

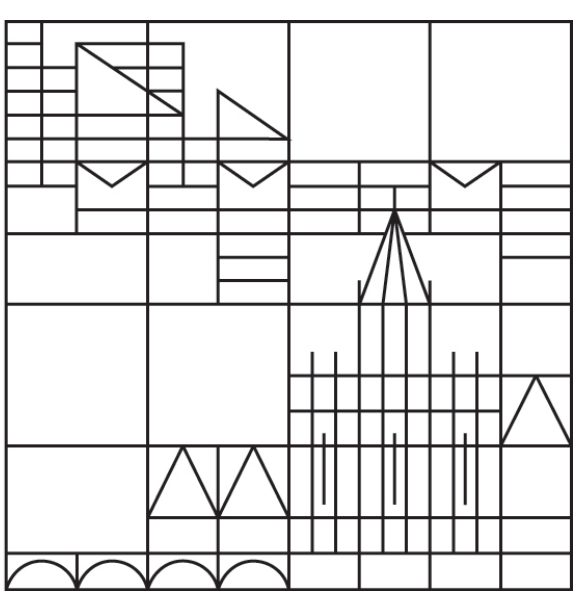
A Diachronic Perspective on V1 in Icelandic

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Introduction

Throughout the history of Icelandic, V1 is attested in declarative matrix clauses such as:

(1) *Vil ég heldur rita þeim hinum fáma sinnum er
will I rather write THE.DAT.PL those.DAT few.DAT times.DAT REL
þarf d og s
required d and s*

'I shall rather write *d* and *s* on the few occasions where it [z] is needed.'

(1150, *First Grammatical Treatise*)

(2) *Sýndi drottinn mikla miskunn vin sínum
showed Lord.nom great.ACC mercy.ACC friend.DAT his_own.DAT
sankti Georgíum...
saint.DAT George.DAT*

'The Lord showed his great mercy to his friend St. George...'

(1525, *Georgíus Saga*)

(3) *Verður Ketill forviða fyrir atsókn þeirra
becomes NAME.NOM astonished for attack their
'Ketill becomes surprised by their attack.'*

(1650, *Illuga saga Tagldarbana*)

(4) *Gnæfði gaflinn hátt yfir fjöruna...
towered gable.the. high over beach.the
'The gable towered high over the beach...'*

(1907, Jón Trausti *Leysing*)

Syntactic (e.g. Sigurðsson 1990, Axel 2005, Franco 2008) and information-structural accounts (e.g. Hinterhölzl & Petrova 2010, 2011) have proposed different factors that favour the use of V1 in Germanic languages. No analysis yet has been based on large corpus data. We aim to fill this gap and evaluate the relevance of the individual factors using the Icelandic diachronic corpus IcePaHC (Wallenberg et al. 2011).

Proposed Factors for declarative V1

- expletive constructions
- known subject referents
- deontic modals
- lexical verb class (unaccusatives, motion verbs, presentationals, existentials, inchoatives)
- declarative V1 sentences lack topic-comment structure
- in correlation with discourse structure
 - V1 at beginning of episode in narratives
 - V2 within narrative episodes
- text genre (mainly in narratives)

Findings and Visualization

After extracting V1 declarative matrix sentences from IcePaHC, the corpus was tested for:

- 312 sentences with pro vs. 4356 with overt subject
- declarative V1 are attested in all time spans under investigation
- frequency decreases diachronically, especially after 1900
- intermediate decrease of V1 in a text cluster around 1550
- use of modals not restricted to 'must/shall' (cf. ex. (1))
- no restrictions with regard to lexical class (e.g. to unaccusatives, cf. ex. (2))
- *verða* 'become' occurs with definite subjects (cf. ex. (3))

A following multifactorial visualization of V1 occurrences was carried out.

