INVERSION IN EMBEDDED CLAUSES IN MODERN ICELANDIC

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Word order in Icelandic prose is quite free, especially in main clauses. Although the most usual, or unmarked, word order in declarative sentences is subject + finite verb + . . . , almost any sentence constituent can be found in sentence-initial position. I call this phenomenon—the fronting of stressed elements of the predicate to sentence-initial position—*topicalization*.[1] Whatever the discourse function of topicalization may be, there is an obvious syntactic consequence: the finite verb must then be moved into second position through inversion with the subject noun phrase (NP), if any. I refer to this general feature of Icelandic word order as the *verb-second constraint* (V2).

In this article inverted word orders in Modern Icelandic prose are studied in order to test the generality of V2 as a principle of Icelandic word order. This study is limited to embedded clauses, where V2 applies most generally. The article is organized as follows. In section 1, I argue for a general principle of what counts as second position, particularly in questions and relative clauses. In section 2, I look at examples of inversion and argue for a distinction between two kinds of fronting processes, topicalization and another kind of movement referred to as *stylistic fronting*. I argue that stylistic fronting, unlike topicalization, applies only in clauses containing a subject gap, and that this kind of fronting can therefore be viewed as a generalization of V2 to clauses that would otherwise begin with the finite verb. In section 3, this subject-gap condition on stylistic fronting is shown to provide an argument for the existence of oblique subjects.

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Finally, in section 4, various conditions on what can precede the finite verb are discussed, including conditions on the use of the dummy *það*, and on the occurrence of unfilled subject gaps.

1. DEFINING SECOND POSITION

Topicalization in main clauses in Icelandic is fairly common. One study of Icelandic word order, Kossuth (1978), reported that, on the average, 20% of declarative sentences in Modern Icelandic prose begin with an element other than the subject. Topicalization in embedded clauses is much less frequent. However, it is by no means true that only subjects can precede the finite verb in embedded clauses, as has often been asserted.[2] An example of topicalization in an embedded clause is given in (1); the topicalized object NP is in boldface type.

(1)   *Sigga Ólina mundi   vel eftir því, að **Brynjólf**   hafði hún*
        Sigga Olina remembered well after it, that Brynjólf (ACC) had   she
          oft   og   mörgum sinnum getað   fengið.
          often and many   times   been-able-to get.
        'Sigga Ólina remembered well that she had time and again been able to get
        Brynjólf (as a husband).'

<div align="right">(Gestur Pálsson, "Tilhugalíf," Ch. 5)</div>

Note that the finite verb is in second position in the embedded clause, as indicated by the numbering. V2 applies equally to both main and embedded clauses in Icelandic.[3] First position for the finite verb (V1) is typically reserved for main clauses, namely, for direct questions, imperatives, and the so-called narrative style characteristic of Icelandic. In embedded clauses, the finite verb comes first in conditional sentences without the conjunction *ef*. Ignoring such conditionals, let us explore the hypothesis that V2 holds without exception in embedded clauses in Icelandic.[4]

Of course, in order to determine the position of the finite verb, we need to know where the embedded clause begins: what counts as first position? Consider the examples in (2).

(2)   a. *Þeir sögðu, að amma   hefði ekki lesið bókina.*
      they said   that grandma had   not read the-book.

<div align="right">(Haugen, 1976:84)</div>

      b. *Ég vissi aldrei, hvort   hann kæmi   eða ekki.*
        I   knew never   whether he   would-come or   not

      c. *Þeir vissu, hvern amma   hafði hitt í   bænum.*
        they knew whom grandma had   met in town

$$\overset{}{}\quad\overset{1}{}\quad\overset{2}{}\quad\overset{3}{}$$

                     1   2 3

d. *Maðurinn, sem amma   hafði hitt í bænum, heitir   Pétur.*

   the-man   that grandma had   met in town   is-named Peter

As indicated by the numbering, the subject NP counts as first position. Conjunctions such as *að* 'that' and *hvort* 'whether' are ignored, that is, they are considered to be outside the embedded clause. The same principle usually applies to interrogative pronouns such as *hvern* 'whom', as illustrated in (2c), and the relative particle *sem,* as illustrated in (4d). But suppose that the embedded clause does not have a subject NP overtly present, as will be the case whenever the subject NP has been questioned or relativized. The relative particle *sem* and the interrogative pronouns are traditionally counted as subjects just in case the finite verb comes next. Thus, in the word order study referred to above, Kossuth (1978:446) states that "the relative particles *sem* and *er* were counted as C (= conjunction), but if appropriate, also as S (= subject)." It is clear that what is intended by "if appropriate" are sentences in which the subject NP has been relativized, and hence there is no subject to count as filling first position. Similarly, in his discussion of the possible positions of the finite verb in Scandinavian languages, Haugen (1976:84) gives the example shown in (3a) with the indicated numbering.

                1   2   3 2   3

(3) a. *Þeir vissu, hver   genginn væri/væri genginn.*

       they knew who (NOM) gone   was/ was gone

       'They knew who had gone.'

              1   2   3 2   3

    b. *Maðurinn, sem farinn var/ var farinn heim, heitir   Pétur.*

       the-man   that gone was/was gone home is-named Peter

       'The man that had gone home is named Peter.'

Haugen does not give an example of a comparable relative clause, but he would presumably count the position of the finite verb as indicated in (3b). Note that the finite verb is counted as being in third position if the past participle has been inverted.

