

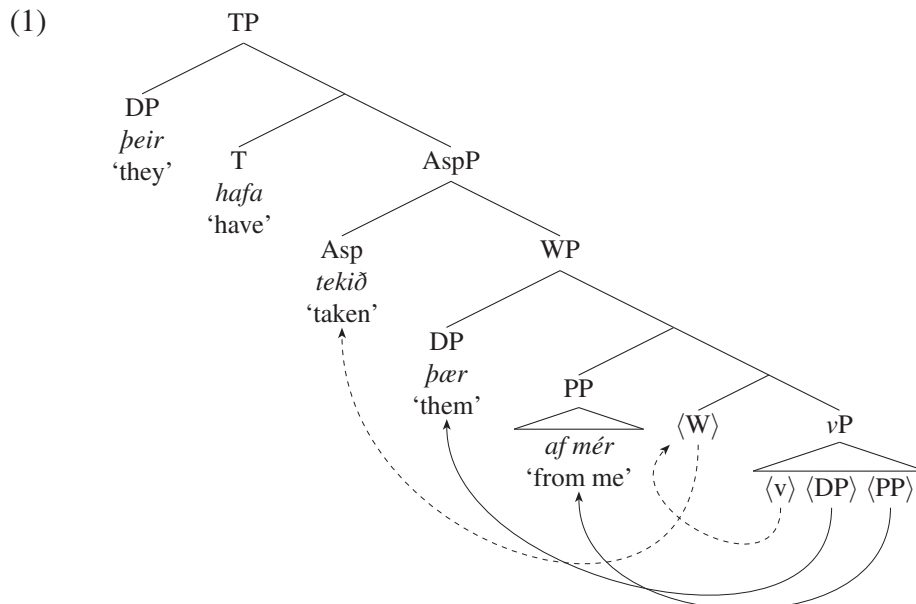
Everything out! Evacuating the Icelandic ν P

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1. Everything out!

In this paper, I pursue the consequences of the idea that in Icelandic, all ν P-internal material—the verb, its arguments, everything—evacuates the ν P in the course of ordinary derivations.¹



The present paper will make no specific theoretical proposal explaining why everything evacuates the ν P. Instead, we begin by embracing the claim that as Icelandic sentences are built up, from bottom to top, everything moves out of the ν P in due course. However, as we proceed, we will see some reason to think that each movement has its own independent motivation. This is because under special circumstances, some of the movements can be stopped. There is a situation where the verb remains in the ν P (Stylistic Fronting), and where

¹In this paper, I assume that the ν P corresponds to the canonical VP, containing the verb and its internal arguments, but not the external argument. I abstract away from the location of and role of the external argument, which I take to be introduced externally to the ν P in the specifier of a Voice head.

the verb and a DP object remain in the vP (pseudogapping). This general picture suggests that each movement can be interrupted or prevented in its own way.

From a diachronic perspective, Hróarsdóttir (2000) argued that a proposal quite similar to the present one offered the best explanation for how Icelandic went from being a mixed OV/VO language to being a VO language. Essentially, when Icelandic allowed OV, this was because vP -internal material underwent a series of leftward movements. VO was derived when the remnant vP , containing only the verb, moved to the left this material, restoring the underlying VO order. What changed over time was that this remnant vP movement became obligatory instead of optional.

There is one crucial difference between the present proposal and Hróarsdóttir's: the account of vP ellipsis and vP fronting depends on the verb moving to the left its objects by head movement, out of the vP , rather than by phrasal movement of a remnant vP (cf. Haider 2000, 2005). This difference notwithstanding, Hróarsdóttir (2000, 343) pointed out that "the discussion of a remnant VP-preposing in Icelandic will inevitably also lead to the question whether, or how, this is compatible with other aspects of Icelandic syntax." She went on to ask "whether there is evidence for the assumption of leftward movement of objects in overt syntax in Modern Icelandic."

