

**24.902 Homework #5: Case**  
 [Due Wednesday 10/22/03]

**Part 1:**

Explain, referring specifically to principles of case assignment, how each NP in the following sentences does or does not get assigned case. This means, for NPs that are OK, name the case assigner and draw a tree or relevant tree fragment to show the structural configuration of case assignment. For NPs that are not OK, find the nearest imaginable case assigners and explain why case is not assigned.

- a. Mary has placed a star near the sentence.
- b. I consider sushi to be delicious.
- c. Tom arranged for Sue to leave.
- d. \*It is believed [John to have died].
- e. \*[his destruction Rome] failed.
- f. \*I am eager [John to leave].

**Part 2: Passives and Case in Icelandic**

To do this problem, you must have a good grasp of case theory and how it applies to passive constructions in English. This problem set takes you *beyond* what we did in class. What we did in class is background, but this problem set leads you to discover something new -- something new and simple. If your answer is too complex, you're on the wrong track.

Note: A few of the forms in this problem set might be wrong. In some cases, this might be due to a typo (e.g. an accent mark omitted).<sup>1</sup> In other cases, I made up some verb forms on analogy with other forms. My guesses are probably right, but there might be a few errors. However, the glosses always point you in the right direction.

Icelandic is a head-initial language. Please assume that it has more or less the phrase structure of English, including phonologically null I where you don't hear an "I" word. Don't worry about verb movement, though in reality there is verb movement. For the purposes of this problem set, assume all verbs stay put.

Now to the point. Icelandic NPs are morphologically marked for case. The usual case for subjects of tensed sentences is NOMINATIVE. The usual case for direct objects is ACCUSATIVE. This is seen in example (1).

- (1)        Jón kyssti Maríu.  
           John kissed Mary  
           NOM            ACC

Throughout this problem set, assume that the pattern seen in (1) through (4), which involve the verb 'kiss', is the normal pattern in Icelandic.<sup>2</sup> The word *Það* is found in Icelandic roughly where dummy (expletive, pleonastic) *it* is found in English, for example in sentences like *It is believed that Mary read the book*, and is more generally an all-purpose expletive NP.

<sup>1</sup> The letter Ð/ð is a voiced interdental fricative. The letter Þ/þ is the voiceless counterpart. [The former should look like a D with a line through it, and the latter should look like a p whose lefthand vertical line extends above the curved part. This is a check to make sure the font downloaded to your printer correctly.]

<sup>2</sup> The word *Það* that occurs in a number of these examples is an expletive element in Icelandic that can occupy otherwise empty subject positions in several constructions. The examples involving *Það* are given to demonstrate something about movement in passive constructions.

- (2) a. Hann telur Jón hafa kysst Maríu.  
       he believes John to-have kissed Mary  
       NOM            ACC            ACC
- b. \* Hún reyndist Jón hafa kysst Maríu.  
       she tried John to-have kissed Mary  
       NOM            ACC            ACC
- (3) a. María var kysst (af Jóni).  
       Mary was kissed (by John)  
       NOM
- b. \* Það var kysst María/Maríu (af Jóni).  
       it was kissed Mary (by John)  
       expletive            NOM/ACC
- (4) a. María er talið hafa kysst Jón.  
       Mary is believed to-have kissed John  
       NOM            ACC
- b. \* Það er talið María/Maríu hafa kysst Jón.  
       it is believed Mary to-have kissed John  
       expletive            NOM/ACC            ACC

However, a significant number of Icelandic verbs require their subject or object to bear some other, so-called quirky case marking. In this problem set, we see quirky DATIVE and ACCUSATIVE subjects and quirky DATIVE and GENITIVE objects. What is of particular interest to us is what happens to quirky subjects and objects in passive sentences.

1. Draw trees for each of the sentences in (2)-(4), explaining how each NP is or is not assigned case, and why. Make sure it is evident from your discussion why the (a) sentences are ok and why the (b) sentences are not. Please assume that *believe* and other verbs subcategorize for the same sorts of phrases in Icelandic as they do in English.
2. Consider the following statements, which do pretty well for examples from languages with overt case that we discussed in class:
  1. Nominative case on NP is assigned by finite I to the specifier of IP.
  2. If an NP bears nominative case, it bears nominative morphology.
  3. Accusative case on NP is assigned by a V that minimally c-commands it.
  4. If an NP bears accusative case, it bears accusative morphology.