It is precisely for these cases that I propose a change from the traditional treatment of word order: even in the cases of subjectless sentences the finite verb should be counted as being in second position, as illustrated in (4):

               1   2 1 2   3

(4) a. *Þeir vissu hver farinn var/ __ var farinn heim.*

       'They knew who had gone home.'

              1   2 1 2   3

    b. *Maðurinn sem farinn var/ __ var farinn heim heitir Pétur.*

       'The man who had gone home is named Peter.'

              1   2

    c. *Maðurinn sem __ kom í gær   heitir   Pétur.*

       the-man   that   came yesterday is-named Peter

       'The man who came yesterday is named Peter.'

If the past participle is fronted, then it counts as filling first position; if it is not fronted, then the first position of the embedded clause will be considered empty, as indicated by the dash. In either case, the finite verb is in second position. The same is true of an embedded clause with a simple past tense verb as given in (4c): the subject NP has been relativized, leaving first position in the relative clause empty, and the finite verb *kom* 'came' is in second position. The relative particle *sem* is not counted as subject.

What I am suggesting, then, is that sentences such as those in (4) are simply another type of subjectless sentence. There are two advantages of this analysis over the traditional way of determining second position. First, it provides a uniform treatment of conjunctions, including interrogative pronouns and the relative particles: they *never* count as filling first position but are always considered to be outside the clause boundaries. Second, this analysis allows the simplest possible description of the conditions under which various inverted word orders are possible in embedded clauses. This is the topic of the next section.

2. FRONTING IN EMBEDDED CLAUSES

In addition to the topicalization of stressed elements of the predicate, there is another type of fronting that is extremely common in embedded clauses and that is characteristic of Icelandic (and Faroese) as opposed to the other Scandinavian languages. This kind of fronting, which I refer to as stylistic fronting, is illustrated by the examples in (5)–(7). These examples were taken at random from two short stories by Gestur Pálsson (1970), "Tilhugalíf" and "Hans Vöggur," but all are typical of the inverted word orders one finds in Icelandic prose. The examples have been divided into three categories, according to whether the embedded clause begins with (1) a past participle, (2) an adjective, or (3) some adverbial. Especially typical of the third category are negative adverbs such as *ekki* 'not' and verbal particles such as *fram* 'forward'. The fronted constituent is in boldface type.

(5) a. *Honum   mætti standa á   sama, hvað* **sagt** *væri um   hann.*
        him (DAT) might stand on same what said was about him
        'It might be all the same to him what was said about him.'
                                                                    ("Tilhugalíf," Ch. 5)

     b. *og hann léti   þá   vita, að hann . . . kæmi   ekki heim,*
        and he   would-let them know that he . . .   would-come not   home,
        eins og **ráðgert** *hafði verið*
        as   planned had   been
        'and he would let them know that he wouldn't be coming home as had
        been planned'   ("Tilhugalíf," Ch. 1)

    c. *Hún benti   á ýmsa   roskna trésmiði   í bænum, sem **byrjað** höfðu*
        she   pointed to various old   carpenters in town   that begun   had
        með engum efnum.
        with nothing   ("Tilhugalíf," Ch. 1)

(6) a. *Hann raulaði þá   vísuna sína nokkuð   hærra en   **venjulegt** var.*
       he   hummed then tune   his somewhat louder than usual   was
       'Then he hummed his tune somewhat louder than usual.'

                                                                    ("Hans Vöggur")
    b. *Engum   datt í hug, að **vert**   væri að reyna til að kynnast*
       No one (DAT) fell to mind that worth was to try   P to know
       honum.
       him
       'It didn't occur to anyone that it was worth trying to get to know him.'
                                                      ("Hans Vöggur")
    c. *Þeir voru að tala um . . .   hvað **hægt**   hefði verið.*
       they were to talk about . . . what possible had   been
       'They were talking about what had been possible.'
                                                  ("Tilhugalíf," Ch. 1)

(7) a. *og nú   eigum við að vita . . .   hvort   **ekki** finnst meira*
       and now ought we to know . . . whether not finds more
       þýfi   hjá piltinum.
       stolen-goods on the-boy
       'and now we are supposed to find out whether any more stolen goods
       can be found where the boy lives.'   ("Tilhugalíf," Ch. 4)
    b. *Hún horfði á þennan stóra sterka mann, sem **aldrei** hafði beygt lund*
       She looked at this   big   strong man   that never had   bent will
       sína fyrir nokkrum kvenmanni.
       his for any   woman
       'She looked at the big, strong man who had never changed his mind
       because of a woman.'   ("Tilhugalíf," Ch. 1)
    c. *og Sveinn fór   smátt og smátt að . . . muna   eftir öllu, sem*
       and Svein began little and little to . . . remember after all   that
       ***fram** hafði farið.*
       on   had   gone
       'and little by little Svein began to remember all that had happened.'
                                                       ("Tilhugalif," Ch. 6)
    d. *Þá gæti enginn sagt með vissu,   að **svo** hefði verið.*
       then could no-one say with certainty, that so   had   been
       'Then no one could say with certainty that it had been that way.'
                                                      ("Tilhugalíf," Ch. 5)

c. *Aldrei var Hans ánægðari en   þegar svo bar   undir.*
   never was Hans happier   than when so   happened
   'Never was Hans happier than under such circumstances.'

<div align="right">("Hans Vöggur")</div>

2.1. Topicalization versus Stylistic Fronting

A preliminary dichotomy between topicalization and stylistic fronting is given in (8) below. The distinction between the two fronting processes is sometimes a fuzzy one, particularly when it comes to the fronting of adverbials (see section 4.2), and needs to be investigated further. Note the postverbal position of *ekki* in (2a), however, which illustrates that adverbs do not generally precede the finite verb in embedded clauses in Icelandic, as opposed to the other Scandinavian languages.

