

The distribution of embedded V2 and V3 in modern Icelandic

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Abstract

This paper aims at giving a comprehensive and current overview of the key empirical facts regarding embedded V2 and V3 in Icelandic, including age-related variation, and to compare this to what has been shown for other Scandinavian varieties. It is shown that Icelandic is a robust symmetric V2-language, meaning that it exhibits V2 as the default word order both in matrix and subordinate clauses. In general, preposing is easier in matrix clauses than in subordinate clauses, with the exception of Stylistic Fronting (SF) which is more easily applicable in embedded contexts. As discussed in the paper, recent research has shown that the simple typological picture of the late 1990s is in reality much more articulated, in particular with respect to age-related variation. The fact that younger speakers of Icelandic do not accept embedded topicalization and SF as much as older speakers could be interpreted as an ‘ongoing change’ in Icelandic. However, it must be taken into account that these constructions are more common in the written language and in a formal style of speech. If the results regarding V3 in Icelandic are taken to indicate an ‘ongoing change’, then there are two changes that must be recognized: In relative clauses the conditions for V3 are reminiscent of the conditions for Topicalization and SF (less accepted by younger people), while in complement-clauses V3 is more accepted by younger people than older (innovation).

1 Introduction¹

This paper is concerned with the distribution of embedded V2 and V3 in modern Icelandic. Jónsson’s (1996) observation that there appear to be two varieties of Icelandic – Icelandic A, which quite generally permits embedded V2, and Icelandic B, which exhibits the more limited embedded V2 pattern seen in the Mainland Scandinavian languages – has led to much detailed empirical work during this millennium (cf. Thráinsson 2007 for a partial overview, and references, Angantýsson 2011, and Thráinsson et al. 2013, 2015, 2017). In light of this past work, the main purpose of the paper is to give a comprehensive and current overview of the key empirical facts, including age-related variation in modern Icelandic, and to compare this to what has been shown for other Scandinavian varieties, including some of the lesser studied systems which were part of the Scandinavian Dialect Syntax project (2005–2010). The main result is that the simple typological picture of the late 1990s is, in reality, much more articulated, and that a careful consideration of the Icelandic facts has much to offer both V2 and variation-oriented theorists.

The organization of the paper is as follows. In section 2, I describe the ‘core’ V2-properties of modern Icelandic, modelling the examples and presentation partly on Holmberg’s (2015) discussion of the V2-phenomenon. Section 3 focuses on selected V2

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constructions in Icelandic, namely subject-initial V2, embedded topicalization, stylistic fronting and expletive insertion, building on results of speaker surveys undertaken in the Icelandic Dialect Syntax project (IceDiaSyn). Section 4 reports on the IceDiaSyn results for the exceptional V3-construction in Icelandic. In section 5, I address some comparative and theoretical issues and attempt to clarify the status of Icelandic among the Scandinavian languages with respect to embedded V2 and V3. In short, it turns out that Icelandic is not as different from the other Scandinavian languages as sometimes assumed in the literature, and also that there is considerable age-related variation with respect to embedded V2/V3 and related constructions within Icelandic. Section 6 concludes the paper.

2 Icelandic as a core I-V2 language

According to Holmberg's (2015) definition, Icelandic has all the characteristics of a 'core V2-language'. The examples in (1) present various categories that can be the first constituent in matrix V2-clauses:

- (1) a. [Ég] hef í hreinskilni sagt aldrei séð refi á þessum slóðum. (subject)
 I have honestly said never seen foxes in this area
 'I have honestly never seen foxes in this area'
- b. [Refi] hef ég í hreinskilni sagt aldrei séð á þessum slóðum. (object)
 foxes have I honestly said never seen in this area
- c. [Í hreinskilni sagt] hef ég aldrei séð refi á þessum slóðum.
 honestly said have I never seen foxes in this area
 (speech act adverb)
- d. [Hvað] pantaðir þú af matseðlinum? (wh-phrase)
 what ordered you from menu-the
 'What did you order from the menu?'
- e. [Gáfulegur] getur hann varla talist. (predicate)
 intelligent looking can he barely be supposed
 'One can hardly say that he is intelligent looking'
- f. [Ekki] get ég sagt að hann sé mjög gáfulegur. (negation)
 not can I say that he is very intelligent looking
- g. [Neyðarlegast af öllu] var að detta af sviðinu. (comparative adjective)
 most embarrassing of all was to fall off stage-the
 'The most embarrassing thing was falling off the stage'
- h. [Samt] vilja þeir segja upp samningnum. (conjunctive particle)
 still want they denounce contract-the
 'Still they want to denounce the contract'
- i. [Handan við hæðina] stendur lítið hús. (locative phrase)
 behind hill-the stands little house
 'Behind the hill there is a house'
- j. [Lesnar] voru bækur um vináttu. (participle)
 read were books about friendship
 'Some books about friendship were read'

- k. Rígt hafði alla nóttina (participle)
 rained had all night
 ‘It had rained all night’
- l. [Það] stendur lítið hús handan við hæðina. (expletive)
 there stands little house behind hill-the
 ‘There is a house behind the hill’

In (1a), the subject is in its default position while (1b-c) show argument fronting and adjunct fronting, respectively. Movement of the *wh*-phrase is obligatory in questions such as (1d) in Icelandic, with the exception of echo-questions. Examples (1f-i) include fronting of adjectives, negation, a conjunctive particle, and a prepositional phrase. In (1j-k), there are examples of stylistically fronted past participles. Finally, (1l) shows expletive insertion which is restricted to clause-initial position in Icelandic. All of these main-clause V2-phenomena have been widely discussed in the literature (for a thorough overview, especially on topicalization, stylistic fronting and expletive insertion, see Thráinsson 2007: 341–393).

Some restrictions on the fronted elements are shown in (2):

- (2) a. *[Lesið] hafa margir bókina. (participle)
 read have many book-the
- b. *[Upp] höfðu sumir nemendurnir tekið bækurnar. (particle)
 up have some students-the taken books-the
- c. *María vill að Jón giftist henni og [giftast henni] mun hann. (verb phrase)
 Mary wants that John marries her and marry her will he
- d. *[Bara] búa allir í Reykjavík. (certain adverbs, see below)
 just live all in Reykjavík

Examples (2a-b) show that stylistic fronting is not always possible in main clauses with a postponed subject. However, preposing of this sort is easily applicable in certain types of embedded clauses as we will see in section 6.3. VP-fronting (2c) is also impossible and the same holds true for fronting of adverbs as in (2d) (Brandtler and Håkansson 2017 discuss and analyze adverbs of this type in Swedish).

Only one category can precede the finite verb in main clauses in Icelandic:

- (3) a. *[Á virkum dögum][dagblöðin] les hann alltaf.
 on weekdays newspapers reads he always
- b. *[Hvers vegna][einn] viltu ekki vera / *[Einn] [hvers vegna]
 why alone want-you not be / alone why
 viltu ekki vera?
 want-you not be

In (4), there is an (apparent) exception from the requirement on one constituent preceding the finite verb:

- (4) [Í gær] [um fimmleytið] [þegar ég kom heim úr vinnunni] hitti ég
 yesterday around five when I came home from work met I
 gamlan félagi.
 old fellow
 ‘Yesterday, around five, when I was on my way back from work I met an old friend of mine’

Under the assumption that these adverbials form a complex adverbial phrase with each adverbial adjoined to the next one, one can say that sentences of this type act in accordance with V2 (see discussions on stacked circumstantial adverbials in Holmberg 2015). Another possibility is that a cartographic analysis along the lines of Rizzi (1997 and much later work) is relevant in this context.

