

**COMPLEMENTS OF ADJECTIVES:
A DIACHRONIC APPROACH**

Nigel Vincent & Kersti Börjars

The University of Manchester

Proceedings of the LFG2010 Conference

Miriam Butt and Tracy Holloway King (Editors)

2010

CSLI Publications

<http://csli-publications.stanford.edu/>

Abstract

In this paper we challenge the traditional view that adjectives do not subcategorise for the grammatical function OBJ. We argue instead that the more general cross-linguistic restriction is against the assignment of accusative case outside the domain of a governing verb or preposition. This may however be violated in particular languages as we show by comparing Old Swedish, in which adjectives may unusually take accusative complements as first noted by Platzack (1982a, b) and Maling (1983), with Latin, where an accusative complement of an adjective is not possible. We then explore the diachronic developments into modern Swedish and more generally the modern Germanic languages and contrast them with the changes that have taken place in the modern Romance languages. We show that there are significant differences between the two language families in the way prepositions compensate for the loss of morphological case. We also suggest an alternative to Maling's account of the history of English *near*.

1. Introduction¹

Can an adjective have an object? Traditional grammar says no (Huddleston & Pullum 2001: 527). In a similar vein, Principles & Parameters Case Theory relies on the inability of nouns and adjectives to assign objective case to explain the distribution of English *of* (Chomsky 1981: 50-1). Compare too the theory of categories proposed by Jackendoff (1977), according to which adjectives are [-obj, -subj], thus contrasting with verbs: [+subj, +obj], nouns: [+subj, -obj] and prepositions: [-subj, +obj].

¹ We are grateful to those who have provided examples and/or contributed to discussions of this paper at LFG 2010 and at the annual conference of the Linguistics Association of Great Britain held at the University of Leeds in September 2010. These include: Wiebke Brockhaus-Grand, Martin Forst, Joan Maling, Christer Platzack, Louisa Sadler, Eva Skafte Jensen, Merethe Damsgaard Sørensen, and Bo A. Wendt. We thank too the anonymous referees of the abstract when it was submitted for LFG 2010, and Miriam Butt for her comments on the pre-final draft. Errors and omissions remain our own responsibility. Correspondence address: {kersti.borjars, nigel.vincent}@manchester.ac.uk

Maling (1983) and Platzack (1982a,b) by contrast noted in the earlier stages of the Germanic languages the existence of a category of so-called ‘transitive adjectives’, by which they mean adjectives taking NP complements (Platzack 1982b: 274). In the Old Swedish examples in (1) (cited after Platzack 1982a, b) the adjectives *lyþoghe* ‘obedient’ and *vis* ‘sure’ take complements respectively in the dative and the genitive:

- (1) a. *at i ärin guþi lyþoghe*
 COMP 3PL be.PRS.PL God.DAT obedient
 ‘that you are obedient to God’
- b. *päs är iak vis*
 that.GEN be.PRS.SG 1SG sure
 ‘of that I am sure’

Platzack points out that the complements of the same adjectives in modern Swedish are marked by prepositions, which is what one might expect given that the modern language has lost the earlier system of nominal case inflection. Yet the issue is not simply one of replacing cases by prepositions since, as he also notes, already in Old Swedish many adjectives took PP complements and some adjectives occur with either an NP or a PP complement.

More recently, within LFG, Mittendorf & Sadler (2008) consider the Welsh construction exemplified in (2), and propose an analysis according to which the adjective *byr* ‘short’ takes *Siân* as SUBJ and *thymor* as OBJ:

- (2) *Mae Siân yn fyr ei thymor.*
 is S PRED short her temper
 ‘Siân is short-tempered.’

Al Sharifi & Sadler (2009) argue along similar lines in respect of the Arabic adjectival construct in (3) suggesting that *-l-wağh-i* ‘the face’ bears the relation OBJ to *ğamī-l-at-u* ‘beautiful’ and that this relation is realised as GEN(itive) in the context of this construction:

- (3) *imraʔ-at-un ġamī-l-at-u -l-wağh-i*
 woman-F-NOM beautiful-F-NOM the-face-GEN
 ‘a woman with a beautiful face’

Data of this kind raise three questions: a) what grammatical functions (GFs) should be assigned to adjectival complements? b) how do morphological case

and prepositions interact in the realization of these GFs? c) how do the relations between the underlying GFs and their overt realizations change over time? The broader issue of what properties a function should have in order to be classified as OBJ will not be dealt with directly here; we refer the reader to Börjars & Vincent (2008) for discussion.

In this paper we address these questions through a comparative analysis of the history of cases and prepositions which depend on adjectives in Romance and Germanic. After further discussion of some of the basic theoretical issues (section 2), we compare the distribution of adjectives and case in Old Swedish (OSw) (section 3.1) and Latin (section 3.2). We then review the possible pathways for change in general terms (section 4) before charting the particular history of these constructions in the two language families (section 5). Finally, in section 6 we draw out the theoretical consequences that we suggest follow from our account.

