

Locating finite verbs in Faroese: a problem for linguists (and children?)

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Locating finite verbs in Faroese

- What is the question?
- What are possible sources of data?
 - Language output
 - Written
 - Spoken
 - Judgments
- What have we found so far?
- How do children manage?

Does Faroese still have V-to-I?

That is the book that Elin has not read

Icelandic:

Þetta er bréfið sem Elin (hefur) **ekki** (*hefur) lesið

Danish

Dette er brevet, som Tove (*har) **ikke** (har) læst

Faroese

Hetta er brævið, sum Elin (hevur) **ikki** (hevur) lisið

What is the nature of the variability in Faroese?

Theoretical questions include:

- Is there optionality within a single grammar?
- Is there competition between two “equal” grammars?
- Is there a single, invariant competence grammar, perhaps with an overlay of familiarity with a learned register that is not truly “acquired”?

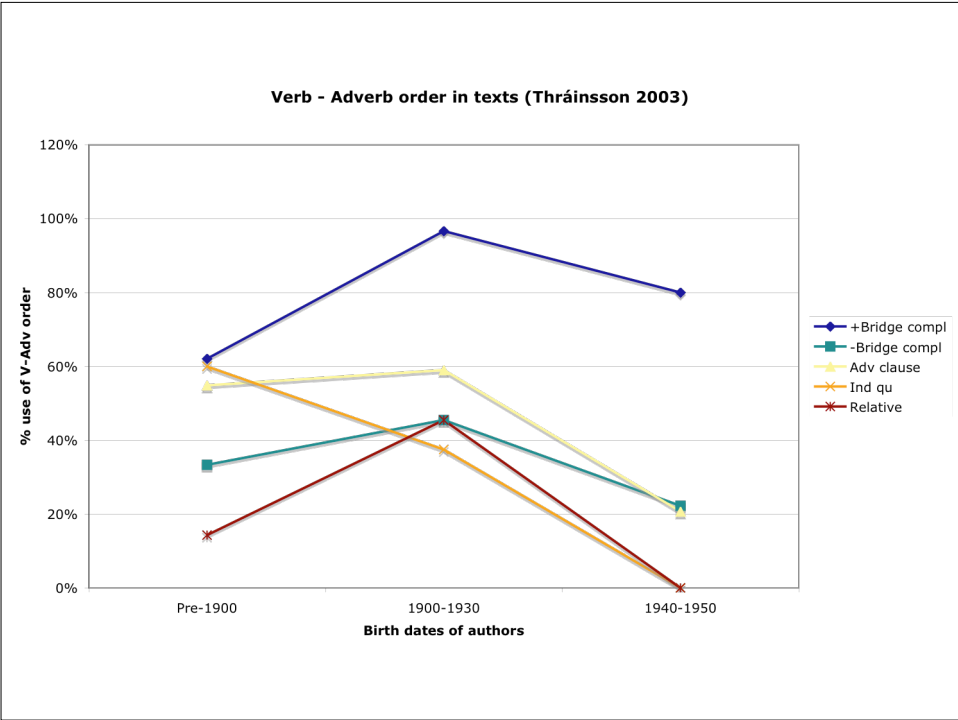
What is the nature of the variability in Faroese?

Empirical questions include:

- Is there dialectal variation?
- Do speakers judgments match their production?
- Do judgments change with exposure to the written language, and more formal styles?

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Verb-Adverb order in texts

(from Thráinsson 2003)

| Clause type | Number of authors, grouped by year of birth | | | | | | | |
|-------------|---|-------|--------------|-------|--------------|-------|---------|-------|
| | 3, pre-1900 | | 5, 1900-1939 | | 3, 1940-1950 | | Total | |
| | V-Adv | Adv-V | V-Adv | Adv-V | V-Adv | Adv-V | V-Adv | Adv-V |
| +Bridge | 18(62%) | 11 | 29(97%) | 1 | 12(80%) | 3 | 59(80%) | 15 |
| -Bridge | 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 |

Issues:
What are the relevant clause types?

- The basic question here is: what is the distribution of “embedded Verb Second”?
 - Do we know what “bridge verbs” are?
 - Are all adverbial clauses equal?