Some well known exceptions showing other than V2 order in main clauses are given in (5–7):

- (5) a. Les hann blöðin á hverjum degi? (V1: yes/no-question)
 reads he newspapers-the each day
 ‘Does he read the newspapers every day?’
 b. Farðu heim! (V1: imperative)
 go-you home
 ‘Go home!’
 c. Hringir síminn! (V1: exclamative)
 rings phone-the
 d. Veit ekki. (V1: subject ellipsis)
 know-I not
 ‘I don’t know’
 e. Komu þeir þá að stórum helli. (V1: narrative inversion)
 came they then to big cave
 ‘Then they came to a big cave’
 f. [Æfi Jón sig] verður hann góður (V1: conditional clauses)
 practice-subj. John self become she good
 ‘If John practices he will be good’
- (6) a. [Upphæðin], [þeir] ákváðu hana strax. (V3: left dislocation)
 amount-the they determined it immediately
 ‘They determined the amount immediately’
 b. [Þennan mann], [hann] hef ég ekki séð. (V3: ‘contrastive’ left dislocation)
 this man he have I not seen
 ‘I have not seen this man’
- (7) a. [Við] [einfaldlega] getum ekki gert þetta. (V3: exceptional adverbs)
 we simply can not do this
 ‘We simply can’t do this’

- b. Ég [í kjánaskap mínum] hélt að ... (V3: exceptional prepositional phrase)²
 I in foolishness my thought that
 ‘I thought in my foolishness that...’
- c. [Kannski][hann] komi á morgun. (V3: adverb fronting triggering V3)
 maybe he comes-subj. tomorrow
 ‘Maybe he will come tomorrow’

Default V1-order in yes/no-questions (5a) and imperatives (5b) is a general feature of V2-languages and V1 in exclamatives (5c) and subject ellipsis resulting in V1 (5d) are also quite common in the Germanic V2-languages (see the overview in Holmberg 2015 and Jouitteau 2010). Declarative V1 as in (5e), or so-called narrative inversion (Sigurðsson 1983, 1990), and V1 in conditional clauses without a conjunction are less common (see Thráinsson 2007:30). Icelandic also exhibits the left dislocation construction (6) which is found in many Germanic languages (see Thráinsson 1979 and later work). In (7a-b), there are examples of adverbs/PPs intervening between the subject and the finite verb in a matrix declarative sentence, and (7c) presents a conjunction-like use of the adverb *kannski* ‘maybe’ (see Thráinsson 1986, Sigurðsson 1986, Thráinsson 2007: 53, 343).

Icelandic is an ‘I-V2’ (symmetric V2) language as opposed to the Mainland Scandinavian ‘C-V2’ (asymmetric V2) languages in Holmberg’s (2015) terms, meaning that subject-initial V2 is the default word order both in matrix and subordinate clauses. Compare the Icelandic and Norwegian examples in (8) below.

- (8) a. Hann efast um [að hún hafi ekki (*hafi) hitt þennan mann. (Icelandic)
 he doubts that she has not has met this man
- b. Han tvilte på [at hun (*hadde) ikke (hadde) møtt denne mannen]. (Norwegian)
 he doubts that she has not has met this man
 ‘He doubts that she has not met this man’

In the general case, the finite verb must precede the sentence adverb in examples such as (8a) in Icelandic. In Norwegian, the opposite holds (8b). However, there are quite well documented exceptions in the literature (see for instance Angantýsson 2007 and Thráinsson 2010 for Icelandic and Bentzen 2007 for the Mainland Scandinavian languages):

- (9) a. Ég veit um eina Íslendingasögu [sem hann (hefur) ekki (hefur) lesið]. (Ice.)
 I know about one Icelandic saga which he has not has read
 ‘I know of one saga which he has not read’
- b. Eva säger [att hon (ser) aldrig (ser) på TV]. (Swedish)
 Eva says that she watches never watches TV
 ‘Eva says she never watches the TV’

² Johan Brandtler (p.c.) points out that in Swedish, at least, (7a) requires no special intonation or pause, whereas the PP in (7b) does. This actually seems to hold true for Icelandic as well so the structures are probably not syntactically equivalent.

The negation-V_{fin} order in (9a) is excluded in matrix clauses in Icelandic and restricted to certain types of embedded clauses as we will see in section 4. In Mainland Scandinavian, the mainclause-like V_{fin}-negation order is mostly restricted to certain types of assertive complement clauses (see, for instance, Julien 2015).

3 Embedded V2

In the following subsections, I focus on the results from the Icelandic Dialect Syntax questionnaires (Thráinsson et al. (eds.) 2013, 2015, 2017) regarding (i) subject-initial V2, (ii) embedded topicalization, and (iii) stylistic fronting and expletive insertion, respectively. There are several theoretical reasons for linking these constructions together. First, it is usually assumed that stylistic fronting, topicalization and expletive insertion all make use of a similar, or even the same, position to the left of the canonical position of the finite verb. Second, if one assumes that verb movement is related to rich verbal morphology, the subject-initial V3-order in languages like Icelandic (see section 4) raises questions about the nature of V-to-I movement. The third reason is that it is relevant to explore the interaction between stylistic fronting and expletive insertion, i.e. the similarities and differences between the distribution of these phenomena in different types of embedded clauses without a pre-verbal subject, and to discover the extent to which it is possible to leave the subject position empty. Finally, the acceptability of all of these word order phenomena depends to some extent on clause type (see discussion below). Since there was interesting variation with respect to age but not the other socio-linguistic variables in the IceDiaSyn project, the discussion is restricted to the results from the oldest group (ages 65–70) and the youngest group (age 15).³

3.1 Subject-initial V2 and pre-VP adverbs

As frequently mentioned in the literature, V2 is always the default word order in all types of subject-initial embedded clauses in Icelandic (see for instance Bobaljik and Thráinsson 1998; Holmberg and Platzack 1995; Vikner 1995, and much later work). An overview is given in (10–13):

- (10) Kennarinn segir að Haraldur **hafi ekki** lesið bókina (that-clause)
 teacher-the says that Harold has not read book-the
 ‘The teacher says that Harold has not read the book’
- (11) Kennarinn spurði hvort Haraldur **hefði ekki** lesið bókina (indirect question)
 teacher-the asked whether Harold had not read book-the
 ‘The teacher asked if Harold had not read the book’
- (12) Ég veit um eina Íslendingasögu sem Haraldur **hefur ekki** lesið (relative clause)
 I know about one Icelandic saga which Harold has not read
 ‘I know about one book that Harold has not read’

³ In the following overview tables, the total number of informants is a bit higher than in the final reports of the Icelandic Syntactic Variation project (Thráinsson et al. 2013, 2015, 2016). The reason is that the statistics presented here were prepared before the final revision of the IceDiaSyn data collection. However, this should not affect the overall results and the comparison between the two age-groups.