2. Theoretical preliminaries

The architecture of LFG assigns, via f-structure, a key role to grammatical functions or relations (GFs). We need to ask therefore what links there are on the one hand between the f-structure and the syntactic categories of c-structure, and on the other between f-structure and the m(orphological)-structure system of case for those languages which have one. A central issue concerns the GFs that can occur as arguments of adjectives. The set of sub-categorizable GFs includes: SUBJ, OBJ, OBJ_θ, OBL, XCOMP and COMP. Whereas a verb, depending on its semantics, may in principle subcategorize for any of these, it has standardly been assumed that adjectives differ from verbs in allowing for all except OBJ and OBJ_θ. In this respect, LFG is no different from traditional grammar and the various versions of Chomskyan syntax mentioned in our opening paragraph (see Platzack 1982a,b; van Riemsdijk 1983 and Ohkado 1990 for discussion of the issues that the construction gives rise to within a Chomskyan framework and how these can be dealt with).

If we are to pursue the question of whether this received wisdom is correct, it is important to distinguish between a GF and its morpho-syntactic realisation. Thus, if a language like Latin does not allow accusative arguments of adjectives, this could in principle be explained at the level of f-structure by a constraint that forbids OBJ as the argument of A, or at the level of m-structure by a constraint that OBJ cannot be realised as ACC within an AP. Put another way, Old Swedish, which does allow accusative complements of adjectives, could be exceptional in allowing its adjectives to sub-categorise for OBJ or it could be unusual in permitting ACC to be assigned inside the AP. One of our main concerns in the

present paper is to try to find grounds for deciding between these two alternatives. Our discussion focuses in the main on simple adjectives, although in section 3.2 we touch briefly on the properties of some Latin participial constructions which lie at the border between adjectives and verbs.

A further issue concerns the relations between adjectives and the categorial — as opposed to functional — status of their complements. Thus, Maling (1983: 254) articulates a widely held assumption when she writes that: ‘... there is something essentially correct about the idea that it is less natural for A and N to take NP complements than for V and P to do so ...’. And if we are dealing with a language without nominal case such as English she is surely right; hence her discussion of apparently exceptional examples such as *worth further consideration* or *like your sister*, which we pick up below. For a language like Latin, on the other hand, Maling’s remark is less obviously true, since examples such as *plenus rimarum* ‘full of chink.GEN.PL’ and *similis matri* ‘like his mother.DAT.SG’ abound.² The heart of the problem therefore seems to reside in the nature of a language’s system for marking functional dependency rather than in the theory of grammatical categories.

3. Adjectives and case in the older languages

In this section we compare the patterns of case distribution in Old Swedish (OSw) (section 3.1) and Latin (section 3.2). Both languages have nominal case systems, but exhibit significant differences in the co-occurrence of the cases with adjectives. Most relevantly, as we shall see, OSw allows complements of adjectives in the accusative whereas Latin does not. To set the scene, the following table shows the correspondences between the cases reconstructed for Proto-Indo-European (PIE) and Germanic and Latin, and the different ways the original system has been reduced in Latin compared to OSw, which inherits unchanged the Proto-Germanic four case system.³

² We assume here that bare case forms such as *rimarum* ‘chink.GEN.PL’ and *matri* ‘mother.DAT.SG’ are indeed NPs. In systems which exploit extensive inventories of functional heads, these forms might be KPs or something similar, but within such a system of course not even verbs would co-occur with NPs. Either way, it remains true that in languages like English and French bare NPs do not usually co-occur with adjectives whereas they do in languages like Latin or Russian.

³ We exclude the vocative and nominative from consideration since they would not have been available to mark internal arguments, whether verbal or adjectival. In addition, Latin has a small number of residual locatives but they too are not relevant here. See Meiser (1992) for further discussion and references.

Proto-Indo-European	Proto-Germanic	Latin
Accusative	Accusative	Accusative
Genitive	Genitive	Genitive
Dative	Dative	Dative
Ablative	Genitive OR Dative	Ablative
Instrumental	Dative	Ablative
Locative	Dative	Ablative
Table I: Case correspondences between Latin and Germanic		

Noteworthy here is that Latin has retained the Indo-European ablative in a range of functions, one of which is to mark the complements of some adjectives, whereas the corresponding adjectives in those Germanic languages which retain case-marking take a dative or a genitive. Fuller investigation of these more detailed case-marking differences between the two families will however have to be put off to a future occasion.

