arrive at well-considered risks, dream about them and build upon them, in order to fail and become successful.'



A Minimalistic approach (Platzack 1999)

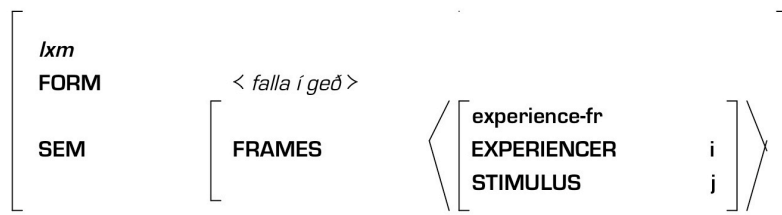
30

- Alternating verbs: One lexeme
- Basic NOM V DAT
- NOM moves to SpecAgrOP
- DAT V NOM derived by moving DAT across NOM to SpecTP
- Apparently violating Shortest Move, but in accordance with “Minimal Compliance”
- Problematic then... and it still is...



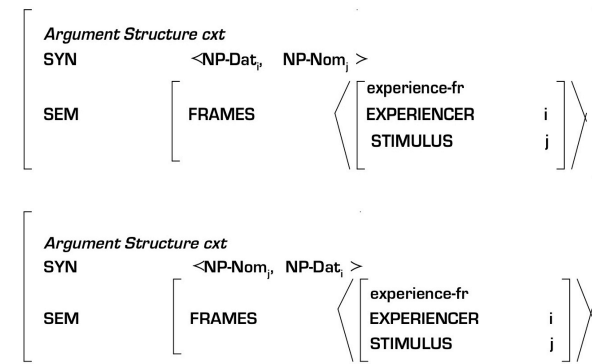
CxG: One Lexeme

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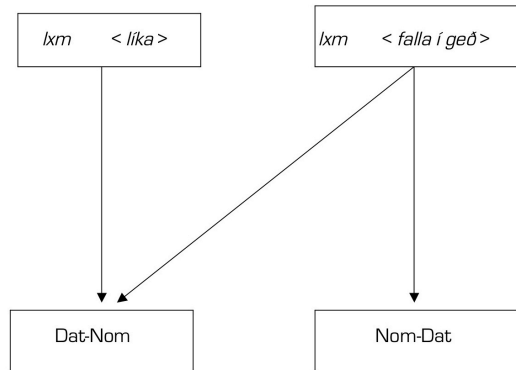
CxG: Two Argument Structures

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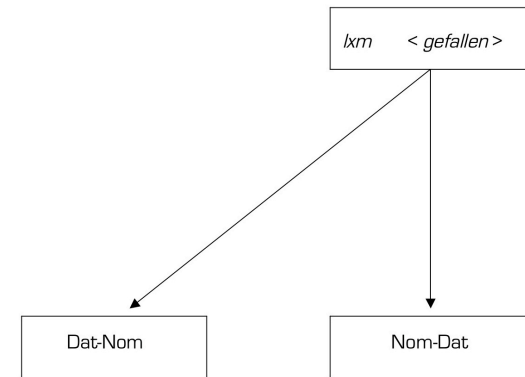
CxG: Icelandic

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CxG: German

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Conclusion

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- Two types of Dat-Nom predicates exist in Icelandic, alternating Dat-Nom/Nom-Dat predicates like *falla í geð* ‘like/please’ and non-alternating Dat-Nom predicates like *líka* ‘like’.
- Such alternating predicates have been argued to exist in Faroese, the history of English and the history of Mainland Scandinavian.
- The present examination suggests that Dat-Nom predicates in German, like *gefallen* ‘like/please’, *gelingen* ‘succeed’, *genügen* ‘suffice’ and others, also alternate systematically between two basic, equally neutral word orders, which in turn suggests that they instantiate two different argument structure constructions, the Dat-Nom and the Nom-Dat argument structures.