(8)	Topicalization	Stylistic Inversion
	Applies to object NPs, PPs, etc.	Applies to past participles, adjectives, some adverbs, particles, etc.
	Emphasis or focus on fronted constituent	Emphasis or focus on fronted constituent not necessarily present
	Uncommon in embedded Ss	Common in embedded Ss
	Judgments vary on fronting in relatives, questions, etc.	Accepted by all speakers
	Unbounded	Clause bounded
	Subject gap not required	Subject gap required

The most obvious difference between the two fronting processes lies in the frequency of occurrence. As noted above, topicalization in embedded clauses is quite unusual. The sentence given in (1) was the only example I found in approximately seventy-five pages of text, whereas the examples in (5)–(7) are but a small sample of the stylistic fronting extant within the same corpus.[5] Furthermore, the fronting of object NPs within questions and relative clauses is unacceptable for many speakers, whereas stylistic fronting is accepted by all speakers in the same environments (see section 5.1). Only topicalization can move a constituent outside of the clause in which it originates. Finally, there is a condition on the application of stylistic fronting that topicalization does not share; this condition is stated in (9).

(9) STYLISTIC FRONTING in an embedded clause is possible only if there is a subject gap in that clause.

Note the presence of the subject *hún* in the example of topicalization given in (1). In contrast, the examples in (5)–(7) all contain embedded clauses that are in

some sense subjectless. I hypothesize that it is precisely this property that makes stylistic fronting possible. The generalization given in (9) can only be stated, of course, if the relative particle *sem* and interrogative pronouns are not themselves counted as subjects.

2.2. Evidence for the Subject-Gap Condition

Subject gaps can be created in one of three ways in Icelandic: (1) through extraction of the subject NP by unbounded transformational rules such as relativization, question formation, comparative clause formation, topicalization, and clefting; (2) through use of impersonal passives or lexically impersonal predicates; and (3) through indefinite-NP postposing.[6] The latter two cases of subject gaps can easily be recognized by the obligatory occurrence of *það* in initial position if the sentence is used as a main-clause declarative. Let me emphasize here that my use of the term *subject gap* for these impersonal constructions is not meant to attribute subject status to the dummy *það*.[7]

In this section, data are given in support of the subject-gap condition on stylistic fronting stated in (9). The three types of subject gaps are considered in turn.

2.2.1. SUBJECT EXTRACTIONS

Many of the examples of stylistic fronting in (5)–(7) are instances of subject extraction. Three examples are repeated here for the reader's convenience, together with the normal, uninverted word order. In the (a) versions of the sentences, stylistic fronting has served to fill the subject gap of the (b) versions, indicated by a dash, which would otherwise remain empty.

(10) a. *Honum mætti standa á sama, hvað **sagt** væri um hann.* (=5a)
    b. *Honum mætti standa á sama, hvað ___ væri sagt um hann.*

(11) a. *Hún benti á ýmsa roskna trésmiði í bænum, sem **byrjað** höfðu með engum efnum.* [(=5c)]
    b. *Hún benti á ýmsa roskna trésmiði í bænum, sem ___ höfðu byrjað með engum efnum.*

(12) a. *Sveinn fór að muna eftir öllu, sem **fram** hafði farið.* (cf. 7c)
    b. *Sveinn fór að muna eftir öllu, sem ___ hafði farið fram.*

However, if the subject NP had not been extracted from the embedded clause, that is, if some other NP had been questioned or relativized, then stylistic fronting would be unacceptable. This is illustrated by the examples in (13)–(15), which all have definite subjects.[8]

(13) *Honum *mætti standa á sama, hvað* **sagt** hefði Hjördís um   hann.
     to-him might stand   same, what said had   Hjördís about him

(14) a.*Hún benti   á bæinn,   þar   sem **byrjað** höfðu trésmiðirnir   með
       she pointed to the-town where that begun had   the-carpenters with
       engum efnum og orðið   heimsfrægir   síðar.
       nothing   and become world-famous later
     b.*Hún benti   á bæinn,   þar sem **byrjað** hafði Sveinn með
       she pointed to the-town where   begun had   Svein with
       engum efnum og orðið   heimsfrægur   síðar.
       nothing   and become world-famous later

(15) a.*Hann man   þá stund þegar **burtu** fór   pabbi hans.
       he   remembered the time when away went daddy his
     b.*Hann man   ekki nákvæmlega daginn, þegar **fram** hafði
       he   remembered not exactly   the-day when on   had
       leikurinn farið.
       the-play gone

2.2.2. IMPERSONAL CONSTRUCTIONS

The same contrasts can be found in impersonal constructions. Stylistic fronting is possible in the impersonal (subjectless) passive uses of a verb, but not in the corresponding personal uses of the same verb in the active voice with expressed subject NP. This is illustrated by the contrasts in (16)–(18).

(16) a. *Það var hætt   að rigna þegar **komið**   var þangað.*
       it   was stopped to rain when arrived was thither
       'It had stopped raining when they/we arrived there.'
     b.*Það var hætt   að rigna þegar **komin** var rútan   þangað.*
       it   was stopped to rain when arrived was the-bus thither
       'It had stopped raining when the bus arrived there.'

