

# Investigating embedded V2 and/or V-to-I in Faroese

Caroline Heycock\*, Zakaris Hansen\*†, Antonella Sorace\*

\*University of Edinburgh, †Fróðskaparsetur Føroya

NORMS Workshop on Verb Placement  
Reykjavik, 26th January 2007

## 1 Questions about Faroese

### 1.1 Does Faroese still have V-to-I?

General assumption: Faroese has been moving in some respects from a grammar like that of present-day Icelandic (V2, and V-to-I) to one like that of the modern (standard) mainland Scandinavian languages (V2, but without V-to-I). (Vikner 1991, 1994, 1995, 1997, Jonas 1996, Bobaljik and Thráinsson 1998, Thráinsson 2001, 2003, Thráinsson et al. 2004).

- (1) Hetta er bókin, sum Biritia (ikki) hevur (ikki) lisið.  
this is the book that Biritia (NEG) has (NEG) read  
This is the book that Biritia has not read.

What is not so clear is how far along in this process of change the language has got.

### 1.2 Does Faroese have general or restricted V2?

- (2) a. Jón harmar að þessa bók skuli ég hafa lesið. (*Icelandic*)  
John regrets that this book shall I have read  
John regrets that I have read this book.  
b. \*Johan beklager at denne bog har jeg læst. (*Danish*, Vikner 1994)  
John regrets that this book have I read  
John regrets that I have read this book.

The question of whether Faroese is like Icelandic in this respect has received much less attention in the literature (but see Petersen et al. 1998, p. 320).

### 1.3 What is/are the nature of the variation?

Is V-to-I part of the competence grammar(s) of contemporary speakers of Faroese?

If some speakers are varying between two grammars, what exactly are those grammars?

## 2 Setting about looking for answers

Particular problems of gradience and variability in the data.

## 2.1 Comparison of frequency in text

### 2.1.1 Word order in different types of clauses in Faroese

A summary of Thráinsson's data from a number of texts produced by different speakers born in the 19th and 20th centuries, and the additional data from *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, translated by a speaker born in 1941.

Type of clause	Number of authors, grouped by date of birth							
	3, pre-1900		5, 1900–39		3, 1940–50		Total	
	V-Adv	Adv-V	V-Adv	Adv-V	V-Adv	Adv-V	V-Adv	Adv-V
+bridge v comp	18 (62%)	11	29 (97%)	1	12 (80%)	3	59 (80%)	15
-bridge v comp	4 (33%)	8	10 (45%)	12	2 (22%)	7	16 (37%)	27
Adv clause	17 (55%)	14	36 (59%)	25	6 (21%)	23	59 (49%)	62
Ind qu	3 (60%)	2	3 (38%)	5	0 (0%)	2	6 (40%)	9
Relative	1 (14%)	6	5 (45%)	6	0 (0%)	7	6 (24%)	19

Table 1: Frequency of different orders of finite verb and adverb in different types of embedded clauses in some 19th & 20th century texts. From Thráinsson 2003, p. 176

Type of clause	V-Neg	Neg-V
+bridge v comp	21 (75%)	7
-bridge v comp	2 (33%)	4
Adj comp	1 (14%)	6
Extent	8 (80%)	2
Adv clause	1 (6%)	15
Ind qu	0 (0%)	2
Relative	0 (0%)	27
Not categorised	1 (25%)	3
Total	34 (34%)	66

Table 2: V-Neg and Neg-V order in subordinate clauses in *Harry Potter og Vitramannasteinurin*, excluding *because* clauses

The strength of support that this gives for V-to-I in the youngest group depends partly on the availability of V2 in nonbridge verb complements (and also the status of the adverbial clauses).

The very high rate of of the V-Neg order in bridge verb complements is striking: 77% (33/43) for the speakers born after 1940 in this small sample.

### 2.1.2 Comparison with Danish

Type of clause	Faroese		Danish	
	V-Neg	Neg-V	V-Neg	Neg-V
+bridge v comp	21 (75%)	7	0 (0%)	19
-bridge v comp	2 (33%)	4	0 (0%)	4
Adj comp	1 (14%)	6	0 (0%)	5
Extent	8 (80%)	2	0 (0%)	4
Adv clause	1 (6%)	15	0 (0%)	7
Ind qu	0 (0%)	2	0 (0%)	1
Relative	0 (0%)	27	0 (0%)	18
Not categorised	1 (25%)	3	0 (0%)	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>34 (34%)</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>0 (0%)</b>	<b>62</b>