While the present proposal does not search for evidence of movement in the ordinary sense, it does directly address the question of whether a change of the sort that Hróarsdóttir (2000) envisioned has left observable effects on modern Icelandic. The claim here is that if we start with the assumption that everything evacuates the verb phrase as part of the normal course of affairs in Icelandic, a number of otherwise unrelated puzzles about Icelandic syntax may fall into place.

2. vP topicalization

Many Germanic languages allow some kind of vP topicalization (sometimes called vP fronting or preposing). The vP may carry its arguments with it, as in (2a). Alternatively, its arguments arguments may move out of the vP before it moves, so that only the verb is left in the fronted vP , as in (2b). The latter case is often referred to as remnant vP movement.

- (2) a. [vP Kysst henne] har jag inte t_{vP}
 kissed her have I not
 'Kissed her I have not.' (Holmberg 1999, 7) (Swedish)
- b. [vP Kysst t_i] har jag henne_{*i*} inte t_{vP}
 kissed have I her not
 'Kissed her I have not.' (Holmberg 1999, 7) (Swedish)

vP topicalization—whether complete or remnant—is generally not possible in Icelandic.²

- (3) a. * [vP tekið þær af mér] hafa þeir ekki t_{vP} .
 taken them from me have they not
 INTENDED: 'Taken them from me, they have not.'

²Unless otherwise noted, judgments for Icelandic sentences come from Anton Karl Ingason, Einar Freyr Sigurðsson and Sigríður Sæunn Sigurðardóttir.

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- b. * [_{vP} tekið t_i t_{PP}] hafa þeir [_{WP} þær_i [_{PP} af mér] t_{vP}]
taken have they them from me

The absence of *vP* topicalization in modern Icelandic has been noted before by Rögnvaldsson (1996), Thráinsson (2007, 349), Holmberg & Platzack (1995, 223), and Platzack (2012) and Thoms (2012). This is fact explained by the present proposal: since everything has moved out of the *vP*, there is no overt *vP* left to topicalize.

Note that it appears that Old Icelandic had remnant *vP* topicalization (see Rögnvaldsson 1996, among others), but not full *vP* topicalization.

- (4) [_{vP} gefa t_i t_j] vil ek þer_i fyrst klæði_j t_{vP}.
give t_i t_j will I you first clothes
'First I will give you some clothes.' (Rögnvaldsson 1996, (10a)) (Old Icelandic)³

This is also explained by the present proposal. Old Icelandic alternated between OV and VO word orders, whereas modern Icelandic is more strictly VO (though see below). Following the spirit of Hróarsdóttir (2000), this is because in Old Icelandic, like the modern language, everything generally moved out of the *vP*—except the verb, which could either remain in the *vP* (generated OV orders) or move out of it (generating VO orders). Since the verb could remain inside the *vP* in Old Icelandic, remnant *vP* topicalization was possible. When OV orders were lost, this was because the verb moved out of the *vP*, and then remnant *vP* topicalization was no longer possible, because there was no longer a remnant within the *vP*.

3. *vP* ellipsis

Like English, mainland Scandinavian languages (such as Swedish, Danish and Norwegian) allow *vP* ellipsis (VPE), as illustrated for Swedish in (5a) and Faroese in (5b). According to Sailor (2018), mainland Scandinavian languages do not have verb-stranding VPE (see (5c)); instead, they use something like do-support, as in (5d). (For more discussion, see Sailor 2009, 2018, Thoms 2012, Bentzen et al. 2013.)

- (5) a. Johan har inte läst *Lolita*, men Kalle har <~~vP~~>.
Johan has not read *Lolita* but Kalle has <~~vP~~>
'Johan hasn't read *Lolita*, but Kalle has.' (Sailor 2018, (6b)) (Swedish)
- b. Elsa hevur vitjað ommu sína, og Sára hevur <~~vP~~> eisini
Elsa has visited mother self and Sára has too
'Elsa has visited her mother, and Sára has too.' (Thoms 2012, (35)) (Faroese)
- c. * Johan leste ikke *Lolita*, men Marie leste.
Johan read.PST not *Lolita* but Marie read.PST
'Johan didn't read *Lolita*, but Marie did.' (Sailor 2018, (7b)) (Norwegian)
- d. Johan leste ikke *Lolita*, men Marie gjorde.
Johan read.PST not *Lolita* but Marie did
'Johan didn't read *Lolita*, but Marie did.' (Sailor 2018, (8b)) (Norwegian)

³Example from Droplaugarsona saga.

