

## Chapter 16

# Some like it transitive: Remarks on verbs of liking and the like in the Saami languages

Seppo Kittilä

University of Helsinki

Jussi Ylikoski

University of Oulu & Sámi University of Applied Sciences

Canonical DOM is rather uncommon in the Saami languages (Uralic), and the only clear instances of this are attested in South Saami where definiteness does determine the coding of objects in the plural. On the other hand, the coding of experiencer verbs (e.g., ‘like’, ‘care’ and ‘fear’) displays variation in this regard across Saami languages. With the North Saami verb *liikot* ‘like’, for example, the stimulus may appear in the illative, genitive-accusative and locative cases without any major difference in meaning. This has usually been viewed as unwelcome influence from the majority languages (Norwegian, Swedish and Finnish). In this paper, however, we will argue that it is no coincidence that the variation concerns mainly experiencer verbs, and more specifically, we will show that the attested variation can be seen as an uncanonical instance of DOM. First of all, the variation in the coding is not semantically determined in the sense that it does not affect the semantic roles of the relevant arguments, which is typical of canonical DOM as well. Second, differently from canonical instances of DOM, the variation concerns semantic cases instead of structural cases, and the variation is between two non-zero cases, while canonical DOM is between zero and non-zero case. Third, the conditioning factors are different from canonical DOM, since animacy and definiteness do not contribute to the discussed variation in any direct way. Language contact does play an important role in this process, but the pursuit of coherence, the semantic emptiness of the cases, and features of semantic transitivity also make a significant contribution to the variation.

## 1 Introduction

As is typical of all languages discussed in this volume, instances of canonical differential object marking are attested also in the Saami languages, as illustrated below:



- (1) South Saami (Uralic; Bergsland 1994: 60)
- a. *Laara treavkah dorjeme.*  
 L. ski.PL(NOM) make.PST.PTCP  
 ‘Laara has made (a pair of) skis.’
- b. *Dejtie treavkide vöönim.*  
 it.PL.ACC ski.PL.ACC see.PST.ISG  
 ‘I saw the skis.’

As the above examples show, indefinite objects in South Saami bear (zero) nominative coding (1a), while definite objects appear in the accusative (1b). The examples in (1) thus constitute a typical instance of DOM, as the notion is typically understood, even though it should be noted that the variation illustrated in (1) is limited to the plural while canonical DOM concerns also objects in the singular. Moreover, differently from many other languages with DOM, animacy appears to play no role for DOM in South Saami. Instead, the variation in object coding in (1) is determined solely by definiteness.<sup>1</sup> This is in line with the object coding in other Uralic languages (see, e.g., Virtanen 2015 for a discussion of Eastern Mansi).

Even though the examples above can be viewed as a canonical instance of DOM, they do not constitute the most widespread type of variation in the object coding in the Saami languages. Quite the opposite, canonical DOM in the form illustrated in (1) seems to be limited to South Saami only. Much more common across the Saami languages is the kind of variation illustrated in (2) from North Saami:

- (2) North Saami (Uralic; personal knowledge)  
*Vástit gažaldaga ~ gažaldahkii!*  
 answer.IMP.2SG question.GENACC ~ question.ILL  
 ‘Answer the question!’
- (3) North Saami (Uralic; personal knowledge)  
*Itgo liiko gažaldaga ~ gažaldahkii ~ gažaldagas?*  
 NEG.2SG.Q like.CNG question.GENACC ~ question.ILL ~ question.LOC  
 ‘Don’t you like the question?’

As shown above, the object may appear in the (genitive-)accusative, illative and also locative case without any major changes in semantics.<sup>2</sup> In other words, both constructions in (2) mean ‘Answer the question!’, and the three alternatives in (3) pose the same

<sup>1</sup>As pointed out by Siegl (2012: 208), however, the nominative/accusative DOM in South Saami has not been studied thoroughly. Furthermore, the contemporary object marking seems to differ from that of the language system depicted by earlier grammarians.

<sup>2</sup>In the Saami grammatical tradition, only the (genitive-)accusative (and South Saami nominative plural) are regarded as *object* cases. Semantic cases such as the illative and the locative in analogous functions are usually characterized as *adverbials*. For the purposes of the present paper, all non-nominative arguments of the type seen in (2)–(3) are regarded as *objects* in the sense that they are not subjects and they are parts of the valence of the verbs in question, as it would be somewhat awkward to label freely alternating arguments as either (accusative) *objects* or (illative, locative or relative) *adverbials* on the basis of their external appearance only.

question as to whether the hearer likes the question or not. It is also noteworthy that neither definiteness nor animacy contribute to the attested variation. As for (3), it should be noted that the kind of variation exemplified here is one of the favorite eyesores of Saami language purists, because usually only one of the three alternatives is deemed good North Saami. The variation illustrated above is not limited to North Saami: as the discussion in this paper will show, it is attested in other Saami languages as well. The variation seems to be most common for experienter verbs (3), which will be the focus of our study. It is, however, important to note that similar phenomena can to some extent be observed for other verbs, such as *vástidit* ‘answer’ in (2).

There are numerous studies dealing with DOM from different perspectives, as the chapters of this volume also very well show. Most of these studies are characterized by two important common features. First, the variation is between two structural cases, usually a zero-marked nominative (or absolutive) and an explicitly marked accusative (or accusative-dative) case. Second, the great majority of DOM studies restrict the notion to cases where variation in object coding is determined by animacy, definiteness or topicality on the coding of objects. This paper also adds an entry to the already long list of DOM studies, but the type of DOM examined here is clearly different from that usually discussed. First, the typical DOM triggers, namely animacy and definiteness (or topicality), play no role in object coding. Second, the variation is often between semantic cases (e.g., locative and illative), although the accusative partakes in the variation as well. Third, we are dealing with a clear instance of lexically restricted predicate-triggered DOM, in Saami languages attested primarily (yet not exclusively) for experienter verbs.

Despite the evident differences from typical DOM studies, the variation examined in this paper also resembles canonical DOM in certain respects. The semantic roles of the differently coded objects do not vary in the cases discussed, which can be claimed to be true of canonical DOM as well; in the cases discussed in this paper, the role of the differently coded objects, regardless of their coding, is that of a stimulus. We hope that our study will broaden our perspectives on DOM and help to identify similar phenomena in other languages as well. The number of examples discussed in this paper and attested in Saami languages is not very high, but they nevertheless provide us with clear clues as to what kind of variation we are dealing with.

As noted above, the instances of DOM discussed in this paper differ from the type typically discussed under DOM. The topic is also rather novel to Saami linguistics, where the type of variation illustrated in (2)–(3) is usually understood as unwanted interference from majority languages or language decay (cf., e.g., Vuolab-Lohi 2007: 425; Olthuis 2009: 86–87). In this paper, the problem is approached from a more general perspective. The main features considered here are the effects of language contact, emptiness of semantic cases and tendency towards coherence in marking. In other words, we will show that the variation is not random and not necessarily a result of language decay following from language contact, as is often the view of language purists, but that it can also be given a valid language-internal explanation. Moreover, it is not a coincidence that the variation concerns experienter verbs and not, for example, highly transitive verbs. It is, however, important to note that DOM is still a rather limited phenomenon in the Saami languages.

It is attested mainly with experiencer verbs, and moreover, it applies only to a small set of these verbs. Despite this, we hope that our paper provides new insights into DOM.

The discussion in this paper is based on the six most widely spoken Saami languages, which are described in the following section. We illustrate and discuss examples of many different experiencer verbs. However, it is not our goal to give a systematic overview of the variation between different verbs; instead, the variety of verbs serves only the purpose of illustrating the nature and limits of the variation under discussion.