3.1 Old Swedish and Germanic

As we have already seen in (1), OSw has a range of different cases which can depend on adjectives, among which the following are remarkable for their ability to combine with an accusative (data once more derived from Platzack 1982 a,b):

- (4) *lönlikin* ‘clandestine’, *rätter* ‘suitable’, *godher* ‘kind’,
mögheliker ‘possible’, *þækkeliker* ‘delightful’

With some adjectives, on the other hand, a prepositional construction is already attested in OSw as an alternative to an NP complement:

- (5) *fri (af)* ‘free (of)’
milder (ivir) ‘lenient (to)’
rädder (for) ‘afraid (of)’
vis (alop/af) ‘certain (of)’

Similar patterns to Old Swedish are also found in Old Danish, though in that language we have not yet come across any unambiguous accusative complements of adjectives. Thus, in (6a) the adjective *skuldich* ‘owing, indebted’ combines

with the dative pronoun *hannum* ‘to him’, and in (6b) *oss* ‘us’ co-occurs with the co-ordinated adjectives *høriige eller ludiige* ‘attentive or obedient’:⁴

- (6) a. *och noger borger ær hannum noget skuldich*
 and some citizens be.3PL.PRS he.DAT some owing
 ‘and some citizens owe something to him’ (1452, Rsv V.306)
- b. *at the ey skulle være oss høriige eller ludiige*
 that he not should be us.DAT attentive or obedient
 ‘that he should not listen to and obey us’
 (1502, Rosenv. GL D I,27)

For Old Norse, Faarlund (2004) notes only adjectival complements with the dative and the genitive and interprets their distribution in semantic terms. He writes (p.99), for example, that ‘Adjectives taking dative complements are first of all those that denote a state of mind or an attitude ... This is the benefactive or recipient role, which is the basic meaning of the dative case’, while for genitives he comments (p.101) that ‘typical genitive complements of adjectives have a partitive meaning’. Though the tendencies identified by Faarlund are likely to be correct, Platzack (1982a,b) is more cautious about the connection and further work is required on historical data to get a clearer picture of the correspondences between case on the one hand and the semantic relation between the adjective and its complement on the other. As with Old Swedish, so in Old Norse there are alternations between case marked NPs and prepositional constructions; compare the examples in (7) [= Faarlund’s (24b) and (29a)]: in (7a) the complement of *fúsir* ‘eager’ is in the genitive case whereas in (7b) *búinn* ‘ready’ takes a PP introduced by *til* ‘to’.

- (7) a. *er fúsir váru fararinnar*
 who eager be.3.PST journey.GEN.DEF
 ‘who were eager to leave’ (Kkr II.308.9)
- b. *nú em ek búinn til ferðar*
 now be.1SG.PRS 1SG prepared to journey.GEN.DEF
 ‘Now I am ready to go.’

⁴ The form *oss* here could in principle be either accusative or dative but, given the available evidence of other forms, there is no reason to treat it as anything but dative in this context.

For the history of Dutch, van der Horst (2008) provides examples of adjectives with genitive and dative complements down to the point in time when the case system was lost, but makes no mention of adjectives taking NPs in the accusative case (see also Broekhuis To appear).

3.2 Latin

A semantic account of the distribution of cases with adjectives is also characteristic of traditional Latin grammars, which talk of the genitive of quality, dative of similarity and so on. The relevant cases here are three: genitive, dative and ablative. In the words of Serbat (1996: 371): ‘Après adjectif, tous les cas ou tours prépositionnels sont possibles, à l’exception remarquable de l’Ac[cusatif], qui est comme réservé au verbe.’ [After an adjective all cases and prepositional phrases are possible, with the notable exception of the accusative, which is as it were reserved for the verb.] We set out in (8) a selection of adjectives grouped according to the cases they typically govern:

- (8) DATIVE *similis* ‘like’, *aequus* ‘equal’, *iunctus* ‘joined’, *aptus* ‘suited’,
gratus ‘pleasing’, *carus* ‘dear’
 ABLATIVE *natus* ‘born’, *dignus* ‘worthy’, *vacuus* ‘free’, *oriundus*
 ‘descended from’
 GENITIVE *plenus* ‘full’, *fecundus* ‘fertile’, *cupidus* ‘greedy’, *memor*
 ‘mindful’, *ignarus* ‘ignorant’, *peritus* ‘skilled’

A semantic account seems to fit naturally for ablatives which express the origin or source, since this is a function independently associated with the ablative case. In other instances the historically appropriate semantics is no longer transparent. Thus Latin has ablatives in expressions like *crine ruber* ‘redhaired, lit. red in the hair.ABL’ and *mente captus* ‘insane, lit. caught in the mind.ABL’, where the meaning is appropriate for an earlier locative which was subsequently conflated with the ablative. It is notable too that many of the adjectives which take dative or genitive in Latin take the corresponding case in Germanic, which reinforces the argument for an account along the lines indicated by Faarlund in his comments, quoted above, on the Old Norse data.⁵

Pinkster (1990: 58ff) contrasts the semantic approach, in which arguments of both verbs and adjective bear the same case according to the meaning of the

⁵ For a thorough and richly documented exploration of the semantic bases of adjectival cases in Latin see the relevant sections of Serbat (1996).

predicate expressed, with a structural one whereby objects of verbs are assigned accusative and the same arguments inside noun or adjective phrases are assigned genitive. This principle of genitive as the structural case inside NP or AP can be traced back to the attempt by Benveniste to provide a unified account of the diverse uses of the genitive catalogued by de Groot (1956). Benveniste (1962: 18) writes: ‘... dans la conception esquissée ici, la fonction du génitif se définit comme résultant d’une transposition d’un syntagme verbal en syntagme nominal.’ [... on the view sketched here, the function of the genitive is defined as the result of transposing a verb phrase into a noun phrase.]