Table 3: V-Neg and Neg-V order in subordinate clauses, excluding *because* clauses, in Faroese and Danish translations of the same text

### 2.1.3 Getting an independent measure for embedded V2

Type of clause	Faroese		Danish		<i>Icelandic</i>	
	Other	Subject	Other	Subject	<i>Other</i>	<i>Subject</i>
Main	101 (18%)	453	109 (19%)	450	97 (17%)	472
+bridge v comp	6 (11%)	51	2 (5%)	42	8 (19%)	34
-bridge v comp	0 (0%)	12	0 (0%)	19	1 (17%)	5

Table 4: Word order in Faroese, Danish (and Icelandic)

We can use the ratio of non-subject initial orders in main clauses, together with the number of non-subject initial orders in bridge-verb complements, to estimate the number of complements to bridge verbs that are instances of V2. How do these estimates compare with the frequencies of V-Neg order in these clauses?

Bridge verb complements	Faroese	Danish
V2 (estimated)	58%	24%
Verb-Neg order	75%	0%

Table 5: Word order in bridge verb complements

So: thinking of the questions that we started with:

- We have some direct evidence from texts for the persistence of V-to-I in Faroese, namely the occurrence of V-Neg orders in adverbial clauses in Thráinsson’s data for the youngest speakers.
- We also have some indirect evidence, namely the high frequency of this order in bridge verb complements.
- As we don’t know whether V2 is possible in Faroese in the complements to non-bridge verbs, we don’t know whether the cases of V-Neg order in this environment are attributable to V2 or to V-to-I.

## 2.2 Grammaticality judgments

### 2.2.1 Pilot study 1: Negation in different types of clause

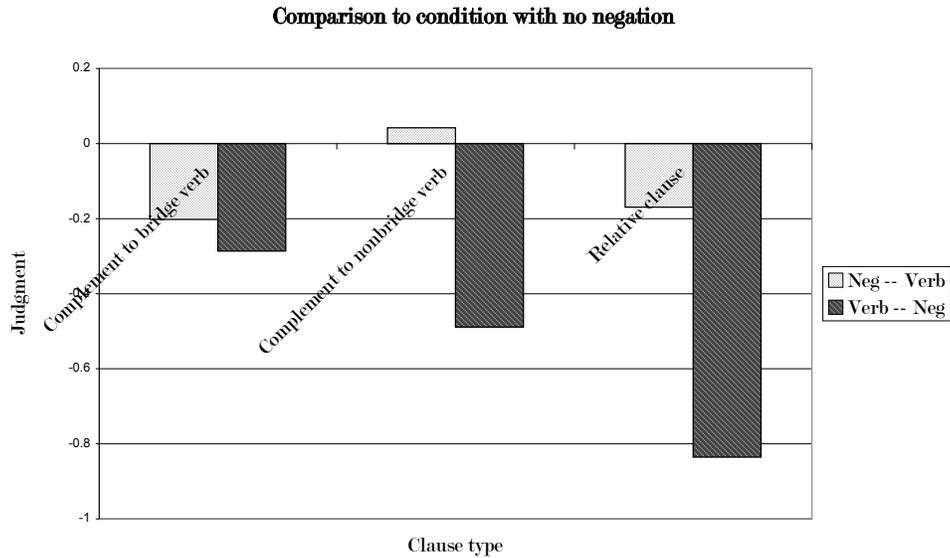
Magnitude Estimation to get at grammaticality judgments.

24 native speakers from Tórshavn and Suðuroy.

9 different conditions: two crossed variables each with 3 values. Three different clause types: complement to a bridge verb, complement to a nonbridge verb, and relative. In each of these types three different possibilities with respect to negation: no negation at all, negation before the verb, and the verb before negation:

- (3) Gunnar helt, at Julius (ikki) fór (ikki) at siga nei.  
Gunnar thinks that Julius (NEG) will (NEG) INF say no  
Gunnar thinks that Julius will (not) say no.
- (4) Tey harmast um, at hann (ikki) fekk (ikki) brævið.  
they regret that he (NEG) got (NEG) the letter  
They regret that he (didn’t) got the letter.
- (5) Okkurt hendi hasa náttina, sum han (ikki) hevði (ikki) væntað.  
something happened that night that he (NEG) had (NEG) expected  
Something happened that night that he had (not) expected.