The organization of the paper is as follows. §2 discusses the examined Saami languages and their basic argument marking patterns as they are relevant to the discussion in this paper. §3 presents a set of concrete examples of the differential coding of experiencer verbs in Saami languages. In §4, the main theoretical implications of the paper are discussed.<sup>3</sup>

## 2 The Saami languages and argument marking

The Saami branch of the Uralic language family consists of a chain of closely related languages whose territory extends from the central parts of Norway and Sweden up to the Kola Peninsula of northwest Russia. Of the nine or ten living Saami languages, seven have official literary standards and six of them have several hundred or even thousands of speakers each. The discussion in this paper focuses on data from the following six languages with the most speakers and widest literary use: South Saami (Norway, Sweden), Lule Saami (Norway, Sweden), North Saami (Norway, Sweden, Finland), Aanaar (Inari) Saami (Finland), Skolt Saami (Finland, Russia), and Kildin Saami (Russia). Our data is either drawn from or otherwise based on the literary use of the present-day languages. As the total number of speakers of the Saami languages is less than thirty thousand, all Saami languages are minority languages except in two Norwegian municipalities, where North Saami is the majority language of the local communities. As a consequence, virtually all present-day speakers of Saami languages are bi- or trilingual to some extent, and this naturally affects the minority languages in many ways – argument marking not being an exception.

Not unlike in the other Uralic languages, the morphosyntax of the Saami languages is largely based on the interplay of morphological cases. All Saami languages are explicitly nominative–accusative languages, with the zero-marked nominative for subject arguments and descendants of the Proto-Saami (and ultimately Proto-Uralic) accusative for direct objects. However, the picture is partly blurred by the fact that in the Saami languages east of Lule Saami (including North, Aanaar, Skolt and Kildin Saami), both the original accusative (\*-*m*) and genitive (\*-*n*) singular case suffixes have been lost, and the two cases have merged into one, the genitive-accusative case, which for most nouns differs from the nominative only by stem-internal differences. Furthermore, the same

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<sup>3</sup>We wish to thank the editors, an anonymous reviewer and Nils Øivind Helander for a number of valuable comments on earlier versions of this paper. We also thank Tiina Sanila-Aikio and Eino Koponen for help and discussions on Skolt Saami and Elisabeth Scheller for corresponding help with Kildin Saami.

language border – between Lule Saami in the west and North Saami in the east – witnesses the merger of two local cases in the west: the descendants of the Proto-Saami inessive (‘at’) and elative (‘from’) survive in the so-called locative case of the easternmost languages.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, the genitive–accusative merger is total – affecting both singular and plural forms – in North Saami only, but not in the easternmost languages (including Aanaar, Skolt and Kildin Saami), which have retained the distinction in the plural.<sup>5</sup>

Table 1: The South, Lule and North Saami case systems exemplified with the words for ‘fish’

	South Saami		Lule Saami		North Saami		
	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural	
Nominative	<i>guelie</i>	<i>guelieh</i>	<i>guolle</i>	<i>guole</i>	<i>guolli</i>	<i>guolit</i>	Nominative
Accusative	<i>gueliem</i>	<i>guelide</i>	<i>guolev</i>	<i>guolijt</i>	<i>guoli</i>	<i>guliid</i>	Genitive-accusative
Genitive (‘of’)	<i>guelien</i>	<i>gueliej</i>	<i>guole</i>	<i>guolij</i>			
Illative (‘to’)	<i>gualan</i>	<i>guelide</i>	<i>guolláj</i>	<i>guolijda</i>	<i>guollái</i>	<i>guliide</i>	Illative
Inessive (‘at’)	<i>guelesne</i>	<i>gueline</i>	<i>guolen</i>	<i>guolijn</i>	<i>guolis</i>	<i>guliin</i>	Locative
Elative (‘from’)	<i>gueleste</i>	<i>guelijste</i>	<i>guoles</i>	<i>guolijs</i>			(‘at; from’)
Comitative (‘with’)	<i>gueline</i>	<i>gueliejgumie</i>	<i>guolijn</i>	<i>guolij</i>	<i>guliin</i>	<i>guliiguin</i>	Comitative
Essive (‘as’)		<i>gueline</i>		<i>guollen</i>		<i>guollin</i>	Essive

Individual Saami languages also exhibit various degrees of syncretism within plural case forms and between the plural inessive/locative and singular comitative, for example. In addition, some of the languages make use of additional cases or regressing case-like adverbs labeled as abessives and partitives, but as their functions fall outside the immediate scope of the present paper, they will be omitted in the following description of argument marking in Saami. (For a more comprehensive description of the Saami case markers and their syncretism, see, e.g., Sammallahti 1998: 65–71; Hansson 2007.) For the purposes of the present paper, the common core of the Saami case morphology is presented in Table 1, which exemplifies the case systems in South, Lule and North Saami.

As regards phenomena that can be labeled as differential argument marking, as many as five of the six to eight cases in Table 1 are involved: nominative, (genitive-)accusative,

<sup>4</sup>The Proto-Saami inessive (\*-*sna*) and elative (\*-*sta*) are cognate with their namesakes in Finnic languages such as Finnish and Estonian (see, e.g., Sammallahti 1998: 66–71, 203). However, in the absence of the so-called external local cases characteristic of Finnic, the Saami cases are also used in most of the functions of the Finnic cases adessive and ablative. As a consequence, the single locative cases in languages like North, Aanaar and Skolt Saami (all spoken in Finland) as well as Kildin Saami roughly correspond to as many as four local cases in Finnish. In the same vein, the Saami illative (\*-*sen*) is cognate with the Finnic illative (\*-*sen*), but is also a functional equivalent of the Finnic allative.

<sup>5</sup>When speaking of the “easternmost Saami languages”, we are not taking a stance on whether or not the Saami branch must be strictly divided to two – Western Saami and Eastern Saami with capital letters – along the phonologically significant, but lexically less decisive border between North Saami and Aanaar Saami. For a comprehensive discussion of these issues, see Rydving (2013).

illative, locative (elative) and comitative.<sup>6</sup> Of special interest here is the use of the local cases illative and locative as argument markers whose functions can hardly be distinguished from the direct objects marked with the (genitive-)accusative (and the South Saami plural nominative). Although this paper pays special attention to the internal and mutual variation in Saami argument marking, it is worth emphasizing that in spite of considerable phonological, morphological and lexical variation that makes even the closest Saami languages mutually unintelligible, their morphosyntactic structures are essentially quite similar. In a nutshell, the variation between individual Saami languages is comparable to the variation within the Germanic languages, for example.

The basics of Saami argument marking can be seen in the following examples from South Saami:

- (4) South Saami (Uralic; SIKOR)

*Gosse aktem gämmam gaavnedigan akte dejstie guaktijste*  
 when one.ACC woman.ACC find.PST.3DU one it.PL.ELA couple.PL.ELA  
*laejpieh öösti jih dejtie varki byöpmedi.*  
 bread.PL.(NOM) buy.PST.3SG and it.PL.ACC quickly eat.PST.3SG

‘When they (two) found a woman, one of them bought some loaves of bread and ate them quickly.’

- (5) South Saami (Uralic; SIKOR)

*Daelie die riektes aaksjoem bөөkti jih älmese vedti.*  
 now then real axe.ACC bring.PST.3SG and man.ILL give.PST.3SG

‘Then he brought a real axe and gave it to the man.’

- (6) South Saami (Uralic; SIKOR)

*Männoeh dutnjien jehkimen, Læjsa.*  
 1DU 2SG.ILL trust.1DU Læjsa

‘We (two) trust you, Læjsa.’

- (7) South Saami (Uralic; SIKOR)

*Edtjem manne datneste billedh juktie im datnem lyjhkh?*  
 shall.1SG 1SG 2SG.ELA fear.INF because NEG.1SG 2SG.ACC like.CNG

‘Am I supposed to fear you if I don’t like you?’