An instructive pattern from this point of view is the three-way alternation exemplified in (9):

- (9) a. *laborem fugit* ‘he shuns work.ACC’
 b. *laborem fugiens* ‘shunning work.ACC’
 c. *laboris fugiens* ‘shunning work.GEN’

The verb here is *fugire* ‘to shun’ whose finite forms take a direct object in the accusative case as in (9a). The present participle *fugiens* by contrast is attested with both accusative objects as in (9b) and genitive objects as in (9c). Not surprisingly when the participle retains its verbal force it takes the accusative case as in (10):

- (10) *quibus pacem atque amicitiam petentibus*
 who.DAT peace.ACC and friendship.ACC seek.PPRT.DAT
 ‘to those seeking peace and friendship’ (Caes. *BG.* 4,18,3)

On the other hand the meaning of such a participle can often be close to adjectival in which case the genitive is possible, as in (11), where the participle is co-ordinated with the adjective *fortis* ‘strong’ and both bear the typically adjectival superlative suffix *-issim-*:

- (11) *vir fortissimus et*
 man.NOM.M.SG strong.SUP.NOM.M.SG and
amantissimus rei publicae
 love.PPRT.SUP.NOM.M.SG state.GEN.SG
 ‘a very strong man and most loving of the state’ (Cic *Cat* 4.17)

Such a participial genitive falls neatly under Benveniste's generalization about what he calls, in the passage already quoted, the genitive of transposition.⁶

We have said that there are no Latin accusatives depending on adjectives of the kind that Platzack has described for OSw. Apparent exceptions are the expressions in (12), where adjectives of dimension such as *altus* 'high, deep', *longus* 'long', *latus* 'wide' and *crassus* 'thick' are found with an NP in the accusative denoting extent:

- (12) a. *longus binos pedes*
 long two feet.ACC
 'two feet long'
 b. *latus digitos tres*
 wide fingers.ACC three
 'three fingers wide'

The reason for the accusative here is not objecthood but rather the fact that expressions of extent, spatial and temporal, in Latin require the accusative:

- (13) a. *trabes distantes inter se binos pedes*
 beams.NOM distant.NOM between REFL two.ACC feet.ACC
 'beams distant from each other two feet' (Caes *BG* 7, 23,1)
 b. *Gorgias centum et novem vixit annos*
 G 100 and 9 live.PRF.3SG year.ACC.PL
 'Gorgias lived for 109 years.' (Quint, 3, 1, 9)

We have here then a good instance of Pinkster's (1990: 59) principle that case forms inside APs commonly reflect the functions of similar items at sentence level.⁷ In Latin then the strong constraint against an accusative inside the domain of AP and VP can be overridden only by adverbial uses of the accusative whereas in OSw the constraint is weaker and some OBJ accusatives are also admitted.

Before concluding this section we should note that from the earliest stages of Latin we find adjectives that are complemented by PPs instead of case forms, and

⁶ For fuller discussion and exemplification of the genitive with participles tending in the same direction as Benveniste, see Serbat 1996: 395-399.

⁷ It is perhaps worth noting that corresponding expressions are unmarked by prepositions in English: *two metres tall*, *five inches thick*, etc. In other words, in both languages, measure phrases, although they are not objects, bear the marking appropriate to a verbal object.

instances where case forms and PPs are alternatives after the same adjective, just as we have observed for OSw. Thus for example we have both *oriundi ex Etruscis* ‘sprung from the Etruscans’ with the preposition *ex* and *caelesti semine oriundi* ‘sprung from divine.ABL seed.ABL’ with a dependent ablative. This is part of the wider phenomenon of alternation between cases and prepositions in both semantic and grammatical uses (see Molinelli 1996 and section 5.1 below).

4. Some routes for change

Given the systems of morphological case as markers of adjective dependency for Latin and the earlier stages of Germanic that we have sketched in section 3, we may then ask: what are the possible routes for change if a language loses that system of morphological case? The options are various and include:

- i) Prepositions may take over the function of marking grammatical relations. In particular a default preposition may be used to license arguments outside the verbal domain, as happens with *of* in English and *de* in French.
- ii) The head item may change status from adjective to preposition. This is commonly argued to be what has happened in the history of English with words like *worth* and *like* (Maling 1983).
- iii) ‘Transitive’ adjectives — in the sense of adjectives with bare NP-complements — may survive as marked options or historical relics, as Maling (1983) suggests is true of English *near*.