In looking at the results, we can compare a “control” case for each clause type—a complement to a bridge verb, a complement to a nonbridge verb, and a relative clause—in which there is no negation, with the two related clauses with negation in each of the two possible placements:



Note however that even the “bad” cases are significantly better than straightforwardly ungrammatical sentences:

- (6) \*Hon rætti hana tallerkin, ið hevði borðinum staðið á leingi.  
 she reached her the plate that had the table stood on long  
 She handed her the plate that had stood on the table for a long time.
- (7) \*Julius visti nakað um Stefan, sum honum vildi hann fortelja.  
 Julius knew something about Stefan that him wanted he tell  
 Julius knew something about Stefan that he wanted to tell him.

### 2.2.2 Pilot study 2: Negatives, adverbs, and embedded V2

A more direct approach to the question of whether Faroese allows “general embedded V2,” or more specifically V2 in non-bridge verb complements: (very) recent pilot carried out by Zakaris Hansen.

17 subjects of different ages (5 18/19, 8 between 34 and 46, 4 in their early 70s).

As well as “true” fillers (13 grammatical, 13 ungrammatical), they were asked for judgments on two sets of sentences types. The first set consisted of four different types of clauses, with both subject-initial and non-subject initial orders: main clauses, clauses occurring as the complement to a bridge verb (*siga* say), to a nonbridge verb (*harmast* regret, *viðganga*, *játta* admit), and to a verb introducing an indirect question, *spyrja* (ask). There were three different lexicalisations of each of these eight conditions.

(8) Matrix clause

- a. Sjúrdur og Pætur komu seint til arbeiðis í morgun.  
Sjúrdur and Peter came late to work this morning  
Sjúrdur and Peter were late for work this morning.
- b. Í dag komu bæði stjórin og varastjórin seint til arbeiðis.  
today came both the director and the vice director late to work  
Today both the director and vice director were late for work.

(9) Bridge verb complement

- a. Liv segði, at hon kom seint til arbeiðis í gjár.  
Liv said that she came late to work yesterday  
Liv said that she was late for work yesterday.
- b. Beinir segði, at í morgin kemur hann seint til arbeiðis.  
Beinir said that tomorrow comes he late to work  
Beinir said that tomorrow he would be late for work.

(10) Non-bridge verb complement

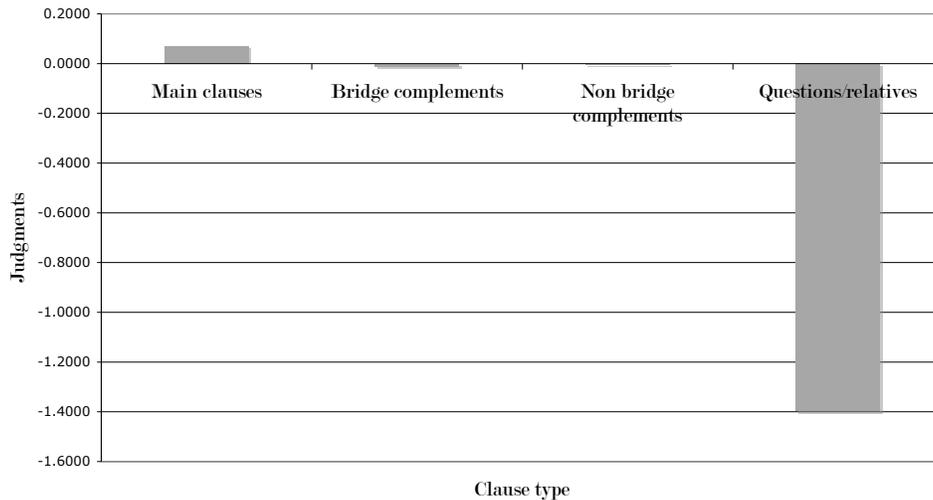
- a. Ása harmaðist, at hon kom so seint til arbeiðis í morgun.  
Ása regretted that she came so late to work this morning  
Ása regretted that she was so late for work this morning.
- b. Lærlingurin harmaðist, at í morgun kom hann ov seint til arbeiðis.  
the trainee regretted that this morning came he too late to work  
The trainee regretted that this morning he came too late to work.

(11) Indirect question

- a. Vikarurin spurdi, um næmingarnir koma seint í skúla hvønn dag.  
the substitute teacher asked if the pupils come late to school every day  
The substitute teacher asked if the pupils are late for school every day.
- b. Venjarin spurdi, um altíð koma spælarnir ov seint til venjing  
the coach asked if always come the players too late for training  
The coach asked if the players always come too late for training.

