

# How to Reconstruct Case and Argument Structure for Inconsistent Correspondence Sets Across Daughter Languages: The Case of ‘Suffice’ in Germanic

Jóhanna Barðdal  
Ghent University

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Reconstructing syntax across consistent correspondence sets entails either that none of the daughters have changed, and thus the data in the correspondence sets represent the original state-of-affairs, or that the relevant structures in the daughter languages have all changed in the same direction. The situation is considerably more complicated when there are inconsistencies across the daughters, although for case and argument structure constructions, certain developmental paths are considerably more likely than others (cf. Barðdal 2014, Dunn et al. 2017).

One example of particular interest involves the verb ‘suffice’ in the Germanic languages, which is interesting for several reasons. One is that there are two different, but etymologically related, verbs that are found in the early daughter languages with the meaning ‘suffice’, reconstructable as *\*ga-nahan* and *\*ga-nōgjan* (Kroonen 2013). Another reason is that there are major inconsistencies found between the case and argument structure constructions across the two verbs and across the daughter languages.

The first verb, *\*ga-nahan*, is a presens-preteritum verb, documented in Gothic, Old English and to a limited extent in Old High German. The case frames found in the individual usage examples of this verb show a considerable diversity, Acc-only, Acc-Nom and Dat-Nom in Gothic, and Nom-Gen and Obl-only in Old English. The second verb, *\*ga-nōgjan*, is deadjectival and occurs with three different case frames in Middle High German, of which Acc-Gen and Dat-Gen are the most common ones. In Old Norse-Icelandic, in contrast, the argument structure of this verb appears to be limited to Dat-Nom. Additional data are presented from Old Danish, Old Swedish, Old Frisian, Old High German, Middle High German, Middle Low German and Middle Dutch, all representing some explainable variation of the theme found in Middle High German and Old Norse-Icelandic. However, these case frames, Dat-Nom in Old Norse-Icelandic, on the one hand, and Acc-Gen and Dat-Gen in Middle High German, on the other, are not particularly compatible with each other, thus the chances of a successful reconstruction appear to be limited.

On a further inspection it turns out that the derived *jan*-verb could also occur as a ditransitive verb, instantiating the Nom-Acc-Dat case frame in both Gothic and Old Norse-Icelandic. Yet, this case frame is still not compatible with the additional case frames listed above, found for the two etymologically related verbs, *\*ga-nahan* and *\*ga-nōgjan*. Nevertheless, on one possible explanation scenario, one might argue that the Middle High German case frames arose through oblique anticausativization, i.e. a reduction in valency from three to two arguments, where the case marking of the indirect object of the causative is maintained on the subject of the anticausative (for a further discussion of this concept and additional data, see Sandal 2011, Ottósson 2013, Barðdal 2014, 2015, Barðdal et al. 2020, Bjarnadóttir 2014). With that said, note that the case frame Acc-Gen can not be a valency-reduced alternant of Nom-Acc-Dat, which is what is attested in Gothic and Old Norse-Icelandic. Given that, the only viable option is to internally reconstruct a causative ditransitive for the prehistory of German as having been Nom-Acc-Gen, despite the Nom-Acc-Dat case frames found in Gothic and Old Norse-Icelandic. Such a reconstruction is indeed supported by the case frames found for ditransitive verbs in Old High German, where Nom-Acc-Dat is not documented, whereas Nom-Acc-Gen is. Hence, through a reduction in valency from three arguments to two arguments, i.e. from Nom-Acc-Gen to Acc-Gen, the Acc-Gen case frame documented with the *jan*-verb may have arisen.

In this paper I reconstruct both ‘suffice’ verbs for Proto-Germanic but with different case frames. I lay out how the internal development may, or even must, have been for the two verbs and the different case and argument structure constructions. It also turns out that the lexical semantic meanings involved range from ‘satisfy’, ‘endow’ and ‘satisfy’ to ‘be satisfied’ and ‘suffice’, all depending on case and argument structure construction. The findings of this study thus call for a further investigation of the role of syntax, or argument structure, for semantic change in lexical verbs.

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