Explicit subject NPs (present in (6) and (7)) are frequently omitted, as the subject participant can often be inferred from the context and the form of the finite verb. As for patients, themes or stimuli of various actions and events such as finding (4), buying (4), eating (4), bringing (5), and liking (7), the object is most often in the accusative. However,

<sup>6</sup>In addition to the genitival functions of the genitive(-accusative) and the spatial (‘at’) semantics of the inessive/locative, the functions of the essive case are not directly relevant for the present discussion, although the interplay between nominative- and essive-marked arguments and secondary predicates could also be regarded as differential argument marking in the broad sense (cf. Siegl 2017; Ylikoski 2017, and Witzlack-Makarevich & Seržant 2018 [this volume]).

as was already briefly mentioned in the introduction, for plural objects such as loaves of bread, a somewhat classical example of differential object marking is available: accusative plural is used to refer to definite objects, whereas less definite objects may be expressed by the nominative plural. Thus, in (4) ‘buying loaves of bread’ and ‘eating them (= the loaves)’ are expressed by the nominative and accusative, respectively. In singular, such objects are always marked by the accusative only. Although this underdescribed phenomenon seen in (1) and (4) would merit a separate study (see, e.g., Wickman 1955: 30–36; Magga & Mattsson Magga 2012: 184–186), it is enough to state here that South Saami seems to be the only Saami language exhibiting differential nominative/accusative object marking (see also example (1) above).

For the purposes of the present paper, however, it is important to note that some verbs take their arguments in other cases, too, such as the local cases illative (‘to’) and elative (‘from’). To begin with, the illatives of all Saami languages could actually also be labeled as *datives*, as in addition to their spatial meaning (‘to’), the illatives are the default case for marking recipients such as the man to whom an axe is given in (5). Moreover, the illative-marked noun phrase of (6) as an argument of the verb *jaehkedh* ‘believe, trust’ is also reminiscent of so-called dative objects in cases such as *ich glaube/vertraue dir* ‘I believe/trust you’ in German, as the illatives of Saami languages share many functions with the dative in German. Example (7) presents the second person singular pronoun *datne* in two case forms: *datnem* as the accusative object of the verb *lyjhkedh* ‘like’, but *datneste* as the elative (‘from’) complement of the verb *billedh* ‘fear’. While the choice of cases like the ones seen here may have historical and metaphorical connections to the concrete spatial meanings of local cases, from a strictly synchronic perspective we are often dealing with verbs whose argument structures seem to require the use of the elative instead of the default accusative case used for most verbs (*billedh* ‘fear’) or vice versa (*lyjhkedh* ‘like’).

Many Saami languages show considerable variation as to which cases are used for marking arguments of verbs such as the experiencer verbs for ‘trust’, ‘fear’ and ‘like’ as seen in (6)–(7). While the nominative–accusative differential object marking seen in (4) has a clear semantic function, it is more difficult to recognize possible semantic differences behind what seems to be more arbitrary variation in Saami argument marking. As it turns out, however, an important source of the variation to be described in the following section seems to be the sociopolitical environment of the Saami languages: in spite of relatively uniform morphosyntax, the present-day Saami languages are mostly used by bilinguals whose other languages include nation-state languages as divergent as Norwegian, Swedish, Finnish and Russian. While the Scandinavian (Norwegian and Swedish) influence on Saami syntax is rather uniform, Russian is quite different, and Finnish belongs to the altogether different stock of Uralic languages.

### 3 Data: experiencer verbs and their coding in Saami (with a special focus on ‘like’)

In this section, the linguistic coding of experiencer verbs across languages and in Saami languages will be discussed. After briefly commenting on the coding of experiencer verbs from a cross-linguistic perspective, we present some of the semantic features that explain their less transitive coding. The section is devoted to the examination of Saami data, especially focusing on the argument marking of verbs that denote positive emotions such as liking, loving and caring (see also §4.1 further below).

It is received wisdom in linguistics that the coding of experiencer verbs often deviates from the basic transitive pattern of a given language; for example, dative coding of the subject is common with experiencer verbs (see, e.g., Verma & Mohanan 1990 and Aikhenvald et al. 2001). These formal differences from basic transitive constructions of a given language are not random, instead following from the different semantic role assignment of experiencing; experiencer verbs do not involve an agent and a patient, but an experiencer and a stimulus instead. Neither the experiencer nor the stimulus is necessarily affected, while in typical transitive events, the patient must be affected in order to constitute a true patient. It is, however, important to note that experiencer verbs do not constitute a semantically coherent verb class, but there are clear differences in their nature, which is also reflected in their coding. First, for example, in Finnish, the partitive (with verbs like ‘love’ and ‘hate’), elative (‘like’), illative (‘get bored with’), allative (‘get mad at’) and also accusative (‘see’, ‘hear’) can appear with experiencer verbs. Second, different classes of experiencer verbs differ according to whether the stimulus or the experiencer surfaces as the subject.

With the Finnish verbs noted above, the subject refers to the experiencer, while the differently coded second argument codes the stimulus. However, there are other verbs, such as *miellyttää* ‘please’, or *pelottaa* ‘scare’, where the stimulus surfaces as the subject, and the partitively coded object refers to the experiencer. In the same vein, in Saami languages such as North Saami, verbs like *balddihit* ‘scare’ code the stimulus as a nominative subject and the experiencer as a genitive-accusative object. Finally, there are also verbs such as Finnish *iloita* ‘rejoice’, where the (elatively coded) stimulus can be seen as a kind of optional oblique that can be left out if the reason for rejoicing is not contextually relevant. Again, the same can be said about Saami verbs like North Saami *illudit* ‘rejoice’ (cognate of Finnish *iloita*), which will be discussed further below. Consequently, it is rather hard to make any cross-linguistic generalizations about the coding of experiencer verbs apart from the fact they typically somehow deviate from basic transitive constructions. In this paper, the focus is exclusively on experiencer verbs that code the stimulus as the (direct) object. This is very well in line with the goals of the paper, which is to show that there is a kind of differential marking for the objects of experiencer verbs. Taking other types of experiencer verbs into account may distort the results, because the attested variation follows from features that are not relevant to the discussion in this paper.



Argument marking of experiencer verbs has received almost no attention in Saami linguistics *per se*. Except for North Saami, the major Saami language that is spoken by about 90% of all speakers of the Saami languages, grammatical descriptions of most Saami languages contain only little information about argument marking. The general pattern of the existing school grammars (e.g., Spiik 1989; Olthuis 2000; Moshnikoff et al. 2009; Magga & Mattsson Magga 2012) is to state that the object is marked by the accusative case, whereas most other cases function as adverbials. The latter functions are described quite sporadically and impressionistically, though. For example, descriptions of South Saami characterize the use of elative in clauses like (7) as adverbials of cause, whereas some other complement-like elatives have been labeled as partial objects (Bergsland 1994: 60–61, 72; Magga & Mattsson Magga 2012: 186). On the other hand, the identical behavior of the Lule Saami elative with verbs like *ballat* ‘fear’ (cognate of South Saami *billedh* seen in (7)) is explained as part of a larger whole, wherein verbs of fearing are said to co-occur with the object of fear marked by the elative (Spiik 1989: 98). Further still, Nickel and Nickel & Sammallahti (2011: 233, 236, 529–530) describe the analogous use of the North Saami *ballat* ‘fear’ as an example of verbs that come close to being transitive but govern the locative case instead. However, none of the grammars or other descriptions of Saami syntax have paid significant attention to possible semantic reasons for not using the accusative for all object-like arguments. Additionally, little attention has been paid to the fact that in actual use, many verbs show variation in how the non-subject arguments are coded. The most remarkable exception in this respect is Helander’s (2001: 134–143) study of the North Saami illative in which he briefly examines the argument structure of the emotion verbs *áibbašit* ‘miss, yearn’, *dorvvastit* ‘count on, rely on’, *duhtat* ‘settle for’, *jáhkkit* ‘believe’, *liikot* ‘like’, *luohttit* ‘trust’, *oskut* ‘believe, have faith’ and *suhttat* ‘get angry’, some of which also show variation between illative arguments and other cases as well as postpositions in their coding of the stimuli. The list could be continued with verbs like *dolkat* ‘get fed up’, which takes either the illative or the locative, or *illudit* ‘rejoice; celebrate’ and *heahpanit* ‘be ashamed of’ with even more variation to be discussed further below. Any comparative studies that would focus on these issues and cover more than one Saami language do not exist, however.