- (13) Kennarinn tók bókina svo að Jón gat ekki lesið hana (adverbial clause)
 teacher-the took book-the so that John could not read it
 ‘The teacher took the book so John could not read it’

Not surprisingly, examples of subject-initial V2 received very positive judgements in the IceDiaSyn project as shown in Table 1 (Overview questionnaire II, see Thráinsson and Angantýsson 2015 – the most common response in each age-group is in bold type).

Table 1: V2 in a complement clause and a relative clause in Icelandic.

	Youngest group (359 informants)			Oldest group (185 informants)		
	OK	?	*	OK	?	*
(14) Ég held að Anna hafi ekki lesið bókina I think that Anna has not read book-the ‘I think Anna has not read the book’	91.4	4	4.6	98.4	1.6	0
(15) Hún spurði hvort þeir hefðu alltaf verið she asked whether they had always been flughræddir afraid of flying ‘She asked if they had always been afraid of flying’	83.8	9.7	6.6	89.6	7.1	3.3
(16) Þar var alls konar matur sem henni líkaði ekki there was all kind of food that she liked not ‘There was all kind of food that she didn’t like’	73	15	12	84.5	9	6.5

Most of the informants fully accepted the V2-order and relatively few put a question mark. In section 4, we will see to what extent V3 is also an option in embedded clauses in Icelandic.

3.2 Embedded topicalization

It has been claimed that topicalization is more readily accepted in embedded clauses in Icelandic than in the Mainland Scandinavian languages (cf. Holmberg and Platzack 1995: 78–79; Magnússon 1990; Rögnvaldsson and Thráinsson 1990; Vikner 1995: 72); however, for a different view see Ottósson (1989), Jónsson (1996: 36–37) and Wiklund et al. (2007, 2009). Consequently, it has been proposed that embedded clauses in Icelandic are more “matrix-like” than embedded clauses in related languages (Iatridou and Kroch 1992; Santorini 1992, 1994; Vikner 1995). The view that Icelandic is systematically different from the Mainland Scandinavian languages with respect to embedded topicalization (ET), is challenged by the data discussed here. We will come back to such comparative issues in section 5.

In this subsection, and also in my presentation of subject-initial V3, I organize the data in accordance with Hooper and Thompson’s (1973) influential classification of predicates that take clauses as their complements.⁴ Table 2 presents examples of topicalization in *that*-clauses

⁴ The following examples illustrate Hooper and Thompson’s (H&T 1973) classification of predicates that take clauses as their complements (see also Heycock 2006, Levin 1993, Simons 2007):

- (i) a. John says [that Mary has not read the book] (class A)
 b. John thinks [that Mary has not read the book] (class B)
 c. John doubts [that Mary has not read the book] (class C)

that are complements of different types of matrix predicates (from Overview questionnaire III, see Thráinsson and Angantýsson 2015). According to Hooper and Thompson's theory, main clause phenomena like topicalization should be most acceptable in complements of predicates of types A, B and E:

Table 2: Topicalization in *that*-clauses

	Youngest group (261 informants)			Oldest group (159 informants)			
	OK	?	*	OK	?	*	
(17) Hann sagði að þjóðsönginn gæti hann ekki sungið He said that the national song could he not sing 'He said that he could not sing the national anthem'	A	20.5%	25.1%	54.4%	65%	17.8%	17.2%
(18) Hann hélt að þá mynd hefðum við ekki séð He thought that that movie had 1st.pl not seen 'He thought that we had not seen that movie'	B	24.7%	26.7%	48.6%	71.3%	14%	14.7%
(19) Ég veit þó að til Aþenu hefur hún aldrei komið I know though that to Athens has she never come 'I do however know that she has never been to Athens'	E	22.9%	29.5%	47.7%	83.6%	10.7%	5.7%
(20) Hann uppgötvaði að þá bók hafði hann ekki lesið He discovered that that book had he not read 'He discovered that he had not read that book'	E	47.5%	24.5%	28%	87.8%	6.4%	5.8%
(21) Ég efast samt um að þennan mann hafi hún hitt I doubt however that this man has she met 'Nonetheless, I doubt, that she has met this man'	C	26.2%	22.4%	51.4%	55.1%	16.7%	28.2%

d. John regrets [that Mary has not read the book] (class D)

e. John realizes [that Mary has not read the book] (class E)

In a sentence like (ia), that is with a predicate like 'say' and a sentential complement, the proposition of either the main sentence or of the complement clause alone represents the main assertion. In the latter case, the main clause predicate has a "parenthetical" reading. If the predicate in the main clause is a verb like 'think', as in (ib), the complement proposition represents the main assertion in the normal case (H&T 1973: 477–478). This means that complements of predicates A and B can be assertive. Complements of predicates like 'doubt' (ic) are non-assertive. Factive predicates like 'regret' (id) "express some emotion or subjective attitude about a presupposed complement" and their complements are "clearly not asserted" (H&T 1973: 479). Finally, (semi-)factive predicates like 'realize' (ie) "assert the manner in which the subject came to know that the complement proposition is true". Hooper and Thompson claim that complements of this type can be asserted (1973: 480), and this can be supported by examples like *I was just discovering that the bike has disappeared*. The most straightforward interpretation is that the latter assertion is the main assertion of the utterance, i.e. "the bike has disappeared".

	Youngest group (261 informants)			Oldest group (159 informants)		
	OK	?	*	OK	?	*
(22) Ráðherrann harmar að það mál D The minister regrets that that matter skuli þeir ekki hafa rætt should they not have discussed 'The minister regrets that they had not discussed that matter'	25%	29.4%	45.6%	40.8%	19.7%	39.4%

In general, the youngest speakers do not accept embedded topicalization as readily as the oldest speakers. “A natural sentence” is the most commonly given response in the oldest group with the exception of (22), while “unacceptable sentence” is the most commonly given response in the youngest group with the exception of (20). Among the oldest informants, the acceptability of topicalization depends to a certain extent on the type of the predicate in the matrix clause. In the complements of the predicates of classes A (17), B (18) and E (19–20) it receives a significantly higher score than in complements of predicates C (21) and D (22). This fits nicely with Hooper and Thompson’s (1973) classification of predicates taking *that*-clauses as their complements. In both age-groups, topicalization receives the most positive judgements in the complement of *uppgötva* ‘observe’ (class E). These results show that for many speakers of Icelandic the type of the predicate in the matrix clause matters.

Table 3 shows the reactions to topicalization in an indirect question and XP-fronting in a relative clauses with an overt subject (also Overview questionnaire III):

Table 3: Topicalization in indirect questions and relative clauses

	Youngest group (261 informants)			Oldest group (159 informants)		
	OK	?	*	OK	?	*
(23) Ég veit þó ekki hvort til Rómar hefur I know though not whether to Rome has hún komið she come 'I do not however know whether she has been to Rome'	5%	12.4%	82.6%	1.3%	8.3%	90.4%
(24) Þetta er strákurinn sem í París hitti This is the boy that in Paris met ég síðast I last time 'This is the boy who I met in Paris last time'	7.4%	8.1%	84.5%	0.6%	5.1%	94.2%

In both age-groups (and overall), topicalization received a very low overall score in indirect questions (23) and in a relative clause with an overt subject (24). This is consistent with Magnússon’s (1990) survey of the acceptability of embedded topicalization in clauses of this type, and not surprising from a comparative perspective (see for instance Rizzi 2001, Cinque 2004, Haegeman 2012 and references there for discussions on intervention effects in clauses of this type).

