Verb Movement in Faroese: an Old Question and a New Project

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1 V-to-I and General Embedded V2: some background

1.1 V-to-I and its morphological correlates

To most syntacticians, perhaps the most salient question about Modern Faroese syntax is: Does it (still) exhibit V-to-I?

Why does it matter? Because this is a test case for the relation between **syntax** and **morphology**.

Rohrbacher 1999:

(1) rich agreement morphology ↔ V-to-I

(2) The Paradigm-Verb Raising Correlate: A language has V to I raising if and only if in at least one number of one tense of the regular verb paradigm(s), the person features [1st] and [2nd] are both distinctively marked.

A weaker (one-way) version from Roberts 1999:

(3) rich agreement morphology → V-to-I

A slightly different one-way implication from Bobaljik and Thráinsson 1998, Bobaljik 2002:

(4) distinct morphemes for agreement and tense → V-to-I

Alexiadou and Fanselow 2000: no synchronic implication at all.

(5) suffixal agreement morphology → V-to-I

(6) [Infl verb] [vP subject . . .]

(7) [Comp verb] [IP subject . . .]

A question: what, if anything, do these different theories predict about the trigger/course of change?

1.2 A potential confound: embedded V2

Subordinate syntax without a matrix context:

(8) At hann ikki skammaðist!
that he NEG shames
He should be ashamed of himself!

Matrix clause syntax in a subordinate clause:

(9) Sie sagte, wir sollten keine Bücher kaufen.
she said we should no books buy
She said that we should not buy any books.

(10) Sie sagte, dass wir keine Bücher kaufen sollten.
she said that we no books buy should
She said that we should not buy any books.

2 Faroese: in transition?

- Does Faroese still have V-to-I?
- Does Faroese have general or restricted V2?

3 Methods for looking at variable and gradient data

A methodological (and theoretical) problem: judgments in this area are GRADIENT and VARIABLE.

3.1 Comparison of frequency in text

3.1.1 Word order in different types of clauses in Faroese

First step: count the relative proportions of V-Neg and Neg-V orders in subordinate clauses.

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	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

Data for the youngest group suggest they may still have general V2 but may have lost V-to-I (but the *n* for the crucial cases is so low that this is not a safe conclusion).

Comparable data from novel translated from English into Faroese by a further speaker born 1941:

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

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

3.1.2 Comparison with Danish

Table 3: V-Neg and Neg-V order in subordinate clauses, in Faroese and 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
Total	34	(34%)	66	0	(0%)	62

3.1.3 Getting an independent measure for embedded V2

Table 4: Non-subject initial clauses in Faroese and Danish:

Type of clause	Faroese			Danish			*Icelandic*		
	Other		Subject	Other		Subject	*Other*		*Subject*
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	*0*	*(0%)*	*6*

So how many (bridge verb) complement clauses are V2?

Making a (no doubt) false assumption about lack of interaction,

(Main_Clauses/Non-Subject-Initial_MCs) = (V2_Subordinate_Clauses/Non-Subject-Initial_SCs)
so
V2_Subordinate_Clauses = (Main_Clauses/Non-Subject-Initial_MCs) × Non-Subject-Initial_SCs

Estimated number of embedded V2 in Faroese bridge verb complements:
(554/101)×6 = 33
Estimated rate of embedded V2 in Faroese bridge verb complements:
33:57 = 58%

Estimated number of embedded V2 in Danish bridge verb complements:
(559/109)×2 = 10
Estimated rate of embedded V2 in Danish bridge verb complements:
10:44 = 23%

3.2 Grammaticality judgments: a pilot study

A pilot study on Faroese using Magnitude Estimation (Bard, Robertson, and Sorace 1996). With respect to our particular question, different orders of negation tested in three different types of clause: complement to a bridge verb, complement to a nonbridge verb, and relative clause. Also the same contexts tested with no negation, to establish a control.

(11) 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.

(12) 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.

(13) 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.

Some results displayed in the graph on the next page entitled *Comparison of judgments*.

But a more perspicuous display of the relevant data is given on the following page in the graph entitled *Differences to no negation*.

But note also contrast with judgments on some other sentence types:

(14) *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.

(15) *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.

4 The new project

4.1 Aims

In September of this year we will be beginning a 3-year project funded by the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC). Our overall aim is to establish the status of verb movement in contemporary Faroese, in particular:

- Are there speakers who have V-to-I as a fully grammatical option?
- Is V-to-I only associated with exposure to written literature?
- Is there any correlation with age?
- Is there any correlation with dialect areas, as reported?

4.2 Methodology

- Main methodology: Magnitude Estimation, looking at judgments on V-to-I and its correlates.
- 3 age groups with this methodology: young adults (15–25), middle aged (40–55) and older (65+).
- 2 dialect areas: Tórshavn area and Southern

In order to determine the effect of exposure to written norms, we also plan to test pre-school children:

- Production and judgment tests for pre-school children
- Samples of parental language input to children

5 Conclusion

We are very open to suggestions about how to gain the maximum insight from this study, into Faroese, into syntactic variability and syntactic change, and into clausal syntax. We welcome your input!

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