One might then have expected Icelandic to allow vP ellipsis as well. However, vP ellipsis—whether “verb stranding” or not—is not possible in Icelandic. (6a) shows that VPE is not possible with an auxiliary, (6b) shows that verb-stranding VPE is not possible, and (6c) shows that do-support does not allow VPE either.

- (6) a. * Hún hefur tekið bækur af mér, og þeir hafa $\langle vP \rangle$ líka.
 she has taken books from me and they have $\langle vP \rangle$ too
 INTENDED: ‘She’s taken books from me, and they have too.’
- b. * Hún tók bókina, og hann tók $\langle vP \rangle$ líka.
 she took the.book and he took $\langle vP \rangle$ too
 INTENDED: ‘She took the book, and he did too.’
- c. * Hún tók ekki bókina, en hann gerði $\langle vP \rangle$.
 she took not the.book but he did $\langle vP \rangle$
 INTENDED: ‘She didn’t take the book, but he did.’

The absence of VPE in Icelandic has been previously noted by Thoms (2012) and Platzack (2012), and it, too, follows from the present account. Because everything has moved out of the verb phrase, including the verb, there is no verb phrase left to elide.⁴

The present account would not predict that Old Icelandic had VPE, since my proposal is that in Old Icelandic everything but the verb moved out of the vP , and the verb moved out only optionally. However, the account does predict, if nothing else is said, that something like pseudo-gapping, where only the verb (and not its arguments) is elided, would have been possible. I do not know if this prediction is borne out, but see below for further discussion of pseudo-gapping.

4. Remnant OV Order

While modern Icelandic, unlike Old Icelandic, is a fairly strict VO language, there are certain constructions where OV order still exists. To give one class of examples, the verb *láta* ‘let/make’ sometimes takes complements that allow otherwise impossible OV orders. This is illustrated with the examples in (7) and (8).

- (7) Þeir létu sig { **varða** } þessi mál { **varða** }.
 they let REFL { concern } these issues.ACC { concern }
 ‘They are engaged with these issues.’ (Wood 2015, 269)
- (8) a. Ég læt mér ekki líka þetta. b. Ég læt mér þetta vel líka.
 I let myself not like this I let myself this well like
 ‘I don’t let myself like this.’ ‘I let myself like this.’

Why might this be? In the present account, there is a stage in the derivation where all the arguments precede the verb. To be more precise, this is when all the vP -internal material moves to the specifiers of WP , and the verb head-moves to W . In general, then, the

⁴Technically speaking, as observed by Anton Karl Ingason, verb phrase ellipsis could take place and one simply would never hear it.

present account opens up the possibility that the derivation can be interrupted at this stage, deriving OV word order. There are independent reasons to think that *láta* ‘let/make’ is able to select rather small verb phrase complements, as argued by Wood (2011a) (developing a proposal for Swedish going back to Taraldsen 1983 and Lundin 2003). Following Pykkänen’s (2002) typology of causatives, Wood (2011a) proposes that *láta* ‘let/make’ can select a variety of complements, including *vP*, VoiceP, and perhaps even AspP. Here we can understand this fact as telling us that in remnant OV constructions, *láta* ‘let/make’ selects WP. Thus, when it does, the verb never makes it to the left of the arguments.⁵

5. Optional PP-DP Order

One fact about Icelandic word order that is not often mentioned in theoretical work is that argumental PPs can optionally precede argumental DPs. This is illustrated in (9).

- (9) Þeir hafa tekið { **af** **mér** } bókina { **af** **mér** }.
 they have taken { from me } the.book { from me }
 ‘They have taken the book from me.’