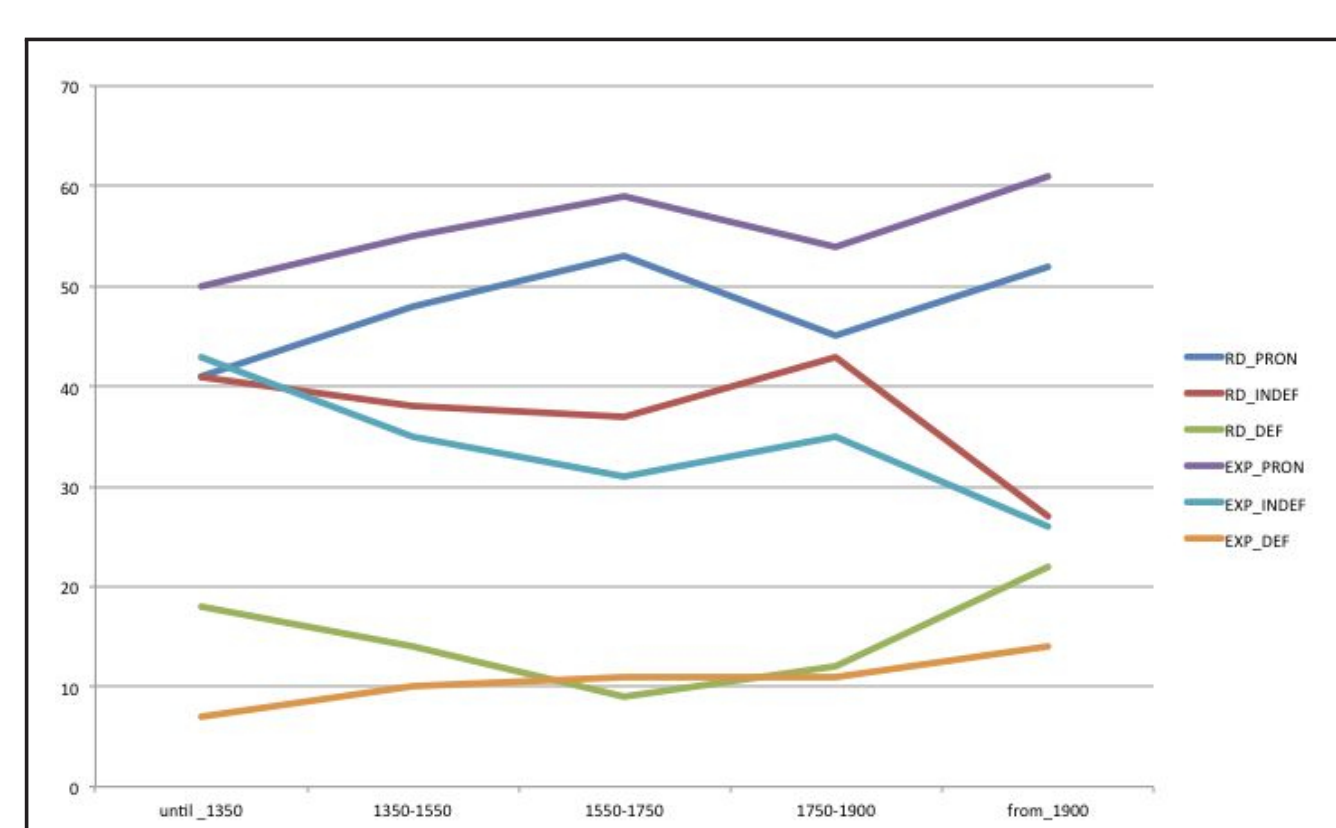
Icelandic parsed historical corpus (IcePaHC)

- Penn-style treebank
- 60 texts of different genres, ca. 1 Mio words
- texts range from 12th to 21st c.
- search conducted with CorpusSearch tool
- target: **V1 declaratives matrix sentences**
- hits: **4668 V1 declarative matrix sentences** out of 73014 total sentences in the corpus

Correlations examined

Our examination of the corpus took two forms: statistical analysis and visualization of the results

- verb type ('be', 'do', 'have', 'become', main verb, and modals)
- subject: NP or pronoun
- subject NP: definite or indefinite
- time spans (before 1350, 1350–1550, 1550–1750, 1750–1900, after 1900)
- text genre
- distribution of V1 declaratives in individual texts



Correlation of 'become' subject type (definite vs. indefinite NP vs. pronoun) and time span

The χ^2 method yielded no significant correlations between previously suggested factors and V1: V1 is not facilitated by modals, verb class, etc.