(17) a. *Það fór   að rigna, þegar **farið** var af   stað.*
       it   began to rain   when gone was from place
       'It began to rain when we left.'
     b.*Það fór   að rigna, þegar **farið** var barnið   heim.*
       it   began to rain   when gone was the-child home
       'It began to rain when the child had gone home.'

(18) a. *Verðbólgan varð   verri en **búist**   hafði verið við.*
       inflation   became worse than expected had been PRT
       'Inflation was worse than had been expected.
     b.*Verðbólgan varð   verri en **búist**   hafði ríkisstjórnin   við.*
       inflation   became worse than expected had   the-government PRT
       'Inflation was worse than the government had expected.'

The ungrammatical (b) versions all have definite subjects, whereas the grammatical (a) versions are subjectless impersonal passives.

The same point can be made for predicate adjectives such as *hægt* 'possible' or *venjulegt* 'usual', which can occur with dummy subject *það* but which often invert with the copula, instead. This type of fronting in embedded clauses was illustrated in (6). In general, these copular predicates are lexically impersonal and do not have corresponding personal uses.[9] However, there is a personal construction with preposition *til* preceding an infinitive complement, which is illustrated in (19); this construction cannot take dummy *það*.

(19)   a. *Hann er líklegur til   að koma.*
         he   is likely (masc) to come
      b. *Hún er líkleg til   að koma.*
         she is likely (fem) to come

With such personal copular predicates, stylistic fronting is possible only if the subject NP has been extracted; this is illustrated by the contrasts in (20).

(20)   a. *Hann er sá eini sem **ekki** er líklegur til að koma.*
         he   is the only that not is likely   P to come
         'He is the only one who isn't likely to come.'
      b.*Hún spurði hvort   **ekki** væri hann líklegur til að koma.*
         she asked whether not was he   likely   P to come
         'She asked whether he wasn't likely to come.'
      c.*Hún spurði hvort   **líklegur** væri hann til að koma.*
         she asked whether likely   was he   to come

The ungrammatical sentences in (20b–c) have definite subjects in the embedded clause, whereas in the grammatical sentence (20a), the subject NP has been relativized.

2.2.3. Indefinite-NP Postposing

Icelandic has a rule of indefinite-NP postposing that is much more general than its English counterpart, *there*-insertion (Thráinsson, 1979, Ch. 7). The contrast in (21) shows that the rule is sensitive to the definiteness of the subject NP. In main-clause declaratives, the resulting subject gap must be filled.

(21)   a.*Það eru trésmiðirnir í bænum.*
         there are the-carpenters in town
      b. *Það eru nokkrir trésmiðir í bænum.*
         there are some   carpenters in town

This contrast is reflected in the acceptability of stylistic fronting in embedded clauses.

(22)   a. *Hún benti   á bæinn   þar   sem **byrjað** höfðu trésmiðirnir   með
           she pointed to the-town where that begun had   the-carpenters with
           engum efnum   og orðið   heimsfrægir   síðar.
           no   material and become world-famous later
       b. *Hún benti   á bæinn,   þar   sem **byrjað** höfðu nokkrir trésmiðir*
           she pointed to the-town where that begun had   some   carpenters
           með engum efnum   og orðið   heimsfrægir   síðar.
           with no   material and become world-famous later

Additional examples of indefinite-NP postposing are given in (23) and (24).

(23)   *Það   eru margir frægir   Íslendingar fæddir í   þessum bæ.*
        there are many   famous Icelanders born   in this   town
        'Many famous Icelanders were born in this town.'

(24)   a. *Þetta er bærinn   þar sem margir frægir   Íslendingar eru fæddir.*
           this is the-town where   many famous Icelanders are born
           'This is the town where many famous Icelanders were born.'
       b. *Þetta er bærinn   þar sem **fæddir** eru margir frægustu   menn*
           this is the-town, where   born   are many   most-famous men
           þjóðarinnar.
           the-nation(GEN)
           'This is the town where many of the most famous men of the nation
           were born.'

Indefinite-NP postposing creates a subject gap that makes stylistic fronting of the
adjective *fæddir* (nom-masc-pl) in (24b) possible. Note that stylistic fronting is
possible in (24b), even though for many speakers *það*-insertion is not possible,
as illustrated by the ungrammaticality of (25).[10]

(25)   **Þetta er bærinn,   þar sem það   eru margir frægir   Íslendingar fæddir.*
        this is the-town where   there are many famous Icelanders born

The contrast between (24b) and (25) shows clearly that indefinite-NP postpos-
ing is independent of *það*-insertion in Icelandic. Other examples are given in
(26)–(27).

(26)   a. *Það   eru ekki til draugar.*
           there are not P ghosts
       b. *Það sem   **ekki** er til eru draugar.*
           that which not   is P are ghosts
           'What doesn't exist is ghosts.'
       c. **Það sem   það   er ekki til eru draugar.*
           that which there is not P are ghosts

(27)   a. *Þetta er nokkuð   sem **ekki** er hægt   að gera við.*
           this is something that not   is possible to fix   PRT
           'This is something that can't be fixed.'

b.*Þetta er nokkuð   sem það er ekki hægt   að gera við.
this is something that it   is not possible to fix   PRT

Where *það*-insertion is impossible in declarative sentences because indefinite-
NP postposing cannot apply, I predict that stylistic fronting is impossible for the
same reason, namely, there is no subject gap to be filled. This prediction is borne
out, as illustrated in (28).