There are apparently certain constraints governing the choice of word order. For example, the PP-DP order seems most frequent/felicitous when the PP contains a personal pronoun. However, in this paper I am generally interested in the existence of the PP-DP order, which can be explained in the following way. The PP and the DP can move out of the *vP* in either order. As different categories, they do not interfere with each other’s movement.

Assuming that the PP-DP order cannot be derived by rightward movement of the DP, then this order shows that PPs move from their base-generated position. This constitutes independent support for the claim that like DPs, PPs move from their base generated position. The present account goes one step further: not only *can* PPs move from their base generated position, they generally *do*. The word order variation stems from whatever independent factors determine which, out of the DP and PP, moves to SpecWP first.

6. Coordinate Object Deletion

It has long been noted in studies of Icelandic syntax that when verb phrases are conjoined, the object of the second verb can be deleted when it is identical to the object of the first (Rögnvaldsson 1990). This is illustrated with the sentence in (10).

- (10) Hann_i þreif blaðið_j og e_i reif e_j í tætlur.
 he grasped paper.the and ripped to pieces
 ‘He grasped the paper and tore it to pieces.’ (Rögnvaldsson 1990, 368)

⁵It is worth noting that this may be somewhat lexically specific; the OV order cannot apply to just any transitive verb, and generally seems more frequent with verbs that take oblique subjects. To me, this suggests that WP is in fact lower than Voice (which, as noted above, is generally omitted in this paper). If WP is lower than Voice, then whenever there is an external argument, there is Voice, and the verb would be able (even compelled) to move to the left of any objects in WP. However, I must set aside the question for the time being, and remain in principle agnostic as to the position of Voice within the proposed structure.

There are various constraints on the process. For example, it only works if the subject of the second verb is also null (and interpreted as coreferent with the subject of the first verb).

Ximenes (2007) argued that in sentences like (10), the DP moves ‘across-the-board’ (ATB) to a position lower than the canonical object shift position. This movement is usually obscured by further movements. If this is on the right track, we can understand it in the context of the present proposal as coordination of ν Ps, with ATB movement to the shared WP. If so, then it provides independent support for the claim that DPs move to a low position, just outside of the ν P. However, it is not obvious that this account will go through. One possible wrinkle involves the fact that Ximenes (2007) requires head-movement out of the left conjunct only, which violates the coordinate structure constraint (CSC). This issue remains here: the left verb moves to W while the right one remains in ν P. If such a structure is to be banned in general, then it could not be invoked in the present account, and coordinate object deletion would have no bearing on the analysis one way or the other.

Another possible problem is that Rögnvaldsson (1990) shows that there must be a null subject of the second verb in at least some cases of coordinate object deletion. This would suggest that WP should be higher than Voice, and that VoicePs are in fact coordinated. This is the opposite suggestion from the one made in footnote 5. One could in principle resolve the problem by assuming two layers of WPs, one below Voice and one above. Ximenes (2007) provides arguments in favor of a lower level of coordination, but does not respond adequately to Rögnvaldsson’s facts. If this issue cannot be resolved, then given the CSC problem on top of it, I would be inclined to concede that coordinate object deletion needs a separate account. However, if Ximenes’s proposal can be maintained, then the existence of coordinate object deletion would follow from general properties of Icelandic clauses.

7. Stylistic Fronting

Icelandic Stylistic Fronting (SF) is a movement operation, originally identified by Maling (1980), that moves a nonfinite verb, adjective, adverb, PP or DP to SpecTP when there is nothing overt there (e.g. a subject gap or null subject). (See Holmberg 2005 for a thorough overview of SF.) It was originally thought to be restricted to heads, and therefore a kind of head movement. This was particularly interesting, because it looked like a head moving into a phrasal position, such as SpecTP. However, it was later discovered that phrases of various sorts could undergo SF (or something that looks a whole lot like it). Surveying the literature and adding data of his own, Ott (2009, 2018) showed that nonfinite verbs are the only frontable category that is not *demonstrably* phrasal.