Similarly to before, we get the best understanding of the relative acceptability of the nonsubject initial orders by examining the difference between the judgments on this order (the (b) examples above) and the judgments on the subject-initial order (the (a) examples).

### Effects of Nonsubject V2



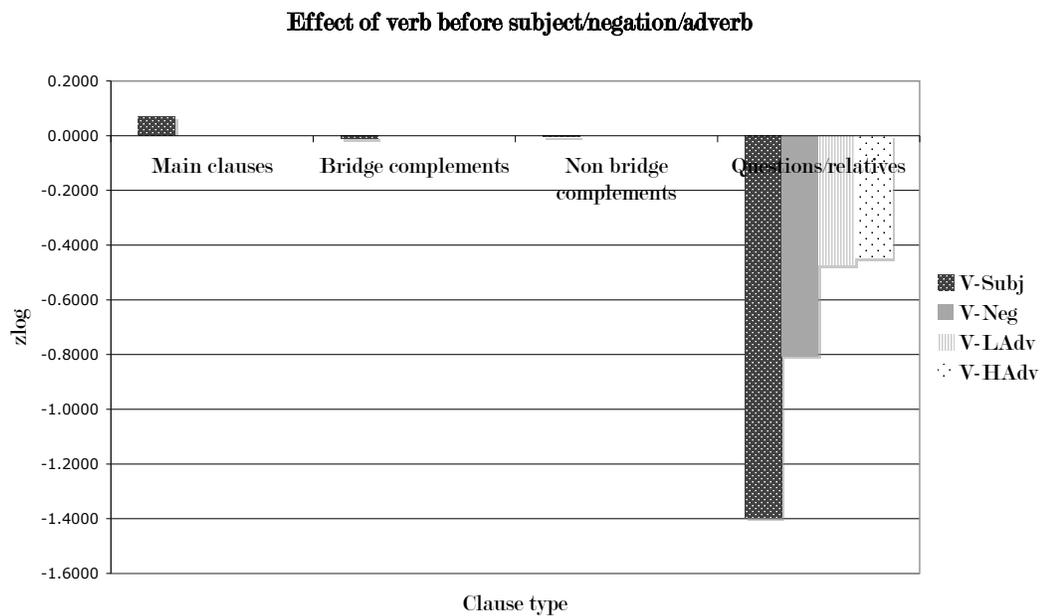
A second question: does Faroese behave like the Regional Northern Norwegian dialects reported in Bentzen 2005, 2006, Hróarsdóttir et al. 2006?

In the same experiment, a set of sentences containing the negative *ikki*, a “high” sentential adverb *kanska* (maybe), and a “low” adverb *ofta* (often); in each case there were two variants, one with the verb before the adverb/negation, and one with it after. Again there were three different lexicalisations of each case. Also, for comparison, there was one case without either adverb or negation.

- (12) Hetta er bókin, sum Birta hevur lisið.  
 this is the book that Birta has read  
 This is the book that Birta has read.
- (13) Negation
- a. Hetta er brævið, sum Elin ikki hevur lisið.  
 this is the letter that Elin NEG has read  
 This is the letter that Elin hasn't read.
- b. Hetta er filmurin, sum Hanus hevur ikki sæð.  
 that is the film that Hanus has NEG seen  
 That is the film that Hanus has not seen.
- (14) “Low” adverb
- a. Hetta er sangurin, sum Eivør ofta hevur sungið.  
 that is the song that Eivør often has sung  
 That is the song that Eivør has often sung.
- b. Hetta er lagið, sum Teitur hevur ofta spælt.  
 this is the melody that Teitur has often played  
 This is the melody that Teitur has often played.

- (15) “High” adverb
- a. Hatta er blaðið, sum Óluva kanska hefur lisið.  
 that is the magazine/paper that Óluva maybe has read  
 That is the magazine/paper that Óluva has maybe read.
  - b. Hetta er myndin, sum Tróndur hefur kanska málað.  
 this is the picture that Tróndur has maybe painted  
 This is the picture that Tróndur has maybe painted.

Again, we can look at the difference between the two conditions, with the different adverbs.



We need an analysis of the variance!

What are the poles of the alternation in Faroese? Hróarsdóttir et al. 2006:

- In Icelandic, the verb must precede negation not only in finite clauses, but also in control infinitives:

(16) Hon reyndi að koma ekki alltaf á réttum tíma í skólann.  
she tried to come not always on right time in school  
She tried to not always be on time at school.