Now look at examples (5)-(12). What modifications or additions to the statements above are motivated by examples (5)-(12)? Be explicit, and very clear, referring to specific examples.

**Hint:** Compare the patterns of acceptable and unacceptable NPs (as well as the patterns of movement) to English. Assume Icelandic is exactly like English except where it is obviously different.

Quirky subjects.

- (5) a. Mig langar að fara til Íslands.  
me longs to go to Iceland  
ACC
- b. Batinn rak á land.  
the-boat drifted to land  
ACC
- c. Honum mæltist vel í kirkjunni.  
him spoke well in church  
DAT
- d. Eldingu sló niður í húsið.  
lightning struck down into the-house  
DAT
- e. Mér býður við setningafræði.  
me is-nauseated at syntax  
DAT
- (6) a. Hann telur mig langa að fara til Íslands.  
he believes me to-long to go to Iceland  
NOM ACC
- b. Hann telur batinn hafa rekið á land.  
the-boat to-have drifted to land  
ACC
- c. Hann telur honum hafa mælast vel í kirkjunni.  
him to-have spoken well in church  
DAT
- d. Hann telur eldingu hafa slegið niður í húsið.  
lightning to-have struck down into the-house  
DAT
- e. Hann telur mér bjóða við setningafræði.  
me to-be-nauseated at syntax  
DAT

- (7) a. \* Hún reyndist mig langa að fara til Íslands.  
she tried me to-long to go to Iceland  
NOM ACC
- b. \* Hún reyndist batinn hafa rekið á land.  
the-boat to-have drifted to land  
ACC
- c. \* Hún reyndist honum hafa mælast vel í kirkjunni.  
him to-have spoken well in church  
DAT
- d. \* Hún reyndist eldingu hafa slegið niður í húsið.  
lightning to-have struck down into the-house  
DAT
- e. \* Hún reyndist mér bjóða við setningafræði.  
me to-be-nauseated at syntax  
DAT

Quirky objects.

- (8) a. Þeir björguðu stúlkunni.  
they rescued the-girl  
DAT
- b. Þeir luku kirkjunni.  
they finished the-church  
DAT
- c. Stúlkan beið min.  
the-girl awaited me  
GEN
- d. Við vitjuðum Olafs.  
we visited Olaf  
GEN
- (9) a. Stúlkunni var bjargað (af Jóni).  
the-girl was rescued (by John)  
DAT
- b. Kirkjunni var lokið (af Jóni).  
the-church was finished  
DAT
- c. Mín var beðið (af Jóni).  
me was awaited  
GEN
- d. Olafs var vitjað (af Jóni).  
Olaf was visited  
GEN

- (10) a. \* Það var bjargað stúlkunni (af Jóni).  
it was rescued the-girl (by John).  
expletive DAT
- b. \* Það var lokið kirkjunni (af Jóni).  
it was finished the-church  
DAT
- c. \* Það var beðið mín (af Jóni).  
it was awaited me  
GEN
- d. \* Það var vitjað Olafs (af Jóni).  
it was visited Olaf  
GEN

By now you should have a pretty good idea of what's going on. Make sure that your analysis also predicts the contrasts below (cf. the (4a-b) pair).

- (11) a. Mig er talið langa að fara til Íslands.  
me is believed to-long to go to Iceland  
ACC
- b. Batinn er talið hafa rekið á land.  
the-boat is believed to-have drifted to land  
ACC
- c. Honum er talið hafa mælast vel í kirkjunni.  
him is believed to-have spoken well in church  
DAT
- d. Eldingu er talið hafa slegið niður í húsið.  
lightning is believed to-have struck down into the-house  
DAT
- e. Mér er talið bjóða við setningafræði.  
me is believed to-be-nauseated at syntax  
DAT
- (12) a. \* Það er talið mig langa að fara til Íslands.  
it is believed me to-long to go to Iceland  
ACC
- b. \* Það er talið batinn hafa rekið á land.  
the-boat to-have drifted to land  
ACC
- c. \* Það er talið honum hafa mælast vel í kirkjunni.  
him to-have spoken well in church  
DAT
- d. \* Það er talið eldingu hafa slegið niður í húsið.  
lightning to-have struck down into the-house  
DAT
- e. \* Það er talið mér bjóða við setningafræði.  
me to-be-nauseated at syntax  
DAT