Clause types: some detail from one C21st text

| Type of clause | Verb - Neg | | Neg - Verb | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|-------------|-------------------|-------------|
| + bridge complement | 75% | (21) | 25% | (7) |
| - bridge complement | 33% | (2) | 67% | (4) |
| Adjective complement | 14% | (1) | 86% | (6) |
| Cons. of degree clause | 80% | (8) | 20% | (2) |
| “because” clause (<i>ti</i>) | 100% | (8) | 0% | (0) |
| Other adverbial clause | 6% | (1) | 94% | (15) |
| Indirect question | 0% | (0) | 100% | (2) |
| Relative | 0% | (0) | 100% | (27) |
| Not categorised | 25% | (1) | 75% | (3) |
| Total | 39% | (42) | 61% | (66) |

Issues:
Are all **adverbs** equal?

- Bentzen 2007: In Regional Northern Norwegian, finite verbs may optionally precede various adverbs, but may **not** precede negation.

Issues:
Are all **verbs** equal?

- Is there any trace of the distinction between main verbs and auxiliaries found in English, and reported in the process of acquisition of Swedish in Håkansson & Collberg 1994?

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Judgment data

Thráinsson 2003, Petersen 2000

| | V-Adv | | | Adv-V | | |
|-------------------|-------|-----|------|-------|-----|----|
| | ✓ | ? | * | ✓ | ? | * |
| +bridge compl | 34% | 33% | 33% | 75% | 21% | 4% |
| | 66% | 7% | 26% | 92% | 0% | 8% |
| -bridge compl | 14% | 41% | 45% | 82% | 14% | 4% |
| | 25% | 6% | 69% | 98% | 0% | 2% |
| Relative | 5% | 31% | 64% | 81% | 17% | 2% |
| | 3% | 0% | 97% | 100% | 0% | 0% |
| Indirect question | 5% | 32% | 63% | 74% | 21% | 5% |
| | 0% | 0% | 100% | 100% | 0% | 0% |
| Adverbial clause | 39% | 37% | 24% | 81% | 17% | 2% |

Using Magnitude Estimation

- Subjects assign a number:
 - to an initial sentence to reflect their judgment of its acceptability
 - to each successive sentence to indicate acceptability relative to the first (or to the previous sentence)
- This is not that different from traditional methods for gathering judgments, except that
 - Judgments are explicitly relative
 - There is no imposed scale: no absolute endpoints, and no fixed degree of discrimination
- These differences allow for the use of parametric statistics

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How “generalized” is V2 in Faroese?

We looked at the effect of two variables and their interaction (2 within-subjects variables, 2 and 5 levels):

- Order
 - Subject-Initial
 - Adjunct-Initial
- Clause type
 - Main clause
 - “Bridge verb” complement
 - Nonbridge verb A complement
 - Nonbridge verb B complement
 - Indirect question

Some comments on “clause type”

- We took “say” as the exemplar of a V2-permitting verb
- Vikner 1995 classifies “regret,” “admit,” “deny,” “doubt,” and “(be) proud” as disallowing embedded V2 in Danish (among others). However, Bentzen et al 2007 argue that
 - **true factives** (under which they include “proud”) do not allow embedded root phenomena, including V2, but “admit” is a **semi-factive**, and this class does allow V2
 - “**regret**” (at least its Icelandic translation *harma*), although a factive, for some reason exceptionally allows V2
- For this reason we split up the examples of Vikner’s class of “nonbridge” verbs into two
 - NonBridge **A**: regret, admit
 - NonBridge **B**: deny, doubt, be proud

Examples

- Clause Type: **Bridge** Order: **Subject-Initial**
Lív segði, at hon kom seint til arbeiðis í gjár
Lív said that she came late to work yesterday
- Clause Type: **Bridge** Order: **Adjunct-Initial**
Beinir segði, at í morgin kemur hann seint til arbeiðis
Beinir said that tomorrow comes he late to work
- Clause Type: **NonBridge B** Order: **Subject-Initial**
Sámal noktaði, at hann hevði verið alla náttina á barrini í fleiri førum
Sámal denied that he had been all night in bar-def frequently
- Clause Type: **NonBridge B** Order: **Adjunct-Initial**
Einar noktaði, at í fleiri forum hevði hann drukkið alla náttina á barrini
Einar deniedthat frequently had he drunk all night in bar-def

How acceptable is V-I in Faroese?