In the following, such variation in argument marking will be described and discussed by examining the use of experiencer verbs denoting liking in six Saami languages. This particular group of verbs shows both language-internal and cross-Saami variation, which makes it suitable for providing novel contributions to our understanding of less typical instances of DOM. Due to the deficiencies and often prescriptive attitudes of existing grammatical descriptions most of the data is drawn from authentic (in part translated) texts made available by the SIKOR corpus at UiT The Arctic University of Norway. Although much of our understanding of South, Lule, North and Aanaar Saami is backed up by comparatively large corpora, this study is predominantly qualitative.<sup>7</sup> As for our un-

<sup>7</sup>With respect to the size of the language communities, the available corpora are quite large. With 21.1 million words for North Saami, 0.8M for Lule Saami and 0.7M for South Saami, they contain approximately one thousand words per one speaker of the languages. As for the 1.3M words for Aanaar Saami, with about 400 speakers, the ratio is even higher.

derstanding of the severely endangered Skolt Saami and Kildin Saami, our observations are more dependent on second-hand sources and elicited information from native and second-language speakers.

The first verb to be examined is the South Saami *lyjhkedh* ‘like’, an apparently recent loan from Scandinavian languages where especially the Norwegian *like* (and to lesser extent Swedish *lika*) has approximately the same meaning and exhibits similar syntactic behavior. It was already seen in example (7) above that *lyjhkedh* is a transitive verb that takes an accusative object instead of elative or any other local case, for example. Yet fully in line with the general object marking pattern discussed in §2, the plural object is marked with either accusative or nominative, depending on whether its referent is definite (8) or indefinite (9), respectively:

- (8) South Saami (Uralic; SIKOR)

*Im lyjhkh niejtide mah desnie.*  
 NEG.1SG like.CNG girl.PL.ACC REL.PL here  
 ‘I don’t like the girls here.’

- (9) South Saami (Uralic; SIKOR)

*Dihte lyjhkoe ánehks mirhke álmah, guktie mánnoeh, Ajloe*  
 3SG like.3SG short dark man.PL.NOM like 1DU Ajloe  
*føørhkeddi.*  
 laugh.PST.3SG  
 ‘She likes short dark men, like the two of us, Ajloe laughed.’

In a word, *lyjhkedh* behaves just like any normal transitive verb of South Saami. By contrast, in Lule Saami the analogous loan verb *lijkkut* ‘like’ usually governs the illative case instead. As a matter of fact, grammars and dictionaries present the illative as the only option (Spiik 1989: 97; Kintel 2012 s.v.), but accusative objects also exist. Both alternatives are present simultaneously in (10) where the illative NPs *guolláj* and accusative *dáv gáváv* could apparently be exchanged with the accusative *guolev* and illative *dán gáváváj* without a change in meaning:<sup>8</sup>

- (10) Lule Saami (Uralic; NuorajTV)

*Lijkku guolláj? De ham de lijkku dáv gáváv aj?*  
 like.2SG fish.ILL then DPT then like.2SG this.ACC picture.ACC also  
 ‘You like fish? Then you must like this picture too, right?’

However, unlike the nominative/accusative alternation in South Saami, the choice of illative or accusative does not seem to be motivated by either semantic or syntactic factors. Instead, the most plausible explanation for the variation seems to align with the received view on similar variation in North Saami:

<sup>8</sup>In the Lule Saami corpus of approximately 800,000 words (SIKOR), nearly half of the 160 instances of the verb *lijkkut* take an infinitive complement. Of the 88 instances with an NP complement, 80 are in the illative and 8 in the accusative, with no visible differences in meaning or distribution. Both cases are used to refer to singular and plural, animate and inanimate, definite and indefinite referents, for example.

(11) North Saami (Uralic; personal knowledge)

a. *Liikot guollái? De han de liikot dán govvii*  
 like.2SG fish.ILL then DPT then like.2SG this.GENACC picture.ILL  
*maid?*

also

b. *Liikot guoli? De han de liikot dán*  
 like.2SG fish.GENACC then DPT then like.2SG this.GENACC  
*gova maid?*  
 picture.GENACC also

c. *Liikot guolis? De han de liikot dán govvas*  
 like.2SG fish.LOC then DPT then like.2SG this.GENACC picture.LOC  
*maid?*

also

‘You like fish? Then you must like this picture too, right?’

For the North Saami *liikot* ‘like’, as many as three different cases are available.<sup>9</sup> North Saami is the Saami language with not only the most speakers, but also the most grammatical research and language planning. As a consequence, the variation seen in (11a)–(11c) has attracted the attention of both descriptive and prescriptive grammarians. To put it briefly, the use of the illative (11a) is unanimously regarded as the most original North Saami, whereas the use of the genitive-accusative and locative are considered interference from Scandinavian (11b) and Finnish (11c), respectively:

(12) Norwegian (Germanic; personal knowledge)

*Liker du fisk?*  
 like.PRS 2SG fish

(13) Finnish (Uralic; personal knowledge)

*Pidätkö kalasta?*  
 like.2SG.Q fish.ELA

‘Do you like fish?’

The data in (12) and (13) corresponds to the variation in the Saami languages rather directly. However, although continuously rejected by language purists (e.g., Magga 1987: 127; Čállinrávagirji 2003: 87; Vuolab-Lohi 2007: 425), both the genitive-accusative and the locative have accompanied the verb *liikot* for decades if not centuries. It seems that the authenticity of the use of the illative has been taken granted due to the fact that the illative was the most common alternative, and nearly the only alternative in earlier periods. The most detailed discussion on this issue is presented by Helander (2001: 139) whose earliest examples of the “wrong” cases stem from the beginning of the 20th century, and

<sup>9</sup>In accordance with the general patterns of NP morphosyntax (see, e.g., Sammallahti 1998: 100–101), the determiner *dán* (11a)–(11c) remains in the genitive-accusative even when headed by a noun in the illative or locative.

some instances of the genitive-accusative can actually be found already in the folklore recorded and authentic texts composed in the 19th century (see, e.g., Qvigstad 1927: 134, 190; Ylikoski 2016). From the non-prescriptivist point of view adopted by Helander, it is easy to agree that all of the sentences (11a)–(11c) are grammatical North Saami. The difference is that only (11a) seems to be shared by the entire speech community, whereas (11b) is mainly used by Saami-Scandinavian bilinguals and (11c) by Saami-Finnish bilinguals.<sup>10</sup>

The above-mentioned verbs *lyjhkedh* (South Saami), *lijkkut* (Lule Saami) and *liikot* (North Saami) have not been compared with each other earlier, but when this is done, the comparison can be extended up to Aanaar Saami where the etymological and semantic equivalent of these verbs is *lijkkuđ*:

(14) Aanaar Saami (Uralic; SIKOR)

*Amahân te mij puoh vissásávt lijkkup kuálán já rähistep*  
 I.guess DPT 1PL all surely like.1PL fish.ILL and love.1PL  
*kyele, ko tom jyehi peeivi šiev puurrâmlustoin puurrâp (...)*  
 fish.ACC as it.ACC every day.GEN good appetite.COM eat.1PL  
 ‘I guess we all really like fish and love fish, as we eat it every day with great pleasure (...)’

(15) Aanaar Saami (Uralic; SIKOR)

*Kreikkaliih iä lijkkum ennuv=gin syemmilijn.*  
 Greek.PL NEG.3PL like.PST.PTCP much=DPT Finn.PL.LOC  
 ‘The Greeks did not like Finns that much.’