For example, the examples in (11) show that adverbs, clausal negation, and adjectives can move as phrases, suggesting that SF is a process that generally moves phrases.

- (11) a. ... sem [_{AdvP} svona vel]_i hafa talað t_i um þig
 ... who [_{AdvP} so well] have talked about you
 ‘... (e.g. people) who have talked so well about you.’ (Rögnvaldsson 1982)
- b. ... sem [_{AdvP} alls ekki]_i hefur t_i skrifað þessar bækur
 ... who [_{AdvP} at.all not] have written these books
 ‘... (e.g. people) who have not written these books at all.’ (Sigurðsson 1997)

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- c. ? ... sem [_{AdjP} einstaklega klár]_i var t_i
... who extraordinarily bright was
'... (e.g. someone) who was extraordinarily bright.' (Ott 2018, 15)

Moreover, Sigurðsson (1997) points out that coordinate nonfinite verbs can undergo SF, which also suggests that vPs move as phrases.

- (12) ... eins og [_{vP} sagt og skrifað]_i hefur verið t_i
... as said and written has been
'... as has been said and written.' (Sigurðsson 1997)

All of this raises the mystery of why SF of nonfinite verbs generally contains only the verbal heads, and never any arguments, adverbs, or specifiers. Ott's (2009, 2018) answer is that what moves is in fact a remnant vP, after *everything but the verb* has evacuated.

- (13) Þeir sem [_{TP} [_{vP} tekið t_i t_{PP}] hafa bókina_i af mér <vP>].
they who [_{TP} [_{vP} taken] have book.the from me <vP>]
'Those who have taken the book from me.'

Ott's explanation for this is formally appealing: essentially, something has to move out of the vP in order for the vP to undergo SF, because that is the only way to avoid a violation of antilocality.⁶ Ott's explanation for *why* the vP must be evacuated, however, does not really go through. It predicts that for a verb that takes two arguments, only one has to leave the vP (to avoid antilocality); the other should be able to under SF with the verb, contrary to fact.

- (14) a. * Þeir sem [_{TP} [_{vP} tekið t_i af mér] hafa bókina_i <vP>].
they who [_{TP} [_{vP} taken from me] have book.the <vP>]
'Those who have taken the book from me.'
- b. * Þeir sem [_{TP} [_{vP} tekið bókina t_i] hafa [_{PP} af mér]_i <vP>].
they who [_{TP} [_{vP} taken book.the] have [_{PP} from me] <vP>]
'Those who have taken the book from me.'

We will set aside the question of what exactly drives the vP evacuation needed for Ott's account.⁷ Suffice it to say that for the account to go through, SF of vPs must be phrasal, and everything but the verb must evacuate the vP prior to movement.

This analysis of SF follows almost directly from the present account. Since everything evacuates the vP as part of normal Icelandic clause-building, there would be nothing left in the vP by the time SF takes place. What is left to be answered is the opposite question: not why does everything *leave* the vP in SF, but why does the verb *stay* in the case of SF? I would like to propose the following. Suppose that whenever Asp is present, it will attract to verb to move to it. Usually, it does this by head movement. However, it could

⁶That is, vP cannot move to SpecTP if vP is the complement of T. However, if something moves out of vP, that creates an extra node, and the lower vP can then move to SpecTP.

⁷Ott (2009, 2018) would argue that many examples, like those above, can be ruled out on prosodic grounds, and indeed SF seems subject to prosodic constraints (see Wood 2011b)). Even Ott (2018, 26), however, points out that not all such cases can be ruled out by prosody in an obvious way.

also do this by moving the whole vP to SpecAspP (cf. Matushansky 2006 on the formal equivalence of head-movement and phrasal movement). If it does this, however, it may not stay in SpecAspP, but must move to a licensing position (see Ingason & Wood 2017 for this idea applied to long-distance SF of DPs and PPs), namely whatever the SF landing site is. Therefore, the phrasal option will only be available when the SF landing site is open, so the verb can, in this instance, remain in the vP after everything else has moved out of it.⁸

8. Pseudogapping

Pseudogapping in Icelandic is subject to unusual restrictions: it is only possible with PP remnants, and even then only in comparative constructions (Gengel 2007). (15a) shows an acceptable example of pseudogapping in Icelandic: it is a comparative construction, and the PP *af þér* ‘from you’ is left behind. (15b) shows that this is not possible in an ordinary coordination construction, even if it has the same remnant PP. (15c) shows that even in comparative constructions, the remnant left behind cannot be a DP.