No examples of topicalization in adverbial clauses were included in the IceDiaSyn questionnaires but there are several mentions in the literature regarding the (im)possibility of fronting in adverbial clauses. Some scholars seem to assume that topicalization is not possible in adverbial clauses (Franco 2009: 146; Hrafnbjargarson and Wiklund 2009: 28) while others accept it to some extent (Angantýsson 2011; Magnússon 1990; Rögnvaldsson and Thráinsson 1990: 25). Haegeman (2012, and much previous work) argues that there is a crucial difference between the external and internal syntax of ‘central’ adverbial clauses (CACs) and ‘peripheral’ adverbial clauses (PACs). Under her analysis, central adverbial clauses are adjoined to the VP or IP/TP, while peripheral clauses are coordinated with the associate clause. Haegeman’s theory predicts that in a V2-language such as Icelandic the peripheral ones should allow main clause phenomena while the central ones should not. This prediction seems to be borne out (see further discussions in Angantýsson 2011):

- (25) a. *María sótti tíma **á meðan ÞÍNA bók** voru þeir að nota (CAC *temporal*)
 Mary attended classes while your book were they using
 en ekki á meðan MÍN var notuð
 but not while mine was used
- b. ?**Á meðan ÞÍNA bók** eru þeir að nota í tveimur námskeiðum (PAC *contrast*)
 while your book are they using in two courses
 hafa þeir ekki einu sinni pantað MÍNA á bókasafnið
 have they not even ordered mine at library-the
 ‘While they are using your book in two courses they haven’t even ordered mine.’

The following examples of argument fronting in PACs further support Haegemans’ theory (26a is from Magnússon 1990:114 and 26b was found online by Dianne Jonas, see Angantýsson and Jonas 2016):

- (26) a. Stína sagði að bókin í heild væri frekar leiðinleg **jafnvel þótt/þótt**
 Stína said that book-the in whole was rather boring although
einstaka kafla gæti hún alveg hugsað sér að lesa aftur.
 some chapters could she well think herself to read again
 ‘Stína said that the book as a whole was rather boring although she could imagine herself reading some selected chapters again.’
- b. Í ensku eru sterkbeygðar sagnir taldar óreglulegar, **á meðan**
 in English are strong verbs assumed irregular while
í fornensku eru þær taldar reglulegar.
 in Old-English are they assumed regular
 ‘In Modern English strong verbs are assumed irregular while in Old English they are assumed regular.’

For many speakers, both examples are perfectly fine. In contrast, temporal CACs resist both argument and adjunct fronting:

- (27) a. *Þegar reglulega pistla byrjaði hún að skrifa aftur hélt
 when regular columns began she to write again thought
 ég að hún yrði ánægðari.
 I that she would be more glad
- b. *Hannsa hana þegar í gær fór hún út.
 he saw her when yesterday went she out

However, as mentioned by Angantýsson and Jonas (2016), the fronting of adjuncts is generally easier than argument fronting in adverbial clauses (see also Jónsson 1996: 42–43 on the distinction between sentence-initial adjunct topics and fronted argument topics in embedded contexts in Icelandic).

Summing up the basic facts regarding embedded topicalization (ET) in Icelandic, one can say that ET is generally accepted in *that*-complements of predicates A, B and E in Hooper and Thompson's (1973) theory, but receives less positive judgements in non-assertive complement clauses. For most speakers ET is excluded in relative clauses and indirect questions. Adverbial clauses generally resist topicalization, apparently with the exception of peripheral adverbial clauses to some extent. In section 5.2, we will come back to some comparative issues regarding embedded topicalization.

3.3 Stylistic fronting and expletive insertion

Stylistic Fronting (SF) is “an optional fronting operation which moves an ordinarily post-verbal constituent to the preverbal domain” (Wood 2011). As originally pointed out by Maling (1980), SF in Icelandic is most typically found in embedded clauses with a “subject gap”.⁵

- (28) a. Þetta er mál sem ___ hefur verið rætt um.
 this is matter that has been discussed about
- b. Þetta er mál sem rætt hefur verið ___ um. (SF)
 this is matter that discussed has been about
- c. *Þetta er mál sem það hefur verið rætt um. (Expl.)
 this is matter that there has been discussed about
 ‘This is a matter that has been discussed.’

⁵ Nowadays, only the Insular Scandinavian languages have stylistic fronting as a productive construction but it existed in the older Mainland Scandinavian languages as well (see Holmberg 2000, Delsing 2001, Thráinsson 2007: 376–377, and references there). However, Engdahl (2012) shows examples of “frozen” SF expressions in modern Swedish. It is also interesting that Old Icelandic exhibits examples of stylistic fronting that sound strange in the modern language (Rögvaldsson 2005).

- (29) a. ?Ég held að ___ hafi verið rætt um málið á fundinum.
I think that ___ has been discussed about matter-the at meeting-the
- b. Ég held að **rætt** hafi verið ___ um málið á fundinum. (SF)
I think that discussed has been ___ about matter-the at meeting-the
- c. Ég held að **það** hafi verið rætt um málið á fundinum. (Expl.)
I think that there has been discussed about matter-the at meeting-the
'I think that the matter has been discussed at the meeting.'
- (30) a. Þeir sem ___ hafa verið í Ósló segja að ...
those that ___ have been in Oslo say that
- b. Þeir sem **í Ósló** hafa verið segja að ... (PP fronting)
those that in Oslo have been say that
- c. *Þeir sem **það** hafa verið í Ósló segja að ... (Expl.)
those that there have been in Oslo say that
'Those who have been in Oslo say that ...'

A comparison of the (a) examples indicates that some subject gaps can be left empty while others preferably need to be filled. Sentences (28b) and (29b) are typical examples of SF. The (c) examples show that SF is not always open to expletive insertion. Example (30b) features SF-like movement of an XP within an embedded clause containing a subject gap.

Stylistic Fronting has been discussed extensively in the syntactic literature, but the kinds of data that are taken to be representative of SF vary from paper to paper. Some linguists regard all fronting in clauses containing a subject gap as SF (e.g. Holmberg 2000, Hrafnbjargarson 2004). Others suggest that only head movement should count as SF (e.g. Holmberg and Platzack 1995; Jónsson 1991; Poole 1992, 1996; Thráinsson 1993). Yet others consider SF and topicalization to be one and the same phenomenon (Rögnvaldsson and Thráinsson 1990). Finally, SF has also been analyzed as an instant of remnant movement (Müller 2004, Franco 2009, Ott 2009, 2016): the apparent heads moved by SF are analyzed as phrases that have been emptied of all material except for the head (for a more detailed discussion on various approaches to SF, see Angantýsson 2011:145–183; Holmberg 2006; Thráinsson 2007: 341–393). Consequently, the results concerning the nature of SF and its structural properties vary substantially. In my discussion here, I use the term SF in a broad sense and include “borderline cases” of SF and Topicalization such as (30b).