(28)   a.*Það   skrifaði Helgi bréfið.
        there wrote   Helgi the-letter
      b.*Ég held að   **ekki** skrifaði Helgi bréfið.
        I think that not wrote   Helgi the-letter
      c.*Þetta er bréfið,   sem **ekki** skrifaði Helgi.
        this is the-letter that not wrote   Helgi
      d.*Þetta er bréfið,   sem **skrifaði** hefur Helgi þrisvar.
        this is the-letter that written has   Helgi thrice

2.3. An Accessibility Hierarchy

Section 2.2 provided evidence for the hypothesis stated in (9) that stylistic
fronting serves to fill subject gaps created by independently motivated rules of
Icelandic syntax. We have seen that subject gaps can be filled by past participles,
predicate adjectives, verbal particles, and adverbs such as *ekki* 'not'. The ob-
vious question is what happens if the embedded clause contains more than one of
these elements. Stylistic fronting seems to be governed by the following ac-
cessibility hierarchy:

(29)
$ekki$ > predicate adjective > $\begin{cases} \text{past participle} \\ \text{verbal particle} \end{cases}$

Consider the contrast illustrated in (30):

(30)   a. Þeir voru að tala um   hvað **hægt**   hefði verið.   (=6c)
         they were to talk about what possible had   been
         'They were talking about what had been possible.'
      b.*Þeir voru að tala um   hvað **verið** hefði hægt.
         they were talking about what been had   possible

Data in support of the hierarchy in (29) are given in examples (31)–(36).

(31)   a. Þetta er glæpamaðurinn sem ⎡ **ekki**   hefur verið dæmdur.
         this is the-criminal   that ⎢ not   had been convicted
      b.   ⎢ *****dæmdur** hefur ekki verið.
      c.   ⎣ *****verið**   hefur ekki dæmdur.

(32)   a. Það fór að rigna, þegar ⎡ **búið**   var að borða.
         it went to rain   when ⎢ finished was to eat
      b.   ⎢ **ekki** var búið að borða.
      c.   ⎣ *****búið** var ekki að borða.

(33)   a. *Þetta er nokkuð,   sem* ⎰ *ekki er hægt   að gera við.*
          this is something that ⎱ not is possible to fix PRT
       b.   ⎱ **hægt* er ekki að gera við.*

(34)   a. *Fundurinn, sem* ⎰ *ekki   hefur farið fram ennþá, mun fjalla*
          the-meeting that │ not   has   gone on   yet   will talk
                            ⎱ *um   málfræði.*
                            │ about linguistics
       b.   ⎱ **fram hefur ekki   farið ennþá*
          'The meeting, which hasn't taken place yet, will be about linguistics.'

(35)   a. *Fundurinn   sem* ⎰ *fram hafði farið í Ósló var skemmtilegur.*
          the-meeting that ⎱ on   had gone in Oslo was fun
       b.   ⎱ *farið hafði fram í Ósló*
          'The meeting that took place in Oslo was fun.'

(36)   a. *Verðbólgan varð   verri en*   **búist   hafð verið við.* (=18a)
          inflation   became worse than   expected had   been PRT
       b.   *við hafði verið búist.*
       c.   **við hafði búist verið.*
       d.   **verið hafði búist við.*

Example (36d) shows that if there is more than one past participle, only the last
one can front.

3. OBLIQUE SUBJECTS

Icelandic has many verbs that appear to have oblique (i.e., non-nominative)
subjects; the NP that precedes the finite verb in the stylistically unmarked word
order is not in the nominative case. Some examples of such verbs are given
in (37):

(37)   a. *Mig   vantar skó.*
          me (ACC) lacks   shoes (ACC)
          'I lack shoes.'
       b. *Mér   nægja tvær bækur.*
          me (DAT) suffice two books (NOM)
          'Two books is enough for me.'
       c. *Þeim   nægir tvær bækur.*
          them (DAT) suffices two books (NOM)
          'Two books is enough for them.'

Thráinsson (1979, Ch. 7) argues at length that these preverbal NPs should be
analyzed as subjects rather than as preposed objects, despite their non-nominative

case marking, even when the postverbal NP is nominative as in (37b–c).[11] The argument is straightforward: such preverbal oblique NPs behave syntactically like subjects. In particular, they behave like subjects with respect to the subject–verb inversion resulting from topicalization, and also with respect to the narrative verb-first order found in main clauses.

The subject-gap condition on stylistic fronting in embedded clauses provides yet another argument for the subjecthood of these NPs. If verbs that take preverbal oblique NPs occur in embedded clauses, then stylistic fronting is unacceptable if that oblique NP is overtly present. This fact is illustrated by the following contrasts:

(38) a. *Hún benti   á myndina   sem **hana**   hafði langað að selja.*
         she pointed to the-picture that she (ACC) had   longed to sell
     b.*Hún benti á myndina, sem **langað** hafði hana að selja.*

(39) a. *Hún benti   á manninn sem **henni**   samdi   ekki við.*
         she pointed to the-man that she (DAT) got-along not with
         'She pointed to the man that she didn't get along with.'
     b.*Hún benti á manninn, sem **ekki** samdi henni við.*
     c.*Hún benti á manninn, sem **við** samdi henni (ekki).*

If the preverbal oblique NPs in (38a) and (39a), namely, *hana* and *henni*, are analyzed as subjects, then the unacceptability of stylistic fronting follows from the subject-gap condition stated in (9). If they are not analyzed as subjects, then we cannot attribute the unacceptability of the (b) versions to the presence of a subject NP, and the generalization expressed in (9) is lost. Note that it is, in principle, possible to invert such preverbal oblique NPs with the finite verb to form questions, or if topicalization has applied, as illustrated in (40).[12]

(40) *Í gær   langaði hana   til Grænlands, í dag langar hana*
     yesterday longed   she (ACC) [to go] to Greenland, today longs she
         til Hollands, og hver veit,   hvað hana   langar   á morgun.
         to Holland   and who knows what she (will) long-for tomorrow
         'Yesterday she wanted to go to Greenland, today she wants to go to Holland, and who knows what she'll want tomorrow.'