To begin with, (14) contains two accusative objects: one for the experiencer verb *rähistiđ* ‘love’ and one for a more concrete transitive verb *puurrâđ* ‘eat’, and for their part Aanaar Saami does not differ from the languages discussed thus far. However, *lijkkuđ* apparently never takes accusative objects, but it does not remain without variation either: the verb governs the illative *kuálán* ‘fish’ in (14), but the locative *syemmilijn* ‘Finns’

<sup>10</sup>It is noteworthy that the variation exemplified in (11a)–(11c) has never been regarded as anything but full synonymy (Magga 1987: 127; Helander 2001: 139, 141; Čállinrávagirji 2003: 87; Sammallahti 2005: 205; Vuolab-Lohi 2007: 425). As seen in example triplets such as (i) and (ii), the illative, genitive-accusative and locative are used with both animate and inanimate, and both definite and indefinite referents, for example.

(i) North Saami (Uralic; Čállinrávagirji 2003: 87)

*Mun liikon dutnje ~ du ~ dus.*  
 1SG like.1SG 2SG.ILL ~ 2SG.GENACC ~ 2SG.LOC  
 ‘I like you.’

(ii) North Saami (Uralic; Sammallahti 2005: 205)

*Mun in liiko guollái ~ guoli ~ guolis.*  
 1SG NEG.1SG like.CNG fish.ILL ~ fish.GENACC ~ fish.LOC  
 ‘I don’t like fish.’

in (15). Again, the two variants are in free variation, as it would be equally possible to replace the illative *kuálán* with the locative *kyleest*, or, vice versa, the locative *syemmilijn* with the illative *syemmiláid*. Furthermore, quite like with North Saami (11a)–(11c), the Aanaar Saami language planners have until recently regarded the use of locative as unwelcome Finnish interference, but according to a recent decision of an Aanaar Saami language planning organ, both alternatives are now acceptable (Olthuis 2009: 86–87).

The easternmost Saami languages such as Skolt Saami and Kildin Saami do not share the Scandinavian loan verb discussed above, nor do we have large corpora for these languages. However, the existing dictionaries and texts support the information provided by our colleagues with intimate knowledge of these languages. In Skolt Saami, the verb *tu'kkēed* 'like' behaves like North Saami *liikot* and Aanaar Saami *lijkkud* in governing the locative case as seen in (16) and (17a); neither the accusative, illative nor other cases actually occur in the present-day language, although data from traditional dialects also include examples of accusative objects, as in (17b), which is deemed ungrammatical in today's language:

- (16) Skolt Saami (Uralic; Koponen et al. 2010: 97)

*Mon jiöm tō'st tu'kkääm ni voo'ps, dōō'st.*  
 1SG NEG.1SG it.LOC like.PST.PTCP not at.all it.LOC  
 'I didn't like that [work] at all.'

- (17) Skolt Saami (Uralic; personal knowledge; confirmed by Tiina Sanila-Aikio (17b) from Itkonen 1958: 612; not accepted by present-day speakers)<sup>11</sup>

a. *Tōst jie tu'kkēd.*  
 it.LOC NEG.3PL like.CNG

b. (\*)*Tō'n jie tu'kkēd.*  
 it.ACC NEG.3PL like.CNG

'They don't like it.'

Our last example comes from Kildin Saami, a language that in a way lacks a verb for 'like'. Instead, sentences denoting liking are centered around the verb *miillte* 'please', and the word referring to the stimulus of liking (*tedt laññ* 'this country' in example (18)) functions as the grammatical subject of pleasing, whereas the experiencer is marked with the illative. Alternatively, it would be possible to resort to the transitive verb *šoabše* 'love', which takes the accusative just like the corresponding verbs in apparently all Saami languages (compare example (14) from Aanaar Saami).

- (18) Kildin Saami (Uralic; Lindgren 2013: 240)

*Я, муни надъеда тэдт ланнъ меллт тоннэ.*  
*ja munn naad'eda tedt laññ meellt toññe.*  
 and 1SG believe.1SG this country please.3SG 2SG.ILL  
 'and I believe that you will like this country.'

<sup>11</sup>This claim is based on the data from and judgments by speakers of Skolt Saami in Finland, but the language also has some elderly speakers in Russia.

What is most interesting in Kildin Saami is that the argument structure of *miillte* ‘please’ (18) is fully the opposite of the most common pattern of the Lule, North and Aanaar Saami verbs *lijkkut* (10), *liikot* (11a) and *lijkkuđ* (14) with which the illative case is used to code the stimulus, not the experiencer of pleasure (liking). On the other hand, as the illative is also the case of recipients and thus in a way the “dative” case of all Saami languages (see, e.g. (5)), the Kildin Saami sentence (18) is conceptually and structurally an instance of a well-known type of dative experiencer sentences.

To summarize, the variation in the coding of liking verbs in the six Saami languages described above can be condensed in Table 2.<sup>12</sup> For the purposes of the present discussion, the focus is on the types of DOM related to the verbs of liking in particular, and the more canonical instances of DOM as seen in the plural object marking of South Saami in general (examples (1a)–(1b) and (4)) are not repeated here.

Table 2: Argument marking of ‘liking’ in six Saami languages.

South Saami (Norway, Sweden)	<i>Bienje</i>	<i>lyjhkoe</i>	<i>gueliem.</i>		
Lule Saami (Norway, Sweden)	<i>Bena</i>	<i>lijkku</i>	<i>guolev</i>	~ <i>guolláj.</i>	
North Saami (Norway, Sweden, Finland)	<i>Beana</i>	<i>liiko</i>	<i>guoli</i>	~ <i>guollái</i>	~ <i>guolis.</i>
Aanaar Saami (Finland)	<i>Peenâ</i>	<i>lijkkoo</i>		<i>kuálán</i>	~ <i>kyeleest.</i>
Skolt Saami (Finland, Russia)	<i>Piânnai</i>	<i>tu'kčkad</i>	<i>(*)kue'l</i>		~ <i>kue'lest.</i>
Kildin Saami (Russia)	<i>Пѣннэ</i> <i>Peenpe</i>	<i>шоабашт</i> <i>šoabašt</i>	<i>кӯль.</i> <i>kuul'.</i>		
	<b>dog(.NOM)</b>	<b>like.3SG</b>	<b>fish.ACC</b>	<b>fish.ILL</b>	<b>fish.LOC</b>
	‘The dog likes (the) fish.’				

<sup>12</sup>Personal knowledge; Skolt Saami and Kildin Saami examples provided and confirmed by Tiina Sanila-Aikio and Elisabeth Scheller, respectively. For the purpose of visualization, the South Saami example is presented in a slightly marked word order (SVO) instead of the most unmarked SOV order typical of the language (cf. (1), (4), (5), (7)). In cases of variation, the boldface indicates the variants officially acknowledged by language authorities. Kildin Saami *šoabašt* in Table 2 means primarily ‘loves’; for the use of the verb *miillte* ‘please’, see (18) above and (i) below:

- (i) Kildin Saami (Uralic; personal knowledge; confirmed by Elisabeth Scheller)

*Пѣннэ меллт кӯль.*  
*Peennge meellt kuull'.*  
dog.ILL please.3SG fish

‘The dog likes fish.’ (Lit. ‘Fish pleases the dog.’)

Table 2 also lists the states in which the examined languages – presented in geographical order from southwest to northeast of the Saami territory – are spoken as minority languages. In this connection, a number of facts are worth noting: As for the variation seen in Lule, North and Aanaar Saami, the use of the illative case is considered the most original. Even though public prescriptivist statements about the unwanted influence of majority languages have been presented for Aanaar and North Saami verbs only (e.g., Morottaja 2007: 33; Vuolab-Lohi 2007: 425), it is also quite likely that the use of the accusative in Lule Saami and that of the locative in Skolt Saami are influenced by their respective majority languages. When speaking of verbs of liking, two types of foreign influences are available. As seen in (12), the Norwegian verb *like* follows a nominative–accusative pattern, but so does its closest Swedish equivalent *gilla* ‘like’, as well as the verb *ljubit’* ‘love, like’ in Russian, which has long had a considerable influence on Kildin Saami. On the other hand, the use of the Finnish elative – the cognate of the Saami elative/locative – in (13) easily explains the established use of the locative for the liking verbs of all three Saami languages spoken in Finland. To make the role of language contact even more explicit, it can be pointed out that the use of the Kildin Saami *miillte* ‘please’ in (18) is analogous to that of the Russian *nravit’sja* ‘please’ (19). However, this verb type falls outside the main scope of the present paper.