We shall see in section 5 that these scenarios play out in interestingly different ways within our chosen families of Romance and Germanic.

5. The historical developments

5.1 From Latin to Romance

As is well known, the Latin case system disappears in the course of the evolution to the Modern Romance languages.⁸ While nominative and accusative as the markers of SUBJ and OBJ give way to fixed pre- and post-verbal positioning, the other cases are in different ways replaced by PPs. Particularly striking in this regard is the development of the Latin preposition *de*, originally meaning ‘away,

⁸ Old French retains a morphological distinction between nominative and accusative but uses *de* in a range of constructions corresponding to the Latin genitive. Romanian retains a morphological genitive which co-exists with constructions using *de* in ways that are too complex to document here and which do not in any case affect the overall thrust of our argument.

down’, to become the marker of nominal dependence across the whole family. Two properties are worth noting in this connection: first that *de* + NP replaces GEN in all its functions, and second that there is evidence for the functional equivalence of GEN and *de* + NP from a very early date. In her otherwise exhaustive survey of the uses of the genitive and its replacement by *de* it is interesting that Molinelli (1996) does not include any examples of adjectival complements. However, the following examples — where *de* + NP in (14a) and (15a) alternate with the genitive NPs in (14b) and (15b) — suffice to complete her account; further alternations of this kind are well documented across the full historical span of the language.⁹

(14) a. *his de rebus conscium esse Pisonem*
 this.ABL.PL DE thing ABL.PL complicit.ACC.SG be.INF Piso.ACC
 ‘that P was complicit in these deeds’ (Cic Att 2.24.3)

b. *si conscius Dymno tanti*
 if complicit.M.NOM.SG Dymnus.DAT.SG so great.GEN.SG
sceleris fuissem
 crime.GEN.SG be.PRF.SBJ.1SG (Curt 6.10.20)
 ‘if I had been an accomplice of Dymnus in so great a crime’

(15) a. *de agricultura peritissimus*
 DE agriculture.ABL.SG skilled.SUPERL.NOM.SG.M
 ‘very skilled in agriculture’ (Varro RR 1.2.10)

b. *multarum rerum peritus*
 many.GEN.PL.F thing.GEN.PL.F skilled.NOM.SG.M
 ‘skilled in many things’ (Cic Font 7,15)

The generalization that emerges therefore is that the Romance languages continue the basic Latin pattern but realise it by different means. The historical evidence thus provides further confirmation that Benveniste (1962) was right to discern a unity in the apparently diverse and multifarious uses of the Latin genitive. In more recent terminology, the genitive is the structural case assigned within the noun phrase. The fact that in the Romance languages this genitival relation is realised via a grammatical preposition rather than a case inflection does not alter the continuity of the underlying structural pattern. In consequence it is possible to identify constructions with *de* corresponding to almost all the

⁹ NB Latin *de* governs the ablative. Ex (14) is cited by Pinkster (1990: 66).

different functions traditionally assigned to the genitive. Table II illustrates this for a representative sample of constructions, where the Latin genitives are in bold. (The language here is French but analogous examples could be constructed in all the modern Romance languages.)

Construction	Latin	French	Gloss
Comp of N	<i>rex regum</i>	<i>le roi des rois</i>	‘the king of kings’
Comp of A	<i>avidus gloriae</i>	<i>avide de gloire</i>	‘eager for glory’
Comp of V	<i>memini vivorum</i>	<i>je me souviens des vivants</i>	‘I remember the living’
Partitive	<i>multi civium</i>	<i>beaucoup des citoyens</i>	‘many of the citizens’
Quality	<i>vir magnae eloquentiae</i>	<i>un homme d’une grande éloquence</i>	‘a man of great eloquence’
Possessive	<i>domus regis</i>	<i>le palais du roi</i>	‘the king’s palace’
Table II: Latin genitive and French <i>de</i> compared			

The one exception to this generalisation is the genitive dependent on a participle as in example (11) above. Arguably in this instance, however, the reason lies in the altered status of the participle, which has either dropped out of use or has been retained only in lexicalised adjectives and nouns such as *intéressant* ‘interesting’, *puissant* ‘powerful’, *aimant* ‘lover’ and the like.¹⁰

5.2 From Old to Modern Swedish

Platzack (1982a, 1982b) considers 62 adjectives that took an NP in the dative, genitive or accusative in OSw. Of these, 23 no longer exist in the modern

¹⁰ It is worth noting in this context a further pattern, which traditional etymological accounts record but do not explain, whereby a number of prepositions in Romance contain an apparently pleonastic *de*. Thus, in Italian we find *dopo* ‘after’ < DE POST, *da* ‘from’ < DE AB, *davanti* ‘in front of’ < DE AB ANTE, etc. The lexical semantic content of the modern prepositions here is found in the corresponding Latin simple prepositions *post* ‘after’, *ab* ‘from by’, *ante* ‘in front of, before’. It is tempting to see these as instances in which the *de* serves to mark the dependent role within the clause not only for NPs but also for some PPs (cf Vincent 1997).