Again, we looked at the effect of two variables and their interaction (2 within-subjects variables, 2 and 3 levels):

- Order
 - Verb-Adverb
 - Adverb-Verb
- Type of “adverb”
 - Negation (*ikki*)
 - “High” adverb (*kanska*)
 - “Low” adverb (*ofta*)

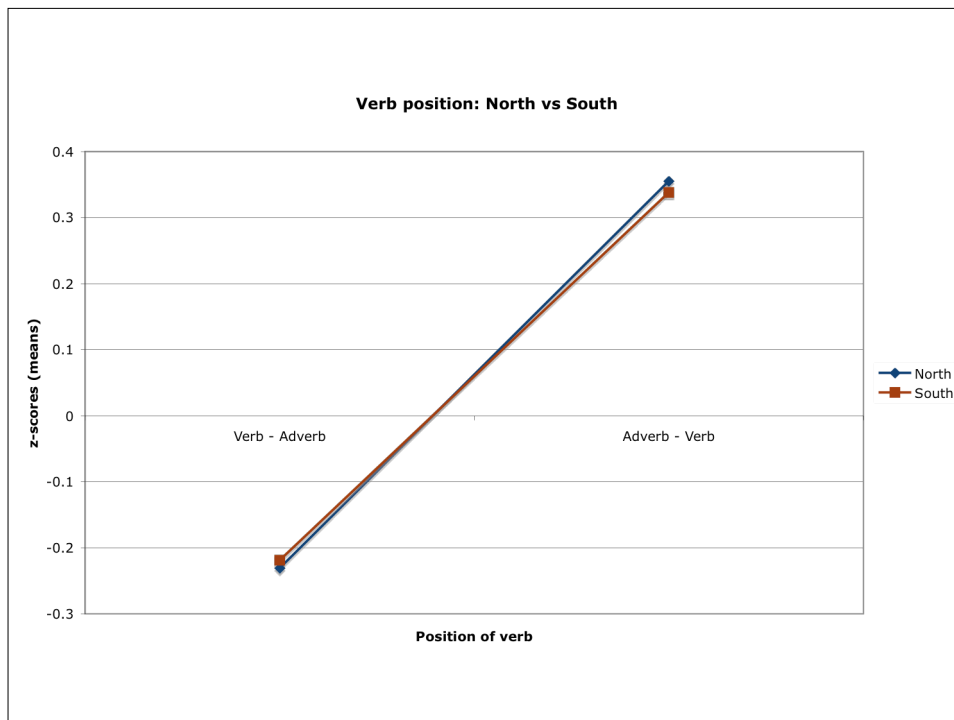
These orders were all contained in relative clauses.

Examples

- Adverb: **Negation** Order: **V-Adv**
Hatta er filmurin, sum Hanus **hevur ikki** sæð
That is film-def that Hanus has neg seen
- Adverb: **Negation** Order: **Adv-V**
Hetta er brævið, sum Elin **ikki hevur** lisið
That is letter-def that Elin neg has read
- Adverb: **Low Adv** Order: **V-Adv**
Hetta er lagið, sum Teitur **hevur ofta** spælt
That is piece-the that Teitur has often played
- Adverb: **Low Adv** Order: **Adv-V**
Hatta er sangurin, sum Eivør **ofta hevur** sungið
That is song-def that Eivør often has sung

Faroese 1 vs Faroese 2: geographic?

- In Jonas 1996 it is argued that there are two distinct “dialects” in Faroese:
 - **Faroese 1**, which optionally allows V-to-I
 - **Faroese 2**, which does not allow V-to-I
- Jonas suggests that these two dialects may correlate both with age and with dialect area: Faroese 1 more common in the southern islands, and among older speakers.
- We investigated the geographic dialect suggestion by collecting data from 25 subjects from Tórshavn (North) and 22 subjects from Suðuroy (South). Subjects were, as much as possible, matched for age.