(19) Russian (Slavic; personal knowledge)

<i>Я</i>	<i>надеюсь,</i>	<i>что</i>	<i>тебе</i>	<i>нравится</i>	<i>эта</i>	<i>страна.</i>
<i>Ja</i>	<i>nadejus’,</i>	<i>čto</i>	<i>tebe</i>	<i>nravit’sja</i>	<i>eta</i>	<i>strana.</i>
1SG	hope.1SG	COMP	2SG.DAT	please.3SG	this.F	country

‘I hope that you will like this country.’

The influence of language contact will be discussed in more detail and with additional examples in §4.2 below. However, it must be noted that the Saami languages also exhibit DOM that cannot be easily explained away by referring only to interference from majority languages. As pointed out by Helander (2001: 140–141), the North Saami *suhttat* ‘get angry’ may take not only the illative and locative cases, but also a postpositional phrase headed by *ala* ‘on(to)’, and only the latter alternative can be explained by the influence of the Scandinavian preposition *på* ‘on(to)’. Some verbs such as the North Saami *illudit* ‘rejoice; celebrate’ take not only the illative, locative and genitive–accusative, but also the comitative case. Furthermore, the more than two thousand occurrences of *illudit* ‘rejoice; celebrate’ in the available North Saami corpus (SIKOR) also include many sentences in which the stimulus of rejoicing is not marked by any of these four cases, but by the postpositions *alde* ‘on’, *badjel* ‘over’, *badjelii* ‘onto’ and *dihite* ‘because of’. What is more, occurrences of the verb *heahpanit* ‘be ashamed of’ are accompanied, in addition to the four above-mentioned cases, by yet another set of postpositions (*alde* ‘on’, *badjel* ‘over’, *dihite* ‘because of’, *beales* ‘for, on behalf’, *geażil* ‘for, on account of’ and *ovddas* ‘for, in front of’) (see also Ylikoski 2016).

To our knowledge, however, language contacts are not the whole story: there are other factors at play here as well. It might also be possible to analyze the rich variation in some verbs such as the North Saami *illudit* ‘rejoice; celebrate’ and *heahpanit* ‘be ashamed

of' as combinations of intransitive predicates and optional obliques denoting the cause or stimulus of the experience. However, multiple patterns of coding the stimulus are generally verb-specific and therefore seem to belong primarily to the realm of argument marking. Needless to say, details and possible preconditions of such phenomena in the syntactic patterns of individual verbs in North Saami and other Saami languages call for further research. The present discussion of a small sample of Saami experiencer verbs is the first attempt to outline some possibilities and perspectives on such endeavors.

## **4 Discussion**

### **4.1 Preliminaries**

In the previous section, we have presented some of the variation in the coding of objects with experiencer verbs in the Saami languages. The variation is best seen as manifestations of DOM, because the marking is not semantically determined in the sense that the semantic roles borne by the affected arguments are maintained (the affected argument retains its role as a stimulus) and the alternation in the marking is not directly determined, but only made possible by the verb (i.e., we are not dealing with variation determined by the inherent semantics of verbs, as we are in the case of experiencer vs. prototypical transitive verbs). The instances discussed here represent restricted predicate-triggered DOM, because the described variation is attested mainly for experiencer verbs. Moreover, the discussed instances of DOM can be claimed to be connected only loosely with definiteness, as there are only a few signs that suggest that the variation may be affected by habitual vs. concrete reading of the constructions in question. The rationale behind the variation differs from that of typical canonical DOM in that the typical triggers of DOM, animacy or definiteness, seem to play no role in the cases discussed in this paper (the possible contribution of definiteness is best seen as a by-product). Finally, the variation is not between two structural cases, but rather concerns semantic cases (and in some instances also postpositions, as mentioned above). In this section, we will discuss the most important contribution of the Saami languages to our understanding of DOM in more detail. Basically, three partly competing factors can be seen that add to our understanding of DOM: language contact, the semantic emptiness of the cases (or other case-like categories) involved in the variation, and the pursuit of coherence.

### **4.2 Language contact**

As noted above, the Saami languages are all minority languages spoken in the northern parts of Finland, Sweden and Norway, as well as the northwesternmost part of Russia. This has the very natural consequence that language contact has influenced and continues to influence the structure of Saami languages in many ways, and argument marking is no exception in this regard. The major results of this contact were illustrated in Table 2 above. Table 2 and the following discussion clearly show how the majority languages have affected the coding of liking verbs in Saami, given that the most original pattern



in Lule, North and Aanaar Saami has been the one in which the stimulus of liking is coded with the illative case, whereas the accusative and locative marking are both new and analogous to the patterns of the majority languages at the same time. It is also important to note that we are not dealing with a transfer of DOM in a language contact situation, but rather contact with different languages has produced DOM for a group of predicates in the minority languages.

To give another example of DOM among the experiencer verbs in Saami languages, Table 3 presents a likewise condensed collection of the major patterns of expressing ‘caring’ and its participants in five Saami languages. The South Saami verb *pryjjedh* is a relatively recent loan from Norwegian and Swedish (*bry seg/sig*), whereas the Lule Saami *berustit*, North Saami *beroštít*, Aanaar Saami *perustid* and Skolt Saami *peersted* all go back to Finnish (*perustaa*).

Table 3: Argument marking of ‘caring’ in five Saami languages

South Saami	<i>Bienje</i>	<i>ij</i>	<i>pryjjh</i>	<i>gueleste</i>	~ <i>gueliem</i>	(~ <i>guelien</i>	<i>bijre</i> ).
Lule Saami	<i>Bena</i>	<i>ij</i>	<i>berusta</i>	<i>guoles</i>	~ <i>guolev</i>	(~ <i>guole</i>	<i>birra</i> ).
North Saami	<i>Beana</i>	<i>ii</i>	<i>beroš</i>	<i>guolis</i>	~ <i>guoli</i>	(~ <i>guoli</i>	<i>birra</i> ).
Aanaar Saami	<i>Peenâ</i>	<i>ii</i>	<i>peerust</i>	<i>kyleest</i> .			
Skolt Saami	<i>Piännai</i>	<i>ij</i>	<i>peerst</i>	<i>kue’lest</i> .			
	dog	NEG.3SG	CARE.CNG	FISH.ELA/LOC	FISH.(GEN)ACC	FISH.GEN(ACC)	about
	‘The dog doesn’t care about fish.’						

In the Scandinavian languages, the stimulus of ‘caring’ is coded with the preposition *om* ‘about’, whereas the Finnish verb governs the relative. It is understandable that Saami languages most commonly use the relative/locative case for caring verbs, too, because this is probably inherited from the Finnish loan original. On the other hand, it is also understandable that the westernmost Saami languages (under Scandinavian influence) occasionally resort to the postposition *bijre/birra* ‘about’, which largely corresponds to the most abstract functions of the Scandinavian *om*. However, at the same time, the same languages – South, Lule and North Saami – also witness accusative coding that seems likewise absent in Aanaar and Skolt Saami.