Table 4 shows what kind of judgements SF received in *that*-clauses, indirect questions and relative clauses (Overview questionnaire III, see Thráinsson and Angantýsson 2015):

Table 4: Stylistic Fronting in different types of embedded clauses

	%Youngest group (261 informants)			%Oldest group (159 informants)		
	OK	?	*	OK	?	*
(31) Allir vissu þó að stolið hafði verið everybody knew though that stolen had been skjávörpum some projectors 'Everybody knew though that some projectors had been stolen'	49.2	27.3	23.5	53.5	21.7	24.5
(32) Hún spurði hvort rætt hefði verið she asked whether talked had been við Helgu to Helga 'She asked if Helga had been talked to'	59.5	21	19.5	85.4	8.9	5.7
(33) Þetta er eitt af þeim vandamálum this is one of the problems sem upp hafa komið that up has come 'This is one of the problems that have emerged'	59.8	22.4	17.8	91.1	5.7	3.2
(34) Þetta er frumvarp this is a parliamentary proposal sem lagt hefur verið fram á Alþingi that put has been forth at Alþingi' 'This is a parliamentary proposal that has been propounded at Alþingi'	64.5	18.1	17.4	92.4	4.4	3.2
(35) Þeir sem erfiðustu ákvarðanirnar those who the most difficult decisions tóku voru ekki öfundsverðir made were not enviable 'She asked if Helga had been talked to'	30	31,2	38.8	85.9	8,3	5,8
(36) Þeir sem erfiðustu verkin those who the most difficult work höfðu unnið hættu þó fyrr had done stopped earlier 'However, those who had done the most difficult work quit earlier'	28,1	27,3	44.6	59.9	21	19,1

Overall, the acceptance rate of unambiguous examples of SF (31–34) is relatively high. However, the acceptance ratio of the youngest group is significantly lower than that of the oldest group. Among the oldest speakers, SF is much more degraded in complement clauses than in other clause types. The oldest group also responded positively to XP fronting in relative clauses with a main verb in the finite position (35), but less so if there was an auxiliary in the clause (33). While the majority of the adolescents fully accept unambiguous instances of SF (31–34), the most commonly given response for XP fronting in relative clauses (35–36) was “ungrammatical”. The acceptance rate of examples (35–36) among the adolescents was similar to that of ET in *that*-clauses as shown in section 3.2. Among the oldest speakers, the fronting of a past participle in a subjectless impersonal passive had a higher acceptance ratio in complement clauses (31) than in indirect questions (30). The different conditions for SF in different clause types will become clearer in the following discussion.

Since it has sometimes been proposed that the function of SF (as well as expletive insertion) is to fill subject gaps (cf. Holmberg 2000), it is interesting to chart the extent to which it is possible to leave the subject position empty. Table 5 presents examples for impersonal passives:

Table 5: Subject gap in *that*-clauses

	%Youngest group (261 informants)			%Oldest group (159 informants)		
	OK	?	*	OK	?	*
(37) Eigendurnir segja að hafi verið the owners say that has been unnin skemmdarverk committed sabotage 'The owners say that some sabotage has been committed'	34.8	29.3	35.9	25.6	25	49.4
(38) Í blöðunum segir að hafi verið in the newspapers says that have been bjargað þremur sjómönnum saved three fishermen 'In the newspapers it is reported that three fisherman have been saved'	37.7	26.5	35.8	3.8	18,5	77.7
(39) Allir vissu að hafði verið stolið everyone knew that had been stolen skartgripum some jewelry 'Everybody knew that some projectors had been stolen'	33	27.2	39.8	12,8	26.3	60.9

All these examples receive rather negative judgements, especially among the oldest speakers. A comparison of (39) and (31) shows that both age-groups prefer SF over a subject gap.

Table 6 presents examples of subject gaps (\emptyset) and Expletive Insertion (Expl) in indirect questions and *that*-clauses whose *wh*-objects have been extracted (Overview questionnaire II, see Thráinsson and Angantýsson 2015):

Table 6: Subject gap and expletive insertion in indirect questions and extraction environments

	%Youngest group (261 informants)			%Oldest group (159 informants)		
	OK	?	*	OK	?	*
(40) Þau vita ekki <u>hvort</u> hafa verið Ø they know not whether have been rottur undir gólfinu rats under the floor 'They don't know if there have been rats under the floor'	27.4	23.6	49	17.9	25.6	56.4
(41) Þau vissu ekki <u>hvort</u> það væru Expl they knew not whether EXPL were kominir gestir arrived guests 'They didn't know if any guests had arrived'	76.4	17.4	6.2	70.1	14	15.9
(42) Hvern hélst þú <u>að</u> hefði verið Ø who thought you that had been talað við talked to 'Who did you think that had been talked to?'	48.2	24.9	26.8	58.5	21.4	20.1
(43) Hvaða máli hélst þú <u>að</u> það Expl which matter thought you that EXPL hefði verið sagt frá had been told about 'Which matter did you think that had been reported?'	48.8	29.5	21.7	28.9	26.3	44.7

In the indirect questions in (40–43), most speakers strongly prefer expletive insertion to subject gap and there is no significant difference between the age-groups in this respect. In the extraction constructions in (42–43), the youngest speakers show no strong preferences between the two versions while the oldest group prefers leaving the subject position empty to inserting the expletive.

In Table 7, there are examples of a subject gap and expletive insertion in temporal clauses with a weather predicate, and a relative clause with no insertion or fronting (Overview questionnaire III, see Thráinsson and Angantýsson 2015):

Table 7: Subject gap and Expletive Insertion in temporal clauses and relative clauses

	%Youngest group (261 informants)			%Oldest group (159 informants)		
	OK	?	*	OK	?	*
	(44) Það breytist þegar fer að rigna Ø it changes when starts to rain 'It changes when it starts to rain'	65	18.5	16.5	90.6	5.7
(45) Þær verða opnaðar þegar það Expl they will be opened when EXPL fer að snjóa starts to snow 'They will open when it starts to snow'	84.9	7.3	7.7	67.7	19.6	12.7
(46) Það er mál sem hefur verið Ø this is a matter that has been mikið rætt um á kaffistofunni much discussed in the coffee room 'It is a matter that has been much discussed in the coffee room'	60.1	23.3	16.7	65.2	21.5	13.3

The option of “leaving a subject gap” in temporal clauses (44) scores very highly among the oldest speakers, whereas inserting an expletive in such clauses (45) does not get judged as positively – in the youngest group, the situation is reversed. These results can be interpreted as showing a tendency towards an increased use of the expletive in Icelandic. The relative clause (46) received quite positive judgements in both age groups although the oldest speakers accepted comparable sentences with SF to a higher extent.

In section 6.4.2, we will come back to some comparative issues regarding stylistic fronting and related constructions in Icelandic, Faroese, and Övdalian.

