

## V1, V2 and information structure in the history of Icelandic

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We present an analysis for the diachrony of Icelandic clause structure, focusing on changes in how information structure is encoded syntactically. Moreover, we show how these changes account for the increase of V2 at the expense of V1, as previously observed (Sigurðsson 1990; Butt et al. 2014). Our claims are supported by quantitative evidence from IcePaHC (Wallenberg et al. 2011) concerning the position of finite verbs, topics and discourse adverbs.

V2 is robustly attested in Old Icelandic matrix declaratives. The only deviation from V2 are V1 structures, e.g. (1).

- (1) **Pórir** hann þá eigi að stefna til gatnanna.  
dare.PRS he.NOM then NEG to go.INF to paths.DEF  
'He then dares not make for the paths.' (1250, Sturlunga.445.2015)

Using the LFG architecture – where constituency and functional information are handled separately – we can neatly capture the restricted possibilities for verb position in Old Icelandic by assuming that I is an obligatory functional category, a fixed structural position for finiteness. Thus, V2 and V1 sentences are both rooted in IP; the only difference is that for V2 SpecIP is occupied, for V1 it is not (cf. Rögnvaldsson & Thráinsson 1990). This is contra accounts which assume that the finite verb is in C in V1 declaratives (e.g. Sigurðsson 1990 and Franco 2008). The latter are motivated by the assumption that SpecIP is a unique subject position, within a framework where subjects are defined via position. In LFG, subjects are captured at f-structure and need not be associated with a fixed structural position (Dalrymple 2001). Moreover, this view of subjects is well-suited to historical Icelandic data, where subjects are not associated with a unique position, as we show.

V2 is robustly attested throughout the diachrony, with V1 still an option in the modern stage. Therefore we assume that the c(onstituency)-structure of Icelandic remains stable over time. However, V1 decreases in frequency. Our proposal is that this is connected with changes in the way information structure is encoded syntactically. In Old Icelandic, topics can be clause-initial (in SpecIP) but are also frequently postfinite, e.g. (1). Our corpus findings indicate that topics increasingly target SpecIP over time, and thus V2 increases at the expense of V1. We interpret this as SpecIP becoming more firmly associated with topics, which has consequences for the information-structural mappings for the rest of the clause. Now that topics in SpecIP are clearly demarcated from the rest of the clause via the finite verb in I, I can function as an information-structural boundary separating topic and comment (cf. Hinterhölzl & Petrova 2010 on Old High German).

The changes concerning SpecIP also tie in with changes in the midfield. In Old Icelandic, a small set of discourse adverbs ('DAs', e.g. *þá* 'then' and *þar* 'there') appear to act as discourse partitioners in V1 sentences, separating topic from focus in the midfield, e.g. (2) (cf. van Kemenade & Los 2006 for a similar claim for Early English and Magnusson 2007, who claims that DAs are mandatory connectors in V1 structures in Early Modern Swedish).

- (2) Piggja þau þar ágærar gjafir.  
receive.PRS they.NOM there excellent gifts  
'They receive there excellent gifts.' (1350, Finnbogi.661.2086)

Our corpus findings show that DAs strikingly decrease in frequency in the midfield over time. This we relate to the trade-off between DAs and I in terms of the encoding of information structure. With topics now firmly associated with SpecIP, and I as an information-structural boundary, midfield DAs as discourse partitioners are no longer motivated.

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