language, 17 take only a PP complement, 13 take either a PP or an NP, and 9 take only an NP.¹¹ A first option to consider is the possibility that the elements which take an NP complement have in fact developed into prepositions, as is persuasively argued for the English *worth* and *like* by Maling (1983). The data in (16), however, show that an item like *trogen* ‘faithful’ has all the characteristics of an adjective. Thus, it distributes like an adjective in that it can occur attributively as in (16a), predicatively as in (16b) or as an adjunct as in (16c). Not all of these adjectives can occur attributively, but they still have adjectival properties relating to agreement. As the examples in (17) demonstrate, *övermäktig* takes an NP complement, but like any other adjective it agrees with the gender and number of its controlling noun.

- (16) a. *en sin husse trogen hund*
 a POSS master faithful dog
 ‘a dog faithful to its owner’
- b. *Hunden är trogen sin husse*
 dog.DEF be.PRS faithful POSS master
 ‘The dog is faithful to his master’
- c. *Sin husse trogen vägrade hunden att gå.*
 POSS master faithful refuse.PST dog.DEF COMP go.INF
 ‘Faithful to his master, the dog refused to go.’
- (17) a. *Verkligheten blev oss övermäktig.*
 reality.COM.DEF become.PST 1PL.OBJ overpowering.COM.SG
 ‘Reality overpowered us.’
- b. *Livet blev oss övermäktigt.*
 life.NT.DEF become.PST 1PL.OBJ overpowering.NT.SG

¹¹ There are even some adjectives which take two nominal complements:

- i) *Jag var skyldig honom mitt stöd.*
 I was liable.COM 3SG.M.OBJ my support
 ‘I owed him my support.’
- ii) *Jag känner mig värd resten av chokladkakan.*
 I feel 1SG.OBJ worth.COM.SG rest of chocolate bar
 ‘I feel I have earned the rest of the chocolate bar.’

In this respect the situation in Swedish parallels that found in modern German.

‘Life overpowered us’

- c. *Utmaningarna blev oss övermäktiga.*
challenges.PL.DEF become.PST 1PL.OBJ overpowering.PL
‘The challenges overpowered us.’

These elements then have all the hallmarks of adjectives and they are not just occasional or exceptional examples. Indeed some adjectives which took NP or PP in OSw, such as *liker* ‘like’ and *värbugher* ‘worthy’, take only NP in modern Swedish. Furthermore, some of the modern Swedish adjectives which take NP complements are not attested at all in OSw. Although non-attestation does not always mean non-existence, it is likely that some of these adjectives entered the language after case was lost. In short, the sequence A+NP is a genuine pattern of Swedish grammar, and cannot simply be dismissed as a “historical residue”.

The complement can precede the adjective as in (18), a pattern which is uncharacteristic of Swedish, and which has been taken to betray German influence, although more research is required on the nature of the contact situation that could have engendered this change.

- (18) a. *Regeringen är inte uppgiften vuxen.*
government be.PRS NEG task.DEF adult
‘The government is not up to the task.’
b. *Hunden är sin husse trogen.*
dog.COM.DEF be.PRS POSS master faithful.COM
‘The dog was faithful to his master.’

For most adjectives which can occur with an NP complement, this can either precede or follow, while for some the complement can only follow. Adjectives taking NP complements have entered the language over a long period of time and, although contact with German may have influenced the historical development of the construction, there can be no doubt that it is now an intrinsic property of the language, and hence any analysis of Swedish syntax needs to account for this distribution.

5.3 Other Germanic languages

As mentioned in section 3.1, descriptions of early forms of Germanic do mention adjectives with NP complements, but they do not mention the possibility of these complements occurring with accusative case. Platzack (1982a,b) show that they

do occur in OSw and it may be that further investigation will reveal that they also do in other early Germanic varieties. What is clear is that the Germanic languages that have lost case do indeed have adjectives with NP complements, as the following examples from Danish (19a), Norwegian (19b) and Dutch (19c) show:

- (19) a. *Nu er vi kvit den lykke vi havde.*
 now be.PRS we rid the happiness we have.PST
 ‘Now we have lost the happiness we had.’
- b. *Ho var rädd björnen.*
 she be.PST afraid bear.DEF
 ‘She was afraid of the bear.’
- c. *KNVB directeur Kesler is Rutten en Jol zat.*
 KNVB director Kesler is Rutten and Jol fed up
 ‘The KNVB director Kesler is fed up with Rutten and van Jol.’

The pattern of an adjective with an NP complement in non-case languages, which as we have said has been claimed by many to be rare, appears then to be common across the relevant Germanic languages.