4 Embedded V3

4.1 Introduction

As mentioned in section 2, the different word order in embedded clauses in Icelandic on the one hand and the Mainland Scandinavian languages on the other hand is a widely discussed issue in the literature:

- (47) a. Ég spurði hvort Jón **hefði ekki** séð myndina (Icel.)
I asked if John had not seen movie-the
'I asked if John had not seen the movie'
- b.?*Ég spurði hvort Jón **ekki hefði** séð myndina (Icel.)
I asked if John not had seen movie-the
- c.*Jag frågade om Jon **hade inte** sett filmen (Swed.)
I asked if John had not seen movie-the
- d. Jag frågade om Jon **inte hade** sett filmen (Swed.)
I asked if John not had seen movie-the
'I asked if John had not seen the movie'

This syntactic difference has frequently been connected with the different degrees of verbal morphological inflection in these languages. It is a common assumption that the verb moves into IP/TP in Icelandic in order to check morphological features but stays in situ in the VP in the Mainland Scandinavian languages (see for instance Angantýsson 2007, 2011; Bobaljik and Thráinsson 1998; Holmberg and Platzack 1995; Jonas 1996; Koenenman and Zeijlstra 2014; Thráinsson, 2003, 2010, and references there).

Even though the finite verb usually precedes a sentence adverb in Icelandic, the adverb can precede the verb in some embedded clauses as shown in (48–49):⁶

- (48) a. Það er ein íslensk mynd sem Haraldur **hefur ekki** séð
 there is one Icelandic movie that Harold has not seen
 b. (?)Það er ein íslensk mynd sem Haraldur **ekki hefur** séð
 there is one Icelandic movie that Harold not has seen
 c. Það er ein íslensk mynd sem hann **ekki hefur** séð
 there is one Icelandic movie that he not has seen
 ‘There is one Icelandic movie that Harold/he has not seen’
- (49) a. Ég veit hvaða mynd Haraldur **hefur ekki** séð
 I know what movie Harold has not seen
 b. Ég veit hvaða mynd Haraldur **ekki hefur** séð
 I know which movie Harold not has seen
 c. Ég veit hvaða mynd hann **ekki hefur** séð
 I know which movie he not has seen
 ‘I know which movie Harold/he has not seen’

The word order as illustrated in (48a) and (49a) is definitely the unmarked one, but as seen from the remaining examples, the V3 order is also possible. Examples (48b) and (49b), with a proper noun in the subject position, are slightly marked as opposed to (48c) and (49c) which have unstressed pronouns as subjects.⁷

⁶ For a thorough discussion of the distribution and stigmatization of embedded V3 in older Icelandic, especially in the 19th century, see Viðarsson 2016.

⁷ The relevant adverbs in my discussion on subject-initial embedded V2/V3 are pre-VP sentence adverbs, i.e. adverbs that precede the VP and cannot follow it when there is an auxiliary in the clause. The temporal adverbs *aftur* ‘again’ and *aldrei* ‘never’ behave differently in this respect:

- (ii) a. María hafði **aftur** séð Jón
 Mary had again seen John
 ‘Mary had seen John again’
 b. María hafði **aldrei** séð Jón
 Mary had never seen John
 ‘Mary had never seen John’
 c. María hafði séð Jón **aftur**
 Mary had seen John again
 ‘Mary had seen John again’
 d. *María hafði séð Jón **aldrei**
 Mary had seen John never
 ‘Mary had never seen John’

The examples in (ii) show that both the adverbs can precede the non-finite verb but only *aftur* can follow it.

In the following subsections, I focus on the results from the IceDiaSyn questionnaires regarding subject-initial V3 (Thráinsson et al. 2013, 2015, 2016). As before, the discussion is restricted to the results from the oldest and youngest age-groups.

4.2 V3 in various types of embedded clauses

Table 8 presents the results for subject-initial V3 in *that*-clauses and indirect questions in Icelandic (IceDiaSyn – Overview questionnaire III):

Table 8: Subject-initial V3 in *that*-clauses and indirect questions

	%Youngest group (261 informants)			%Oldest group (159 informants)		
	OK	?	*	OK	?	*
(50) Kennarinn segir að Haraldur ekki hafi teacher-the says that Harold not has lesið bókina read book-the 'The teacher says that Harold has not read the book'	27.4	15.1	57.9	15.3	8.3	76.4
(51) Hann spurði hvort hún alltaf hefði sungið falskt he asked whether she always had sung falsely 'He asked whether she had always sung falsely'	19.8	16.3	64	16.7	12.8	70.5
(52) Hann spurði hvort þeir aldrei hefðu he asked whether they never had borðað svið eaten sheep heads 'He asked whether they never had eaten sheep heads'	14.2	20.3	65.5	8.9	9.6	81.5
(53) Þeir spurðu hvort hann aldrei færi í bað They asked whether he never took a bath 'They asked whether he never took a bath'	18.8	21.9	59.2	7.6	15.8	76.6
(54) Kennarinn spurði hverja hann ekki vildi teacher-the asked who he not wanted leika við to play with 'The teacher asked who he didn't want to play with'	29.8	20.5	49.6	16.7	25.6	57.7

In general, the V3 order gets rather negative judgements. Interestingly, the youngest group is more positive than the oldest group towards the Adv-Vfin order. This could be taken as an indication of ongoing change in Icelandic toward the Mainland Scandinavian word order.

Table 9 shows what kind of judgements subject-initial V3 received in adverbial clauses (Overview questionnaire III):

Table 9: Subject-initial V3 in adverbial clauses

	%Youngest group (261 informants)			%Oldest group (159 informants)		
	OK	?	*	OK	?	*
	(55) Vala tók bókina svo að Haraldur ekki gat Vala took book-the so that Harold not could lesið hana read it 'Vala took the book so Harold couldn't read it'	8.4	11.9	79.7	6.3	12.7
(56) Hann lagði prófið fyrir þótt nemendurnir he propounded the test though students-the ekki hefðu lesið bókina not had read book-the 'He propounded the test even though the students had not read the book'	32.2	20.9	46.9	21	16.6	62.4
(57) Henni líður miklu betur þegar hann ekki mætir she feels much better when he not shows up 'She feels much better when he does not show up'	21.3	27.1	51.6	26	28.6	45.5
(58) Það er leiðinlegt þegar formaðurinn ekki mætir It is bad when director-the not shows up 'It is bad when the director does not show up'	20.4	35.4	44.2	36.8	28.4	34.8

The youngest group is more positive than the oldest group towards the Adv-Vfin order in adverbial clauses conjoined with *þótt* 'though' (56) which is the same situation as in *that*-clauses and indirect questions. In adverbial clauses conjoined with *þegar* 'when' (52–53), there is no substantial difference between the age-groups.

Table 10 presents the results for relative clauses (also from Overview questionnaire III):

Table 10: Subject-initial V3 in relative clauses

	%Youngest group (261 informants)			%Oldest group (159 informants)		
	OK	?	*	OK	?	*
	(59) Ég veit bara um eina mynd sem hann ekki sá I know only of one movie that he not saw 'I only know of one movie that he did not see'	31.5	25.7	42.8	41.6	24.7
(60) En það sem hann ekki sagði skipti meira máli but what that he not said mattered more 'But what he did not say mattered more'	34.1	32.2	33.7	55.7	20.9	23.4

Here the situation is reversed: The oldest group is more positive towards the Adv-Vfin order than the youngest group ("a natural sentence" is the most commonly given response).