The conclusion that Icelandic does indeed have oblique subjects seems inescapable.[13]

4. WHAT CAN PRECEDE THE FINITE VERB?

In this section I discuss two problems related to V2 and the question of what can precede the finite verb in Modern Icelandic prose. In section 4.1 it is hypothesized that the finite verb appears to be in first position in an embedded clause

only if that clause contains a subject gap. Conditions on the filling of subject gaps with dummy *það* are discussed. Section 4.2 notes some problems with respect to the application of topicalization in embedded clauses.

4.1. Constraints on Filling Subject Gaps

In section 2 it was suggested that the function of stylistic fronting is to fill various kinds of subject gaps in order to satisfy V2. In this section, we look more generally at the treatment of subject gaps in Modern Icelandic prose, and at apparent exceptions to V2. In particular, when is it possible for an embedded clause (other than a conditional clause) to begin with the finite verb?

Subject extraction by unbounded transformational rules such as relativization often creates embedded clauses in which the finite verb appears to be in first position; examples have been given in (4c) and (10b)–(12b). Impersonal constructions can also give rise to apparent instances of verb-first order. This is illustrated for impersonal passives by the example in (41).

(41)   *Hann spurði hvar __ væri ennþá ekið   vinstra megin.*
       he   asked where was still   driven left   side
       'He asked where people still drove on the left side of the road.'

Verb-first order is not possible, however, if a subject NP is present, as shown by the contrast in (42):

(42)   a. *Þetta er handritið   sem hann skrifaði eftir.*
          this is the-manuscript that he   copied   from
       b.*Þetta er handritið sem skrifaði hann eftir.*

Such contrasts suggest the following hypothesis:

(43)   The finite verb will appear to be in first position in an embedded clause
       only if the clause contains a subject gap.

The subject-gap hypothesis stated above allows us to maintain the claim that V2 applies to embedded clauses without exception, but it forces us to rephrase the question of exceptions to V2 in the following way: how are subject gaps treated in Icelandic syntax?[14]

The data presented in section 2 suggest that subject gaps can always be filled by stylistic fronting. But can they be filled in other ways, and when can they be left empty? It is well known that dummy *það* is often used to begin subjectless sentences. In main-clause declaratives, *það* occurs in sentence-initial position if and only if nothing has been fronted. The same is true of embedded declaratives, as shown by the contrast in (44):

(44)   a. *Ég veit að það er ekið   vinstra megin í Ástralíu.*
          I   know that there is driven left   side   in Australia
          'I know that people still drive on the left in Australia.'
       b.*Ég veit að __ er ekið vinstra megin í Ástralíu.*

It is clear that subject gaps in declaratives must be filled in order to satisfy V2, either by stylistic fronting or by *það*-insertion, if nothing has been topicalized. (Let me emphasize again that I am not attributing subject status to either kind of filler.)

However, there are other clause types that do allow subject gaps to remain un-filled. This seems to be generally true of clauses that inherently contain gaps, for example, relatives, questions, and comparatives, although the gap that leads to apparent verb-first order need not be the result of subject extraction, as was illus-trated in (41).[15] An example for relative clauses is given in (45).

(45) *Bretland er eina landið   þar sem ___ er ennþá ekið   vinstra megin.*
     Britain is only country where   is still   driven left   side
     'Britain is the only country where people still drive on the left.'

In such clauses, subject gaps due to impersonal constructions can be filled by stylistic fronting, but many speakers do not accept *það*-insertion (cf. section 2.2.3), as illustrated in (46)–(47):

(46) a. *Hann spurði hvar   ekið   væri ennþá   vinstra megin.*
        he   asked where driven was still   left   side
        'He asked where people still drove on the left.'
     b. **Hann spurði hvar það væri ennþá ekið vinstra megin.*

(47) a. *Bretland er eina landið   þar sem ekið   er ennþá vinstra megin.*
        Britain is only country where   driven is still   left   side
        'Britain is the only country where people still drive on the left.'
     b.**Bretland er eina landið þar sem það er ennþá ekið vinstra megin.*

Similarly, for comparative clauses:

(48) a. *Hann raulaði þá   vísuna sína nokkuð   hærra en **venjulegt***
        he   hummed then tune   his somewhat louder than usual
        var.   (=6a)
        was
        'Then he hummed his tune somewhat louder than was usual.'
     b. *Hann raulaði þá vísuna sína nokkuð hærra en ___ var venjulegt.*
     c. *?Hann raulaði þá vísuna sína nokkuð hærra en* það *var venjulegt.*

While there is considerable variation among speakers as to the acceptability of *það* in such contexts, it is clear that *það* can never be used to fill a subject gap created by an extraction rule, as noted ·by Maling and Zaenen (this volume: 383–407). This is illustrated by the contrast in (49):

(49) a. *Hver heldur lögreglan að ___ hafi framið   glæpinn?*
        who think the-police that   has committed the-crime
        'Who do the police think committed the crime?'
     b.**Hver heldur lögreglan að það hafi framið glæpinn?*

This completes a brief sketch of word order in embedded clauses in modern Icelandic prose. It has been argued that V2 is an extremely general principle of word order in Icelandic, and that almost all apparent exceptions in embedded clauses should be analyzed as instances of unfilled subject gaps. Stylistic fronting was shown to bring subjectless sentences of various kinds into surface conformity with V2.