It is also worth noting that there are adjectives in modern German, a language which has preserved case, which take an NP complement in the accusative:¹²

- (20) a. *... waren die Bürger den arroganten Aktivismus leid.*
 were the citizens the.ACC arrogant activism fed up
 ‘the citizens were fed up with the arrogant activism.’
- b. *Dann wird auch den starken Regen gewohnten
 Landwirten der Boden zu nass.*
 then becomes also the strong.ACC¹³ rain accustomed
 farmers the ground too wet

¹² We are grateful to Martin Forst for pointing this out to us. (20a) is a simplified version of a corpus example supplied to us by Martin. Thanks also to Wiebke Brockhaus-Grand for discussion of the German examples. We hope to undertake a more detailed comparison of modern German and Old Swedish in future work.

¹³ *Starken* as a form is not unambiguously accusative, but in this environment it can be shown to be so.

‘Then the ground became too wet even for the farmers who were used to heavy rain.’

5.4 *The special case of near*

We mentioned in section 4 that Maling (1983) treats English *near* as a historical relic. The reason she does so is that, while at first sight this item might seem to fall into the same class as *worth* and *like* with the distribution of a preposition — compare *She lives near/beside/opposite the church* — it retains the classically adjectival property of allowing comparison (examples culled from a Google search):

- (21) a. *Which public control economy is **nearest a mixed economic system**?*
b. *Mascherano edges **nearer the exit***

The evidence of Latin suggests however that this may not be an arbitrary property of the English *near*, as the historical residue scenario might imply, but that there are semantic factors at work. Thus, in Latin the word meaning ‘near’ appears to be prepositional in its ability to co-occur with an NP in the accusative, and indeed is usually so treated in grammars and dictionaries, as in (22):

- (22) *prope amnem*
near river.ACC
‘near the river’

However, here too we can find the same pattern of a comparative (*propius* ‘nearer’) or a superlative (*proxime* ‘nearest’) co-occurring with the accusative in apparent defiance of what we have said above about the absence of accusative complements of adjectives in Latin:

- (23) a. *propius urbem*
near.COMP city.ACC
‘nearer the city’
b. *proxime hostem*
near.SUPERL enemy.ACC
‘nearest the enemy’

It seems therefore that English *near* is not a historical relic, in the sense of an arbitrary survival of an earlier pattern, but rather has special properties, arguably

related to its semantics, which are independently attested in other languages.¹⁴ It should be pointed out that this cannot simply be due to the gradability of the meaning of NEAR, since there are prepositions in the same languages which are conceptually gradable but which do not inflect like an adjective.

6. Consequences and conclusions

Let us now try to sum up the overall theoretical consequences of our analysis. First, it should be clear that we believe there are good grounds for allowing OBJ (and OBJ_Θ) to be sub-categorised by adjectives as well as verbs. In other words, we argue that predicates of all kinds may take the full range of sub-categorisable functions. At the sentential level, accusative is the case which marks the GF OBJ just as nominative is the case which marks SUBJ. In other words the object of a verb is a structural relation marked by the accusative case. Oblique complements of verbs are by contrast semantically motivated and realised either by an oblique case or by a PP. Neither accusative nor nominative, however, are in the unmarked circumstance appropriate in the nominal domain, where instead GEN holds sway. It is only when the ACC has a function other than that of marking OBJ, as with the so-called ‘accusative of extent’, that it can and does occur inside the NP as well as at sentence or clause level.

More generally, the realisations of grammatical relations depend on the relations between case and prepositions in particular (stages of) languages, and in this respect Romance and Germanic provide an instructive minimal contrast. We have seen that the Latin genitive is genuinely structural and that in the daughter languages it is replaced across the board with the equally structural preposition descended from *de*. We would then argue that in these languages, OBJ is marked by the preposition *de* in the nominal domain. In the Nordic languages, by contrast, there is no single preposition that fulfils this function, with the consequence that there is a much wider range of items that realise the relation OBJ. Thus, compare the range of prepositions used in English and Danish to mark nominal dependence (examples from Allan *et al* 1995: para 732; the Danish prepositions are highlighted in bold):

¹⁴ It is interesting to note the way Romance descendants of these items have developed. Thus the superlative *proximus* yields the Italian adjective *prossimo* ‘next’, complements of which are marked by the preposition *a* ‘to’: e.g. *prossimo alla stazione* ‘next to the station’. French *proche* ‘near’ is a derivative of *prochain* ‘next’ (< Lat *proximanus*) and takes complements marked by *de*: e.g. *un café proche de la gare* ‘a café near the station’.