- (15) a. Hún hefur tekið fleiri bækur af mér en hann hefur $\langle vP \rangle$ af þér.
 she has taken more books from me than he has $\langle vP \rangle$ from you
 ‘She’s taken more books from than he has from you.’
- b. * Hún hefur tekið bækur af mér, og hann hefur $\langle vP \rangle$ af þér.
 she has taken books from me, and he has $\langle vP \rangle$ from you
 INTENDED: ‘She has taken books from me, and he has from you.’
- c. * María myndi gefa Pétri fleiri bækur en Páll myndi $\langle vP \rangle$ blöð.
 Mary would give Peter more books than Paul would $\langle vP \rangle$ newspapers
 INTENDED: ‘Mary would give Peter more books than Paul would newspapers.’ (Gengel 2007, 42).

Of course, the sentences in (15b) and (15c) are what we expect on the account so far. The vP cannot be elided, because the verb and its object, in addition to the PP, have already moved out by the time ellipsis can apply. Pseudogapping is not generally possible because it requires at least the verb, and sometimes the verb plus an object, to remain in the vP , and this normally does not happen in Icelandic.

So what, then, are we to make of (15a)? Why is pseudogapping possible in there? Here, I propose that the vP ellipsis in comparatives is available earlier than the more familiar kind of vP ellipsis. It applies after the PP has moved, but before the DP or verb have. To add technical machinery to this idea, I will stipulate that when the comparative operator subextracts to the vP edge, it activates a feature that simultaneously triggers PP movement and vP deletion. We can suppose that the feature is an E-feature (triggering ellipsis) with an [EPP]-subfeature, relativized to category P (forcing PP movement). Thus, this kind of ellipsis will

⁸This analysis is also totally consistent with the fact that Old Icelandic had SF (see Hrafnbjargarson 2004), since I have claimed that the verb was more generally able to stay in the vP in Old Icelandic. This also fits nicely with the observation that SF of nonfinite verbs often has a formal or old-fashioned flavor to it, since it is making use of a syntactic option that was once a more general part of the language.

only be possible when a PP is available, and the feature is only activated in comparatives. This is stipulative for sure, but it tells us something general about Icelandic: *vP* ellipsis, and PP movement out of *vP*, are both possible in principle. The pseudogapping facts thus support the general picture that under ordinary circumstances, everything moves out of the *vP*, but under special circumstances, these movements can be stopped or interrupted.

9. Conclusion

Pseudogapping suggests that Icelandic *vP* ellipsis is possible in principle. Stylistic Fronting suggests that (remnant) *vP* movement is possible in principle. So we need to *derive* the *absence* of these processes as part of the normal course of affairs in Icelandic (and not simply stipulate—somewhere in the grammar—that they are generally not available). The present proposal derives the absence of these things by claiming that the normal course of affairs involves the complete evacuation of the *vP*. Various constructions show us exceptional, intermediate stages of this derivation. *Láta* ‘let/make’ can interrupt the derivation before the verb moves to the left of its arguments. Optional PP-DP order follows from the nature of the movements involved. The existence of coordinate object deletion follows from the ability to coordinate *vPs* prior to *vP*-evacuation. Stylistic Fronting moves the *vP* before the verb moves out, and pseudogapping deletes the *vP* before the verb or its object move out. Embracing the evacuation of the Icelandic *vP* thus explains the absence of *vP* ellipsis/topicalization, gives us a way to understand a variety of other constructions, and offers a new set of questions for the study of Stylistic Fronting and pseudogapping.

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