It is probably no coincidence that experiencer verbs are the foremost playground of DOM in Saami languages. As noted above, the coding of experiencer verbs often deviates from the basic transitive pattern of a given language in addition to which there is variation in their coding within languages (see examples (11a)–(11c) from Finnish). What makes the coding of experiencer verbs in Saami languages interesting is the fact that contact with structurally different source languages (governing different cases and adpositions) has created a situation where the coding patterns of the source languages mirror the cross-linguistic variation attested within verbs in other languages (e.g. in German ‘be cold’ governs a dative subject, while ‘see’ appears in a transitive construction). In contrast to typical cross-linguistic variation in experiencer verbs, yet due to contact with structurally different source languages, similar variation is reflected within

one language and even more so in the group of closely related Saami languages. What is also noteworthy here is that the variation seems most evident and productive for experiencer verbs; other verbs allow it only to a limited degree, if at all. For example, the coding of basic transitive clauses is consistent in the contact languages, because all of them are nominative-accusative languages, even though Norwegian and Swedish do not code A and O<sup>13</sup> using cases like Finnish and Russian do. Consequently, there is no contact-induced variation in the coding of A and O in prototypical transitive clauses, and language contact aids in explaining why obliquely coded arguments have been affected. However, borrowing does not follow automatically nor can it be considered random, since there are many areas of grammar that have remained largely unaffected in the described language contact situations (see, for example, Rießler 2007 for Kildin Saami and Russian). An illustrative example is represented by the Finnish variation between nominative, accusative and partitive in subject and object coding, which has – in spite of occasional translators’ and semi-speakers’ errors (Magga 1987: 131; Lämsman 2009: 78–79) – not gained a significant foothold in any of the three Saami languages spoken in Finland. Moreover, the lack of morphological cases for coding core arguments (characteristic of Scandinavian languages) is not found in any Saami language.

As shown above, contact with the surrounding majority languages provides a rather good explanation for the variation attested in experiencer verbs in the Saami languages, but it is important to distinguish the results of recent language contacts and interference from changes that are due to language contact that has become an established part of the grammar of the modern languages. Although the data presented above may give the impression that the DOM examined here is a recent phenomenon, it has existed in at least North and Aanaar Saami for more than a century (see §3), and thus the variation cannot be seen as random, but rather an entrenched feature of the languages. Somewhat paradoxically, this also underlines the fact that even a seemingly superfluous DOM can be a somewhat stable phenomenon that in itself can be resistant to language change. In other words, this observation is interesting in light of the fact that DOM can be viewed as disturbing the consistency in object coding, but Saami data shows that it can nevertheless be retained through generations.

### **4.3 Emptiness of semantic cases**

As the data discussed in §3 shows, the variation in the O coding (referring to the stimulus) concerns a variety of semantic cases (in addition to the accusative also employed for this function). Semantic cases, as the label implies, differ from syntactic or structural cases (such as the nominative and the accusative) in that they are more directly related to a certain semantic function. Across languages, a variety of semantic cases, such as the dative and different local cases, are used for marking the arguments of experiencer constructions. From the nature of semantic cases it follows that variation between them usually has semantic consequences as well; for example, replacing the allative (‘to’) with the ablative (‘from’) typically results in a change in the direction of the denoted instance

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<sup>13</sup>A and O are here understood in the spirit of Comrie (1978) and Dixon (1979).

of motion (see also Västi 2012 for a somewhat different discussion of the allative and ablative in Finnish). However, as the discussion in this paper has shown, Saami languages provide us with numerous examples of rather free variation between semantic cases. For example, in the North Saami and Aanaar Saami examples in (11c) and (15), replacing the illative (core meaning ‘to’) with the locative (‘at; from’) does not yield any major semantic differences in the reading of the clauses. This means that semantic cases are deprived of their semantic content when they appear with experiencer verbs. These differences reflect the cross-linguistic and also cross-verbal variation in the coding of experiencer verbs rather well, but the variation is manifested within one language and one verb.

One of the main reasons for the loss of semantic content is that with experiencer verbs semantic cases are used for coding arguments that are parts of the verb’s valency. In these cases, the arguments are accorded a semantic role directly by the verb, which has the consequence that the exact mechanism used for argument coding becomes less relevant, which renders the attested variation understandable. In the Saami languages, this has led to the loss of semantic contrast between certain semantic cases when they are used for coding objects (and stimuli) of experiencer verbs. The semantic differences are, however, relevant in other contexts, especially when the given cases are used for coding adverbials. From a synchronic point of view, a given language may select the case its contact language employs for coding experiencer verbs without this having any consequences for the reading of the construction. On the other hand, the choice of acceptable cases is determined – or at least allowed – by the argument structure of an individual verb, after all. For example, even though the North Saami verb *illudit* ‘rejoice; celebrate’ (mentioned at the end of §3) can also code the stimulus using the comitative, such an alternative seems entirely impossible with *liikot* ‘like’.

The discussion above also underlines the fact that DOM seems to emerge only if the attested changes do not have any major consequences for the semantic role assignment of the affected argument. In typical cases, the variation is between two structural cases that are inherently void of semantic content, but the data from the Saami languages shows that similar variation is possible also with semantic cases. As the semantic differences between the cases have been neutralized, however, the variation has no semantic consequences. The important feature of experiencer verbs seems to be their differences from the basic transitive construction, i.e. the events (or rather states) denoted by experiencer verbs rank lower for transitivity, which makes it possible for other cases than the (default) accusative cases to be used for their coding. In other words, the exact mechanism or case form used for argument coding appears to be less relevant due to decreased transitivity, which gives rise to DOM for experiencer verbs in Saami languages. Moreover, typical features of transitivity, such as agency and affectedness, are rather irrelevant to experiencer verbs in that the stimuli are usually not affected at all and even though agency does play a role in cases such as ‘see’ vs. ‘look’, experiencing is always less agentive and affective than typical transitive actions. This has the consequence that changes in these features cannot account for the attested differences in case marking. These features also make experiencer verbs easy targets for semantically rather void DOM.

Above, the reasons for the rather free variation between semantic cases in the function of coding the O were discussed. However, this might not be the whole story, as there are also cases where the variation is not completely semantically free, but it may have resulted in a slight change in meaning. When asked about a possible semantic difference between accusative and illative in cases such as (11a) and (11b), speakers of North Saami may suggest that the accusative is used for concrete liking of fish (i.e., when eating), while the illative is supposed to refer to a habit of liking fish in general.<sup>14</sup> In other words, the difference between accusative and illative may at least to some extent have a semantic basis, and it is also related to semantic transitivity (habituals rank lower for transitivity, see, e.g., Gerstner-Link 1998), and, as was noted above, definiteness might also play a potential role here, although it is best viewed only as a by-product of the attested variation whose ultimate origins seem to lie in language contacts. It must, however, be noted that authentic text materials do not obviously support the elicited judgments on possible semantic differences, and more research is thus needed on this issue. In this context, it is also relevant to note that some verbs that describe more intense feelings, such as ‘love’ and ‘hate’ (e.g., South Saami *iehtsedh*, Lule Saami *iehttset*, North Saami *ráhkistit*, Aanaar Saami *rähistiđ* (cf. (14)), Skolt Saami *rä’ksted* and Kildin Saami *šoabpše*, all meaning ‘love’), only govern the accusative (and nominative in South Saami), which may lend further support to the higher transitivity associated with the accusative in (11b).

#### 4.4 Coherence in marking

The variation between accusative and semantic cases can also be approached from another perspective. As suggested above, the variation may be related to a slight semantic change in certain cases, but examples like (20) below suggest another reason for this:

- (20) North Saami (Uralic; SIKOR)  
*Nuorran diggejin Beatles joavkku.*  
 young.ESS dig.PST.1SG Beatles group.GENACC  
 ‘When I was young, I dug the Beatles.’

The North Saami verb *digget* ‘dig’ is a new internationalism whose O argument bears accusative coding. In (20), the (genitive-)accusative coding does not necessarily reflect a higher degree of transitivity of “digging” (in comparison to liking, for example). This can be explained in two ways. First, the occurrence of the accusative can be explained by the fact that new loan verbs govern the most common case for O coding, namely the accusative, which is used in typical transitive clauses, and, as has been shown, also appears with certain experiencer verbs. Second, this may be interference from Norwegian, or even English, the ultimate source language for the loan. This, as opposed to the cases

<sup>14</sup>Even though native speaker students of North Saami are often aware of the prescriptive grammarians’ view of the “impurity” of accusative objects with *liikot* ‘like’, Saami-Norwegian bilinguals at the Sámi University of Applied Sciences (Guovdageaidnu) and UiT The Arctic University of Norway (Tromsø) have often, when asked, suggested this kind of semantic nuance between the use of accusative and illative.

discussed above, can be taken as a tendency towards coherence in marking; functionally superfluous variation is usually avoided in favor of a more coherent marking system. This argument is in line with, for example, Barðdal's (see, e.g., Barðdal 2008; 2009) findings on Icelandic and other Germanic languages: in many Germanic languages, the less frequent argument marking patterns have disappeared, since the default nominative–accusative has replaced them.