(24) the discovery of America	<i>opdagelsen af Amerika</i>
the manager of the company	<i>chefen for firmaet</i>
the time of departure	<i>tidspunktet for afrejsen</i>
a professor of physics	<i>en professor i fysik</i>
the crew of the ship	<i>mandskabet på skibet</i>
the murder of Duncan	<i>mordet på Duncan</i>
the cause of the fire	<i>årsagen til branden</i>

Given these two different diachronic scenarios, the surprising language is in fact English, which genetically belongs to the Germanic family but has a realisation system based on the single preposition *of* which is analogous to that of Romance *de/di*. The most plausible explanation for this state of affairs is the contact between Old English and Old French in the Norman period, which has led to the Romance, and ultimately Latin, system of structural genitive marking being applied in the alien context of a Germanic language. Dutch would appear to hold a middle ground, in that *van* distributes much like *of* in (24), but the language still has adjectives with NP complements.

Two outstanding diachronic questions are: a) why did Swedish and the other North Germanic languages lose their case system and yet still preserve a significant number of bare NP complements with adjectives? and b) what licensed the bare NPs in the first place? The answer to the first of these questions seems to lie in part at least in the fact there never was the across-the-board equivalence between a prepositional construction and the genitive case that we have evidenced in Latin. No single preposition emerged to inherit the role of the genitive. Here too contact may be a factor, this time between the North Germanic languages and German. It is also possible that the Germanic genitive, despite being cognate with the Latin genitive, had come to assume a rather different function in those languages and therefore did not have the same unified structural role as its Latin congener. This in turn would have meant a different distribution of functions across genitive and accusative cases, and in particular would have licensed bare accusatives along with other cases inside the AP, thus answering our second question. These however are issues which we will have to address in detail on a future occasion.

References

Allan, Robin, Philip Holmes & Tom Lundskær-Nielsen. 1995. *Danish. A comprehensive grammar*. London: Routledge.

- Al Sharifi, Budour & Louisa Sadler. 2009. The adjectival construct in Arabic. In Miriam Butt & Tracy Holloway King (eds) *Proceedings of the LFG09 conference*. Stanford, Ca: CSLI Publications, pp. 26-43. <http://csli-publications.stanford.edu/>
- Benveniste, Emile. 1962. Pour l'analyse des fonctions casuelles: le génitif latin. *Lingua* 11: 10-18. Reprinted in E. Benveniste (1974) *Problèmes de linguistique générale I*, Paris: Gallimard, 140-148.
- Börjars, Kersti & Nigel Vincent. 2008. Objects and OBJ. In Miriam Butt & Tracy Holloway King (eds) *Proceedings of the LFG08 Conference*, Stanford, Ca: CSLI Publications, pp. 150-168. <http://csli-publications.stanford.edu/>
- Broekhuis, Hans. To appear. Adjectives and adjective phrases. *Modern grammar of Dutch*, ed. by H. van Riemsdijk. Tilburg: University of Tilburg.
- Faarlund, Jan Terje. 2004. *The syntax of Old Norse*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- de Groot, A.W. 1956. Classification of the uses of a case illustrated on the genitive in Latin. *Lingua* 6: 8-65.
- van der Horst, J.M. 2008. *Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse syntaxis*. Leuven: Universitaire Pers Leuven.
- Maling, Joan. 1983. Transitive adjectives: a case of categorial reanalysis. In *Linguistic categories: auxiliaries and related puzzles. Vol 1*, eds. Frank Heny and Barry Richard, 253-289. Dordrecht: D Reidel.
- Meiser, Gerhard. 1992. Syncretism in Indo-European languages - motives, process and results. *Transactions of the Philological Society* 90: 187-218.
- Mittendorf, Ingo, and Sadler, Louisa. 2008. NP would like to meet GF. In Miriam Butt & Tracy Holloway King (eds) *Proceedings of the LFG08 conference*. Stanford, Ca: CSLI Publications, pp. 373-393. <http://csli-publications.stanford.edu/>
- Molinelli, Piera. 1996. Casi e preposizioni in latino: lo sviluppo del genitivo e del dativo. Una prospettiva (anche) sociolinguistica. *Linguistica e Filologia* 3: 73-125.
- Ohkado, Masayuki. 1990. Transitive adjectives and the theory of Case. *Lingua* 81: 241-64.
- Pinkster, Harm. 1990. *Latin syntax and semantics*. London: Routledge.
- Platzack, Christer. 1982a. Transitive adjectives in Swedish: a phenomenon with implications for the theory of abstract Case. *Linguistic Review* 2:39-56.
- Platzack, Christer. 1982b. Transitive adjectives in Old and Modern Swedish. In *Papers from the 5th International Conference on Historical Linguistics*, ed. Anders Ahlqvist, 273-282. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

- van Riemsdijk, Henk. 1983. The Case of German adjectives. *Linguistic categories: auxiliaries and related puzzles. Vol 1*, ed. by F. Heny & B. Richard, 223–52. Dordrecht: D Reidel.
- Serbat, Guy. 1996. *Grammaire fondamentale du latin VI: L'emploi des cas en latin*. Louvain: Peeters.
- Vincent, Nigel. 1997. Prepositions. In Martin Maiden & Mair Parry (eds) *The dialects of Italy*, London: Routledge, pp. 208-213.