Table 11 presents examples of Adv-Vfin order as well as the (default) Vfin-Adv order, for comparison (Overview questionnaire II – the sentence pairs where not adjacent in the questionnaire):

Table 11: Comparison of V2 and V3 in subject-initial embedded clauses

	%Youngest group (359 informants)			%Oldest group (185 informants)		
	OK	?	*	OK	?	*
(61) Ég held <u>að</u> Anna hafi ekki lesið bókina I think that Anna had not read book-the 'I think that Anne has not read the book'	91.4	4	4.6	98.4	1.6	0
(62) Ég held <u>að</u> Stebbi ekki hafi þvegið gólfíð I think that Stebbi not has washed floor-the 'I think that Steve not has washed the floor'	29.6	4.8	65.5	14.8	2.7	82.5
(63) Hún spurði <u>hvort</u> þeir hefðu alltaf verið she asked whether they had always been 'She asked whether they had always been afraid of flying'	83.8	9.7	6.6	89.6	7.1	3.3
(64) Hún spurði <u>hvort</u> þeir alltaf hefðu verið she asked whether they always had been hræddir við mýs afraid of mice 'She asked whether they always had been afraid of mice'	20.5	6.6	72.9	7.7	4.9	87.4
(65) Þar var alls konar matur <u>sem</u> henni there was all kind food that she líkaði ekki liked not 'There was all kind of food that she liked not'	73	15	12	84.5	9	6.5
(66) Þar var margt fólk <u>sem</u> hann ekki þekkti there were many people who he not knew 'There were many people there who he not knew'	27.8	22.5	49.7	47.8	25.5	26.6

Most speakers accept the V_{fin}-Adv order as expected. Regarding the Adv-V_{fin} order, the pattern is similar to what was shown in tables 8 and 9. In the *that*-clause (62) and the indirect question (64), the V3 order scores relatively higher among the younger speakers than among the older informants, while the reverse situation holds in relative clauses.⁸

5 Comparative issues

5.1 V2 and V3 in subject-initial clauses

Table 12 summarizes Angantýsson's (2011) results for V_{fin}-Adv (V2) and Adv-V_{fin} (V3) orders in three different types of embedded clauses in the Icelandic (from IceDiaSyn), Faroese (48 informants), Övdalian (52 informants) and Western-Jutlandic (24 informants). In order to make the comparison easier, only the figures for fully accepted sentences (OK) are shown:

⁸ In the interviews conducted in connection with the IceDiaSyn project (including the pilot study), it turned out that the Adv-V_{fin} order was considered better if the sentence adverb was stressed (the examples were from relative clauses) (see Thráinsson and Angantýsson 2015).

Table 12: Comparison of the acceptability of verb/adverb placement in different types of embedded clauses in Icelandic, Faroese, Övdalian and Western-Jutlandic

	Complements of predicates A, B, E		Complements of predicates C, D (not tested in Icelandic)		Relative clauses	
	Vfin-Adv	Adv-Vfin	Vfin-Adv	Adv-Vfin	Vfin-Adv	Adv-Vfin
Icelandic (youngest group)	91%	29%			73%	31%
Icelandic (oldest group)	98%	15%			85%	48%
Faroese	62%	90%	21%	98%	23%	94%
Övdalian	52%	69%	30%	82%	32%	85%
Western Jutlandic	28%	89%	13%	92%	13%	100%

The contrast between Icelandic and Western-Jutlandic is very clear and in accordance with the standard view that in Icelandic the Vfin-Adv order is the default one in all clause types, while the Adv-Vfin order is the default in all clause types in Mainland Scandinavian. The acceptance of the exceptional Adv-Vfin order in Icelandic depends heavily on clause type. In Western-Jutlandic, it was expected that complements of predicates A, B and E would most easily allow the exceptional Vfin-Adv order. However, it was found that complements of such predicates only allowed this order slightly more frequently than other clause types. The standard view is that Faroese and Övdalian lie somewhere between the two poles of Icelandic and Western-Jutlandic with respect to word order in embedded clauses. Faroese appears to be very similar to Western-Jutlandic with respect to Adv-Vfin order, having this as the unmarked word order in all clause types. The main difference between Faroese and Western-Jutlandic lies in the acceptance of the Vfin-Adv order in complements of assertive predicates, where Faroese scores much higher than Western-Jutlandic.⁹ This difference is unexpected under a pure “assertion analysis” of verb movement in complement clauses in languages like Faroese and Danish (see discussions in Heycock et al. 2012 and Angantýsson 2016). In Övdalian, Adv-Vfin is the unmarked word order in all clause types except for indirect questions, where the Vfin-Adv order scores higher (not shown here, see Angantýsson 2015). The acceptance of Vfin-Adv in Övdalian is also quite high in complements of predicates A, B and E. Thus, Faroese and Övdalian can be viewed as much closer to Mainland Scandinavian than Icelandic with respect to verb placement in embedded clauses.

⁹ Heycock et al. (2012: 566) compare the frequencies of V2 and V3 in 353 embedded clauses in Faroese and 316 embedded clauses in Danish (newspaper texts in both cases) and show that the frequency of the finite verb preceding the negation is 41% in Faroese complement clauses, whereas in Danish complement clauses it is only 1%. Furthermore, they show, for instance, that the frequency of the finite verb preceding the negation is 35% in Faroese adverbial clauses conjoined with *svo* ‘so’ + adjective/adverb + *að* ‘that’ (*svo skammarlegt að hann vildi ekki tala um það* ‘so embarrassing that he would not talk about it’), but in Danish there were no examples of the V2-order order in such clauses. In the research project “Syntactic variation in Faroese” (Thráinsson 2015) it also turned out that more than 50% of the informants accepted the V2-order in a conditional clause and more than one third accepted it in a concessive clause.

5.2 Embedded topicalization

Table 13 presents a simplified overview of Angantýsson's (2011) questionnaire results regarding embedded topicalization in Icelandic, Faroese, Övdalian and Western-Jutlandic. A plus sign symbolizes positive reactions and a minus sign symbolizes negative reactions. If both symbols are given it means that there is variation and the first symbol represents the more general reaction. If only one symbol is given it means that there was relatively little variation. An empty box means that the clause type in question was not tested:

Table 13: An overview of the acceptability of embedded topicalization in different types of embedded clauses in Icelandic, Faroese, Övdalian and Western-Jutlandic

	Icel.	Far.	Övdal.	West.- Jutl.
Embedded Topicalization				
<i>that</i> -clauses with predicates of types A, B and E	+/-	+	+/-	+/-
<i>that</i> -clauses with predicates of types C and D	-/+	-	-/+	-/+
Indirect questions	-	-	-	-
Adverbial clauses		-	-	-
Relative clauses	-	-	-	-

The four languages behave similarly with respect to Embedded Topicalization: ET is only generally accepted in *that*-clauses that are complements of predicates A, B and E. Faroese is the “best-behaved” language in terms of Hooper and Thompson’s (1973) classification of predicates with respect to ET as it was also with respect to V_{fin}-Adv order.