On the other hand, while the accusative coding of *digget* (20) can nevertheless be also regarded as inheritance of the transitive originals such as Norwegian *digge* and ultimately English *dig*, the accusative objects of the South, Lule and North Saami verbs for 'care' seen in Table 3 seem to be best explained by a language-internal pursuit of coherence in marking – even when neither the etymological background of the verbs nor the predominant patterns of the majority languages seem to promote the use of the accusative. It is notable that the accusative coding of caring verbs coincides with the westernmost Saami languages, in which the accusative coding is at least one of the alternatives for the liking verbs as well (Table 2). In other words, while the accusative objects of Lule Saami *lijkkut* (10) and North Saami *liikot* (11) can be explained as foreign influence, Norwegian *like* in turn may be interpreted as the subsequent model for extending the accusative coding to caring verbs as well.

It is also notable that for some verbs, the multiple outside pressures on minority languages may pull the Saami languages in a new but single direction: A case in point are verbs for 'fear', which, as illustrated in (7) for South Saami, traditionally govern the relative/locative case in the Saami languages. However, it appears that not only the transitive pattern of Norwegian *frykte* and Swedish *frykta* both meaning 'fear', but also the partitive coding of Finnish *pelätä* 'fear' have given the impetus for the emergence of accusative coding in the Saami languages as well (cf. Vuolab-Lohi 2007: 425; Olthuis 2009: 86–87):

- (21) North Saami (Uralic; personal knowledge)  
*Sii ballet guliin ~ guliid!*  
 3PL fear.3PL fish.PL.LOC ~ fish.PL.GENACC  
 'They are afraid of fish!'
- (22) Norwegian (Germanic; personal knowledge)  
*De frykter fisk!*  
 3PL fear.3PL fish  
 'They are afraid of fish!'
- (23) Finnish (Uralic; personal knowledge)  
*He pelkäävät kaloja!*  
 3PL fear.3PL fish.PL.PTV  
 'They are afraid of fish!'

Again, the accusative coding for verbs of fearing may be seen as strengthening the tendency towards coherence in marking. As noted above, the coding of the verbs for

'fear' differs from the contact languages in that in Finnish the verb does not govern the accusative, but rather the partitive (23), which is common for many experiencer verbs in Finnish. However, this has resulted in the accusative coding in North Saami, because the language lacks a partitive, and the Finnish partitive can also be seen as a grammatically determined structural case.<sup>15</sup>

#### 4.5 Theoretical implications

In the preceding sections, we have briefly discussed the motivation for the occurrence of DOM in Saami languages. We have suggested that the variation in O coding follows primarily from three different factors, namely language contact, emptiness of semantic cases and tendency towards coherence. In addition, transitivity may play a role in cases such as (11a), where the accusative (instead of the illative) coding may underline the concreteness of the denoted event, which makes the event in question more dynamic and thus more transitive (see, e.g., Givón 1995: 76). In other words, the occurrence of DOM constitutes a rather canonical instance of competing motivations. On one hand, contact with different languages and the semantic emptiness of the cases used for coding experiencer constructions produces variation in the marking, while on the other hand, the dominance of accusative coding especially with new loan verbs may create coherence in marking. Experiencer verbs lend themselves naturally to this kind of variation, because their lower degree of transitivity favors the use of semantic cases for their coding. It is easy for a language to adopt the coding pattern of a surrounding majority language in this kind of case, and in many of the discussed instances, the coding pattern of the majority language is mirrored in the given Saami language. The future will show which of the motivations will be stronger.

Another question related to the data discussed in this paper concerns the emergence of DOM. Recently, Iemmolo (2011) has argued that the occurrence (and emergence) of DOM is best explained by topicality. In other words, topical objects gradually start receiving explicit (non-zero) marking, which eventually results in a fully grammaticalized DOM system. What is interesting from a cross-linguistic perspective is that animacy and definiteness, typically seen as the hallmark features of DOM, are not in any direct way related to the cases discussed in this paper (see also Iemmolo 2011 for a recent discussion based on topicality); the possible effects of definiteness are only indirect. This means that DOM cannot be exhaustively explained by animacy and definiteness (or topicality), but the data from Saami languages provides another kind of view to the development of DOM instead. First of all, the type of DOM examined here appears to be most common within a certain verb class only, namely experiencer verbs. This means that semantics makes an important contribution to its occurrence. As noted numerous times in the pa-

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<sup>15</sup>The Saami accusative is also historically directly connected to the Finnish partitive, as the Saami plural accusative ending is cognate to the Finnic plural partitive, and both North Saami *guliid* [fish.PL.GENACC] (21) and Finnish *kaloja* [fish.PL.PTV] (23) thus go back to a common proto-form *\*kala-j-ta* [fish.PL.PTV] (Sammallahti 1998: 68, 203–206). This is possibly further reflected in the fact that Saami-Finnish bilinguals and Finnish learners of Saami languages often tend to equate the Saami genitive-accusative with the Finnish partitive (Magga 2002: 131; Länsman 2009: 78–79).

per, the coding of experiencer verbs varies both within and across languages. This might be the main reason for the fact that they are so prone to external influences. In principle, the language has no reason to resist the emerging variation, because it is not connected to any major semantic differences. For example, the differences between accusative and illative are not related to any semantic differences in the case of experiencer verbs, because, as noted also above, the affectedness of stimuli is not a relevant feature with them. This is in line with more common manifestations of DOM, where the main consequences of DOM are pragmatic in nature, i.e. they do not affect the semantic roles of arguments.

The data from the Saami languages does not provide us with a clear answer to the question of how and why DOM emerges in more general terms, but it aids us in understanding the circumstances under which it may arise. Favorable conditions are present if the variation is between two structural (such as nominative and accusative) or two semantic cases (such as illative and locative), and the variation is thus not related to any major semantic differences. The differential coding of topical objects also lacks an obvious semantic motivation (see Iemmolo 2011), but with time, the seemingly arbitrary variation in object coding acquires pragmatic functions. On the other hand, animacy effects on the coding of goals, for example, are more dramatic in nature, because we are also dealing with differences in roles of the affected arguments (see Kittilä 2008 for a more detailed discussion). It remains to be seen whether the kind of DOM attested in Saami languages will become more functionally triggered in the future. In any case, it is clear that at this point, the DOM in the Saami languages is predicate-triggered and only time will tell whether it will extend to objects in more general terms, and whether it will give rise to more evident semantic differences between the alternatives that are now best seen as free variation.

Another thing that the data discussed in this paper may shed more light on is the semantic nature of cases used for coding arguments that belong to the valence of a given verb. The typical structural cases, most notably nominative, absolutive, accusative and ergative, are semantically rather void of any specific meaning and usually get their semantic role from the verb. Their use is more directly related to distinguishing between A and O. The DOM discussed in this paper provides us with a somewhat different kind of evidence for the semantic emptiness of these cases, because cases that are prototypically best regarded as semantic behave as structural cases instead. In other words, in the data discussed in this paper, the employed case forms receive their meaning from the verb instead of having independent semantics of their own, even though we are dealing with semantic cases. The object slot is inherently related to a certain kind of semantic role, and the formal requirements outrank the inherent semantics of the employed case forms.

## Abbreviations

1	first person	IMP	imperative
2	second person	INF	infinitive
3	third person	LOC	locative
ACC	accusative	NEG	negation
CNG	connegative	NOM	nominative
COMP	complementizer	PL	plural
DPT	discourse particle	PRS	present
DU	dual	PST	past
ELA	elative	PTCP	participle
ESS	essive	PTV	partitive
F	feminine	Q	question marker
GEN	genitive	REL	relative
GENACC	genitive-accusative	SG	singular
ILL	illative		

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