4.2. Constraints on Topicalization

I conclude by mentioning briefly some tentative conditions on the application of topicalization in embedded clauses. In section 2 it was noted that topicalization is much more restricted in embedded clauses than it is in main clauses, and that grammaticality judgments often vary greatly from speaker to speaker. The situation is particularly complicated with respect to the fronting of adverbials. Not all adverbs are equally acceptable in initial position, nor are even different uses of the same adverb equally acceptable. Consider the subtle contrast illustrated in (50): [16]

(50) a. ??*Hann fann   stól   sem **vandlega** hafði verið smíðaður.*
           he   found a-chair that carefully had   been carved
           'He found a chair that had been carved carefully.'
      b. *Hann fann   mynd   sem **vandlega** hafði verið falin.*
           he   found a-picture that carefully had   been hidden
           'He found a picture that had been carefully hidden.'
      c. *Hann fann   setningu   sem **vandlega** hafði verið reynt að þegja*
           he   found a-sentence that carefully had   been tried to be-silent
           yfir.
           about
           'He found a sentence that they had carefully tried not to mention.'

It is unclear whether it is sufficient to distinguish between manner and modal uses of adverbs.

These problems with adverbs serve to point out that the distinction between topicalization and stylistic fronting is sometimes a fuzzy one. In general, stylistic fronting is a more local process involving elements of the verbal complex, and often without the emphatic feel of topicalization. Fronting of verbal arguments, especially NPs, can cross clause boundaries and is considerably more restricted than stylistic fronting, especially in clauses such as relatives or embedded questions that already contain a gap. Extraction out of topicalized sentences generally produces sentences of very low acceptability, as noted for Icelandic by Zaenen and Maling (1977) and Thráinsson (1979:472). The definiteness and heaviness of the fronted NP seems to affect acceptability, suggesting that only presupposed NPs may be fronted in embedded clauses. [17] Consider the contrasts illustrated below:

(51)   a.   *Þetta er hundurinn sem **minkinn**   drap.*
            this is the-dog   that the-mink (ACC) killed
            'This is the dog that killed the mink.'
       b.?* *Þetta er hundurinn sem **minka**   drepur.*
            this is the-dog   that minks (ACC) kills
            'This is the dog that kills minks.'

(52)   a.   *Þetta er maðurinn sem **smásögunna**   skrifaði.*
            this is the-man   that the-short-story (ACC) wrote
            'This is the man that wrote the short story.'
       b.?* *Þetta er maðurinn sem **smásögur**   skrifar.*
            this is the-man   that short-stories writes
            'This is the man that writes short stories.'

(53)   a.   *Hún benti   á   trésmiðina   sem **húsgögnin**   höfðu smíðað.*
            she pointed to the-carpenters that the-furniture had   made
       b.?* *Hún benti á trésmiðina sem **húsgögn** höfðu smíðað.*
                                         furniture had   made
       c.?* *Hún benti á trésmiðina sem **úr eik** höfðu smíðað vönduð en ódýr*
                                         of oak had   made   bad   but cheap
            húsgögn.
            furniture

Verbal complements such as locatives can sometimes be fronted, as illustrated
by the acceptability of (54), whereas predicate nominals cannot be fronted in
relatives, as illustrated in (55) (although they can be fronted in *að* 'that'-clauses).

(54)   *Hann fann   stól   sem **hér** hafði staðið.*
        he   found a-chair that here had   stood
        'He found a chair that had stood here.'

(55)   * *Þarna er konan   sem **forseti** **Íslands**   var kosin.*
        there is the-woman that president Iceland (GEN) was elected
        'There is the woman who was elected President of Iceland.'

Whatever the conditions on topicalization may be, note that all of these embed-
ded clauses freely allow stylistic fronting of a past participle when it occurs:

(56)   a.   *Þetta er hundurinn sem **drepið** hefur fimm minka.*
            this is the-dog   that killed has   five minks
            'This is the dog that has killed five minks.'
       b.   *Þetta er maðurinn sem **skrifað** hefur margar smásögur.*
            this is the-man   that written has   many   short-stories
       c.   *Hún benti   á   trésmiðina   sem **smíðað** höfðu vönduð en ódýr*
            she pointed to the-carpenter that made   had   bad   but cheap
            húsgögn.
            furniture
            'She pointed to the carpenter who had made bad but cheap furniture.'

d. *Þarna er konan   sem **kosin**   var forseti   Íslands.*
   there is the-woman that elected was president Iceland (GEN)
   'There is the woman who was elected President of Iceland.'

These differences support the distinction drawn in section 2 between the two
fronting processes, topicalization and stylistic fronting.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

NOTES

[1] The term *topicalization* may be somewhat of a misnomer, but it has become standard
usage in the transformational literature. It is unclear if the discourse function of topicaliza-
tion is related to the topic–comment distinction; moreover, different languages may put
the same syntactic construction to different uses. For some discussion of the discourse
function of topicalization in Icelandic, see Thráinsson (1979:64–66).

[2] For example, Haugen (1976:84).

[3] See Maling and Zaenen (1978, and this volume: 383–407) for discussion of the con-
sequences of this fact for the derived constituent structure of questions and topicali-
zations.