In (67–71) there are some claims from the literature about the empirical situation regarding Embedded Topicalization in the Scandinavian languages:

- (67) Topicalization is more easily or widely accepted in embedded clauses in Icelandic than in the Mainland Scandinavian languages (Holmberg and Platzack 1995: 78-79; Magnússon 1990; Rögnvaldsson and Thráinsson 1990; Vikner 1995: 72).
- (68) Embedded Topicalization obeys similar restrictions in Icelandic to those in the Mainland Scandinavian languages (Jónsson 1996; Ottósson 1989; Wiklund et al. 2007, 2009).
- (69) There are two varieties with respect to ET in Icelandic. Speakers of variety A allow topicalization quite freely in embedded clauses except for temporal clauses and embedded clauses that contain a trace, while speakers of variety B allow ET only in the complements of bridge verbs (Jónsson 1996: 39).
- (70) In Icelandic, Topicalization in *that*-complements, including complements of non-assertive predicates like *efast um* ‘doubt’, is fine (Rögnvaldsson and Thráinsson 1990).
- (71) In both Icelandic and the Mainland Scandinavian languages Topicalization in complements of non-assertive predicates like *efast um* ‘doubt’ and factive predicates like *sjá eftir* ‘regret’ is bad or impossible (Bentzen et al. 2007).

The data discussed here (and in more detail in Angantýsson 2011, and Thráinsson et al. 2013, 2015, 2017) can be viewed as supporting (68) and (69) as opposed to (67), although it does not exclude the possibility that some speakers of Icelandic allow ET more widely than most

speakers of the Mainland Scandinavian languages do. The description in (70) is correct for many speakers of Icelandic (especially in the older group) and (71) is true for many speakers of Icelandic and probably for many speakers of the standard Mainland Scandinavian languages as well. However, (70) and (71) are too strong as descriptions of either “Icelandic” or “Mainland Scandinavian”. What this means is that there is considerable variation in the use and acceptance of embedded topicalization in complement clauses. The fact that younger speakers of Icelandic are less likely to accept (embedded) topicalization is particularly interesting. To my knowledge, it is not clear whether the other Scandinavian languages behave alike in this respect.

5.3 Stylistic fronting and expletive insertion

The linguistic variables involved in the discussion in 6.3.3 on stylistic fronting and related constructions involve many different types of fronted or inserted elements, different clause types and various kinds of subject gaps that affect the movement of elements within the sentence. Table 14 presents an overview of those parts of Angantýsson's (2011) questionnaire results that can be compared between languages.¹⁰

Table 14: A comparison of the acceptability of SF and related constructions in different types of embedded clauses in Icelandic, Faroese and Övdalian

	Icel.	Far.	Övdal.
Stylistic fronting (of past participles)			
<i>that</i> -clauses (impersonal passives)	+/-	+/-	-
Indirect questions (impersonal passives)	+		-
Relative clauses	+	+/-	-
Expletive insertion			
Temporal clauses (weather predicates)	+/-	+	+
Relative clauses		+	+
Subject gaps			
Temporal clauses (weather predicates)	+/-	-	
Relative clauses	+/-	-/+	+/-

In Icelandic and Faroese, SF was more widely accepted in relative clauses than in *that*-clauses. The Övdalian speakers completely rejected fronting of past participles in both clause types. In all languages, expletive insertion received a high score in temporal clauses with weather predicates. In Faroese and Övdalian, expletive insertion was also accepted in relative clauses, which was very different from the situation in Icelandic, where such insertion is bad (this was not tested in the IceDiaSyn project). Leaving the subject position empty in relative clauses was generally acceptable in Icelandic and, to a certain extent in Övdalian, while most speakers rejected it in Faroese. Most of the older speakers of Icelandic also accepted subject gaps in

¹⁰ As before, a plus symbolizes positive reactions and a minus symbolizes negative reactions. If both symbols are used it means that there is variation and the first symbol represents the more general reaction. If only one symbol is used it means that there was relatively little variation. An empty box means that the clause type in question was not tested.

temporal clauses with weather predicates while most of the Faroese speakers and many of the younger speakers of Icelandic rejected such examples.

The production data presented in Angantýsson (2011) showed that past participles are the most commonly fronted elements in Icelandic relative clauses while adverbs were the most commonly fronted elements in complement clauses. It also turns out that instances of SF are in many cases fixed idioms where the expected unmarked variant is doubtful or ungrammatical. The investigation of subject gaps and expletive insertion showed that the ‘importance’ of the expletive depends to a certain extent on the clause type. In *that*-clauses containing a postponed (indefinite) subject, it is difficult or impossible to leave the pre-verbal subject position empty while in indirect questions introduced with *hvort* ‘whether’, relative clauses, and various types of adverbial clauses expletive insertion seemed to be optional. An important result was that expletives and SF-elements are not always interchangeable, which is surprising if SF and expletive insertion are assumed to have the same function, i.e. to check an EPP feature (Holmberg 2000; see discussions in Angantýsson 2017).

6 Concluding remarks

Icelandic is a robust symmetric V2-language, meaning that it exhibits V2 as the default word order both in matrix and subordinate clauses. Various categories can occur in the first position, including the subject, object, *wh*-phrases, negation, expletive, adverbials, prepositional phrases, adjectives, participles and certain types of particles. Under certain circumstances, (apparently) more than one constituent can precede the finite verb. In general, preposing is easier in matrix clauses than in subordinate clauses, with the exception of stylistic fronting which is more easily applicable in embedded contexts.

As discussed in the paper, recent research has shown that the simple typological picture of the late 1990s is in reality much more articulated, in particular with respect to age-related variation. The fact that younger speakers of Icelandic do not accept embedded topicalization and SF to the same extent as older speakers could be interpreted as an ‘ongoing change’ in Icelandic. Nevertheless, it must be taken into account that these constructions are more common in the written language and in a formal style of speech, and that perhaps the older informants are more likely to accept more ‘ceremonious’ language use, even though they are asked to give judgements about what they themselves use in spoken language. The data from the interviews in the IceDiaSyn-project confirm that people consider these constructions formal and ‘sophisticated’ (Thráinsson and Angantýsson 2015). If the results regarding Adv-Vfin word order in Icelandic are taken to indicate an ‘ongoing change’, then there are two changes that must be recognized: In relative clauses the conditions for V3 are reminiscent of the conditions for Topicalization and SF (less accepted by younger people), while in complement-clauses V3 is more accepted by younger people than older (i.e. here it is an innovation). It is also interesting that the younger speakers in general are less willing than the older speakers to leave the subject position empty and, at the same time, more willing than the older speakers to insert the expletive. This is reminiscent of the situation in Faroese.

In Icelandic, embedded topicalization is generally accepted in *that*-clauses that are assertive complements of predicates A, B and E in Hooper and Thompson’s (1973) theory, but it receives less positive judgements in non-assertive complement clauses. For most speakers ET is excluded in relative clauses and indirect questions. For adverbial clauses, the

general picture is that they resist topicalization, apparently with the exception of peripheral adverbial clauses to some extent. This is very similar to the situation in Faroese, Övdalian and Western-Jutlandic.

There are interesting similarities and differences between SF and related constructions in Icelandic and Faroese. In both languages, expletive insertion is preferred over SF in complement clauses, but in Faroese, unlike in Icelandic, expletive insertion is preferred over SF in adverbial clauses and relative clauses as well. In most cases, fronting past participles is easy in Faroese, as it is in Icelandic, but fronting particles seems to be heavily restricted in Faroese, unlike in Icelandic. In Övdalian, all the examples of SF in Angantýsson's (2011) survey received very low overall scores. Those results are consistent with Garbacz's (2010) claim that SF is not productive in Övdalian any longer.

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