- In Icelandic, even for speakers who in certain circumstances allow the verb to follow negation in a subordinate clause, it must either precede or follow *all* adverbs and negation:

(17) Hann spurði hvort hún (hafi) ekki (\*hafi) sennilega (\*hafi) oft (%hafi) sungið  
He asked whether she (has) NEG (\*has) probably (\*has) often (%has) sung  
falskt.  
out of tune  
He asked whether she has not probably often sung out of tune.

Faroese:

- (18) Hon royndi (ikki) at visa honum (\*ikki), at hon var ill.  
she tried (NEG) to show him (\*NEG) that she was angry  
She tried not to show him that she was angry.
- (19) Katrin ívast, um hann (hefur) ikki (hefur) møguliga (?hefur) ofta (hefur) sungið  
Katrín wonders if he (has) NEG (has) possibly (?has) often (has) sung  
sagin.  
the song  
Katrín wonders if he has not possibly often sung the song.

### 3 Closing remarks

- There is at least preliminary evidence that Faroese speakers allow V2 quite freely in the complement to non-bridge verbs.
- More work needs to be done to determine the grammar of V-to-I for contemporary speakers of Faroese.
- In Faroese the ordering of the verb with respect to negation in a finite and in a nonfinite clause appear to be distinct phenomena, in contrast to what has been claimed for Icelandic.

## References

- Bentzen, K. (2005) "What's the Better Move? On Verb Placement in Standard and Northern Norwegian," *Nordic Journal of Linguistics* 28:2, 153–188.
- Bentzen, K. (2006) "The degree of verb movement in embedded clauses in three varieties of Norwegian," ms., University of Tromsø., April 2006.
- Bobaljik, J., and H. Thráinsson (1998) "Two heads aren't always better than one," *Syntax* 1:1, 37–71.
- Hróarsdóttir, T., G. H. Hrafnbjargarson, A.-L. Wiklund, and K. Bentzen (2006) "The Tromsø Guide to Scandinavian Verb Movement," ms., University of Tromsø., July 2006.
- Jonas, D. (1996) *Clause Structure and Verb Syntax in Scandinavian and English*, Doctoral dissertation, Harvard University.
- Jonas, D. (2005) "Syntactic Variation and Change in Faroese," handout from the Workshop on Faroese Syntax, York University, March 2005.
- Kroch, A. (1989) "Reflexes of Grammar in Patterns of Language Change," *Language Variation and Change* 1.3.
- Kroch, A. (2000) "Syntactic Change," in M. Baltin and C. Collins, eds., *The Handbook of Contemporary Syntactic Theory*, Blackwell, Malden, MA, 629–739.
- Kroch, A., and A. Taylor (1993) "The Syntax of Verb Movement in Middle English: Dialect Variation and Language Contact," ms, University of Pennsylvania, July 1993.
- Petersen, H. (2000) "IP or TP in Modern Faroese," *Working Papers in Scandinavian Syntax* 66, 75–83.
- Petersen, H. P., J. í Lon Jacobsen, Z. S. Hansen, and H. Thráinsson (1998) "Faroese: An Overview for Students and Researchers," draft manuscript, Tórshavn and Reykjavik.
- Thráinsson, H. (2001) "Syntactic Theory for Faroese and Faroese for Syntactic Theory," in K. Braunmüller and J. í Lon Jacobsen, eds., *Moderne lingvistiske teorier og færøsk*, Novus, 89–124.
- Thráinsson, H. (2003) "Syntactic Variation, Historical Development, and Minimalism," chapter 4 in R. Hendrick, ed., *Minimalist Syntax*, Blackwell, Oxford, 152–191.
- Thráinsson, H., H. Petersen, J. í Lon Jacobsen, and Z. S. Hansen (2004) *Faroese: An Overview and Reference Grammar*, Faroese Academy of Sciences, Tórshavn.
- Vikner, S. (1991) "Finite Verb Movement in Scandinavian Embedded Clauses," paper presented at the Workshop on Verb Movement, University of Maryland, College Park.
- Vikner, S. (1994) "Finite Verb Movement in Scandinavian Embedded Clauses," in D. Lightfoot and N. Hornstein, eds., *Verb Movement*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 117–147.
- Vikner, S. (1995) *Verb Movement and Expletive Subjects in the Germanic Languages*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York.
- Vikner, S. (1997) "V<sup>0</sup>-til-I<sup>0</sup> flytning og personfleksion i alle tempora," *Íslenskt mál* 19–20, 85–132.