[4] Although V2 is the general rule in embedded clauses, there are some examples of the
finite verb in third position as the result of an adverb in second position, a possibility not
noted by Bergsveinsson (1969) in his otherwise exhaustive study of adverb positions.
Some examples are given in (i), with the adverbs in bold face type.

(i)   a. *eins og hann varð   rólfær . . . að hann **dag og dag** varð   lasinn.*
            just as he   became   that he   now and then become sick
                                                                    ("Hans Vöggur")
        b. *Þegar ég **loksins** fann   lagið*
            when I   finally found the-tune
        c. *Þegar ég **siðast** hitti hann*
            when I   last   met him
        d. *Þegar mér   **allt í einu** datt í hug að*
            when to-me suddenly occurred that

Note that Icelandic is unlike the other Scandinavian languages in that the negative adverb
ekki does not occur in second position in embedded clauses; a sentence such as (ii) is felt
to be a Danicism.

(ii)   **Þó að   ég **ekki** hefði fundið hann*
        although I   not had   found him

Second position for adverbs seems to have the effect of emphasis, but not all adverbs or
adverbial PPs can occur in this position. Note the contrasts in (iii):

(iii)
$$\begin{array}{l} \textit{Þegar ég} \\ \text{when I} \end{array} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \textit{fyrir löngu} \text{ 'long ago'} \\ \textit{loksins} \text{ 'finally'} \\ \textit{??um helgina} \text{ 'on the weekend'} \\ \textit{??í fyrsta sinn} \text{ 'for the first time'} \\ \textit{*með Siggu} \text{ 'with Sigga'} \end{array} \right\} \begin{array}{l} \textit{hitti hann} \\ \text{met him} \end{array}$$

Just what class(es) of adverbs can occur in second position remains to be determined. (For
further discussion, see Rögnvaldsson and Thráinsson, this volume: 3–40.)

[5] Kossuth (1978) observes that an average of 6.5% (with a range of 1–14 percent) of
embedded clauses begin with nonsubjects, as opposed to 20% of main clauses. Unfortu-
nately, the two kinds of inversion are lumped together in her study, making it difficult to
evaluate the significance of the different frequencies, which may or may not be entirely
attributable to the markedness of topicalization in embedded clauses.

[6] See, e.g., Baker (1978) for an introduction to the basic properties of topicalization
and clefting. Some properties of these transformations in Icelandic are discussed in
Thráinsson (1979). Indefinite-NP postposing is the Icelandic equivalent of *there*-insertion
in English. For a discussion of subjectless constructions in Icelandic, see Thráinsson
(1979, Ch. 7).

[7] For a discussion of the role of dummy *það* in Icelandic syntax, see Andrews (this
volume: 165–185), Maling and Zaenen (this volume: 383–407), and Thráinsson (1979,
ch. 7).

[8] I have used only definite-subject NPs in these examples in order to rule out the possi-
bility of indefinite-NP postposing, which also creates subject gaps; see section 3.2.3.

[9] In transformational terms, Icelandic lacks a subject-to-subject raising construction
with copular predicates. In English syntax, subject-to-subject raising relates pairs of sen-
tences such as (i) and (ii):

(i)   *It is not likely that George will be elected.*
(ii)   *George is not likely to be elected.*

In (i) the copular predicate *be likely* takes a dummy subject *it* and a *that*-clause complement, whereas (ii) takes an ordinary NP subject and an infinitival complement. The subject of the *that*-clause complement in (i) corresponds to the subject of the copular predicate in (ii). See Thráinsson (1979:409ff.).

[10] I found considerable variation among speakers as to the acceptability of *það* in such contexts. Most speakers reject *það* in the starred examples in (25)–(27), but others find it quite acceptable, especially in *þar sem* relatives and in spoken as opposed to written style. Use of *það* is undoubtedly on the increase.

[11] These examples were brought to my attention by Helgi Bernódusson; the vacillation in number agreement is noted by Björn Guðfinnsson (1958:60, Ath. 1).

[12] Note that this difference provides further support for the distinction between topicalization and stylistic fronting.

[13] Yet another argument that preverbal oblique NPs are actually subjects rather than preposed objects comes from the variety of possible infinitival phrases. Consider the following:

(i)   *Að vanta skó*   'To lack shoes
     **Að mig vanta*   *er slæmt.*   'To me lack   is awful'.
     ***Að vanta mig*   'To lack me
     **Að vanta mig skó*   'To lack me shoes

(ii) *Að nægja tvær bækur*   'To suffice two books
     **Að nægja þeim*   *er furðulegt.* 'To suffice them   is horrible'.
     ***Að nægja þeim tvær*   'To suffice them two
        bækur   books

Assuming that infinitival phrases are simply subjectless clauses, then, regardless of whether they are base generated as such (e.g., as VPs) and their subjects supplied interpretatively, or whether they are generated as full sentences with subjects that are transformationally deleted, the contrasts illustrated in (i)–(ii) support the analysis of preverbal oblique NPs as subjects. Infinitival phrases containing an inverted subject NP, while at the same time missing a topicalized object NP, are not even "remotely plausible," as noted by Thráinsson (1979:469) for infinitives produced by EQUI. He makes a similar argument for the subjecthood of these preverbal oblique NPs.

[14] But see n. 4.

[15] This generalization is Annie Zaenen's. See Zaenen (1980) for a more detailed discussion of the environments in which apparent verb-first orders are possible. (For a different point of view, see Sigurðsson, this volume: 41–69.)

[16] This contrast was brought to my attention by Kristján Árnason.

[17] These observations are Kristján Árnason's.

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