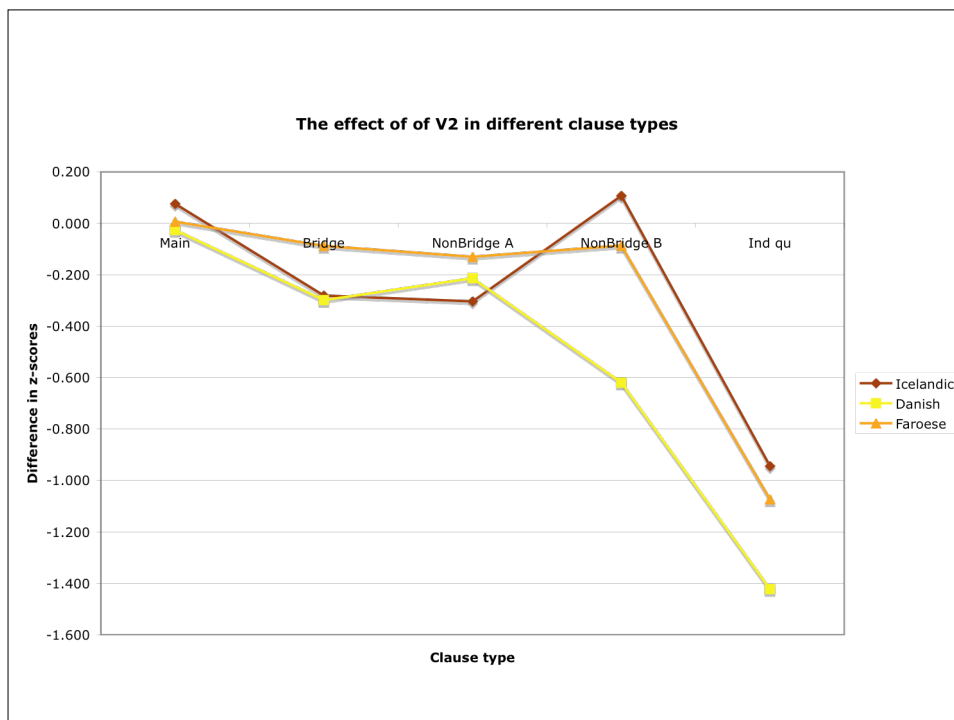


No geographic dialect difference

- The main effect of dialect group was not significant: $F(2, 45) = .002, p = .97$
- There was no significant interaction between language group and position of verb, or between language group and type of adverb
- We did not find any evidence for a geographic dialect difference with respect to V-to-I in our subjects

Looking at the effect of V2

- Each condition (combination of values for each variable) had three sentences exemplifying it: their scores were averaged together for each subject
- The best measure of the effect of V2 is to look at the **difference** between the Subject-Initial and Adjunct-Initial order, for each clause type:



The effect of V2: Danish

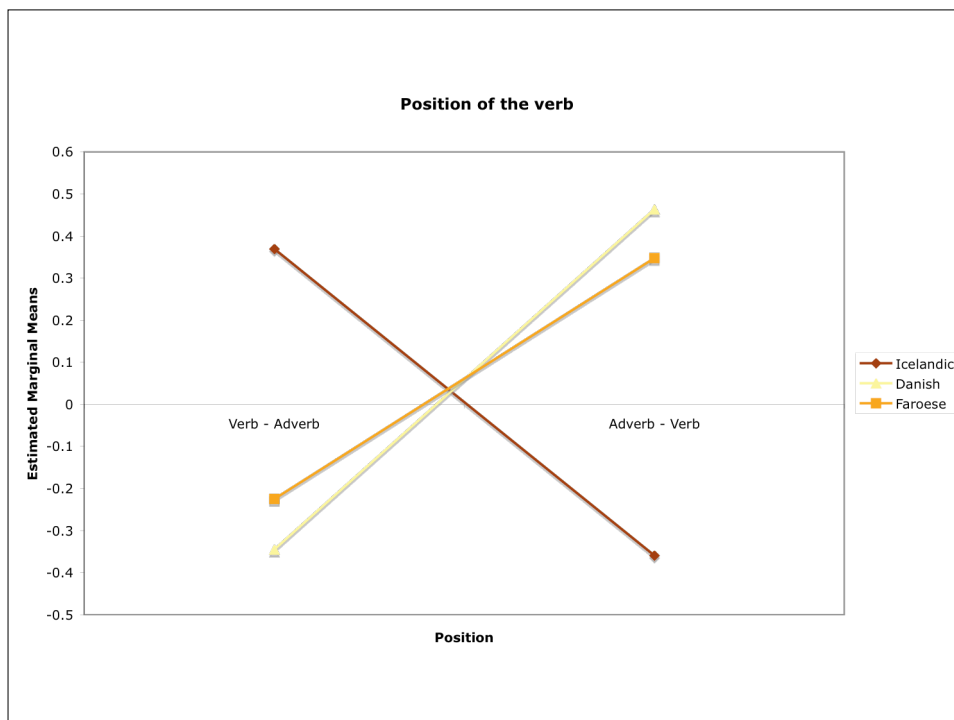
- In Danish there was a significant difference between the effect of V2 in a main clause and after the second category of “nonbridge” verbs (*deny, doubt, be proud*).
- There was however no significant difference between the effect of V2 in a main clause and after the first category of “nonbridge” verbs (*regret, admit*).
- Taken together, this suggests that for this language Vikner’s original categorisation of “bridge” verbs for V2 is not correct; instead these results are more consistent with the proposals in Bentzen et al (2007) or Julien (2007).

The effect of V2: Faroese and Icelandic

- In Faroese and Icelandic, however, there is no significant difference between the effect of V2 in a main clause and after the second category of “nonbridge” verbs.
- This suggests that V2 in these languages targets a different projection than in Danish (and the other mainland Scandinavian languages?)

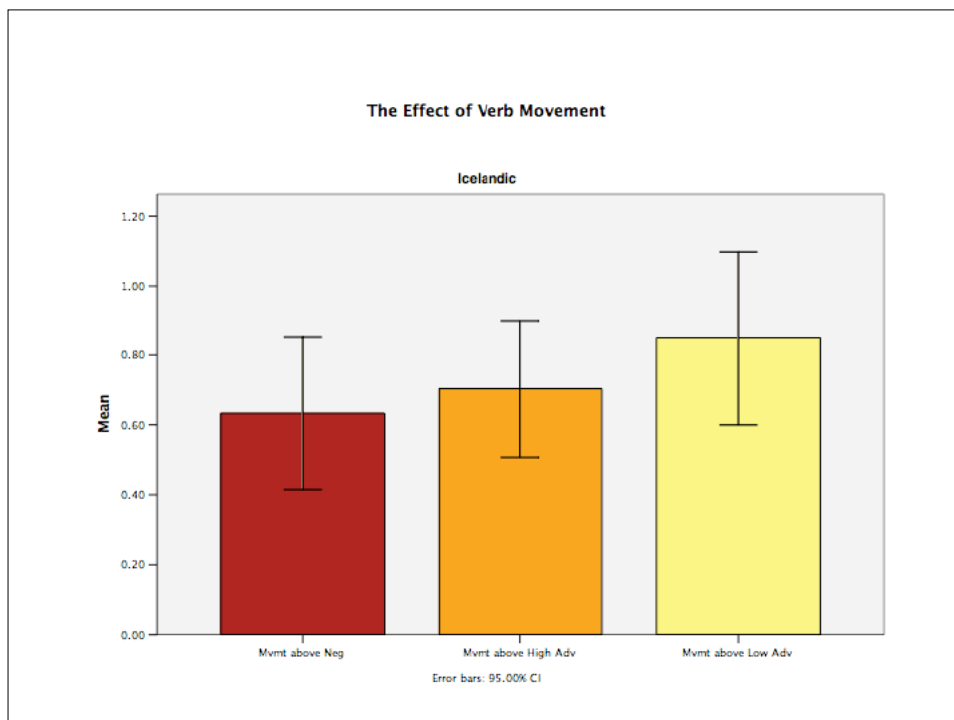
Comparing Verb/Adverb orders

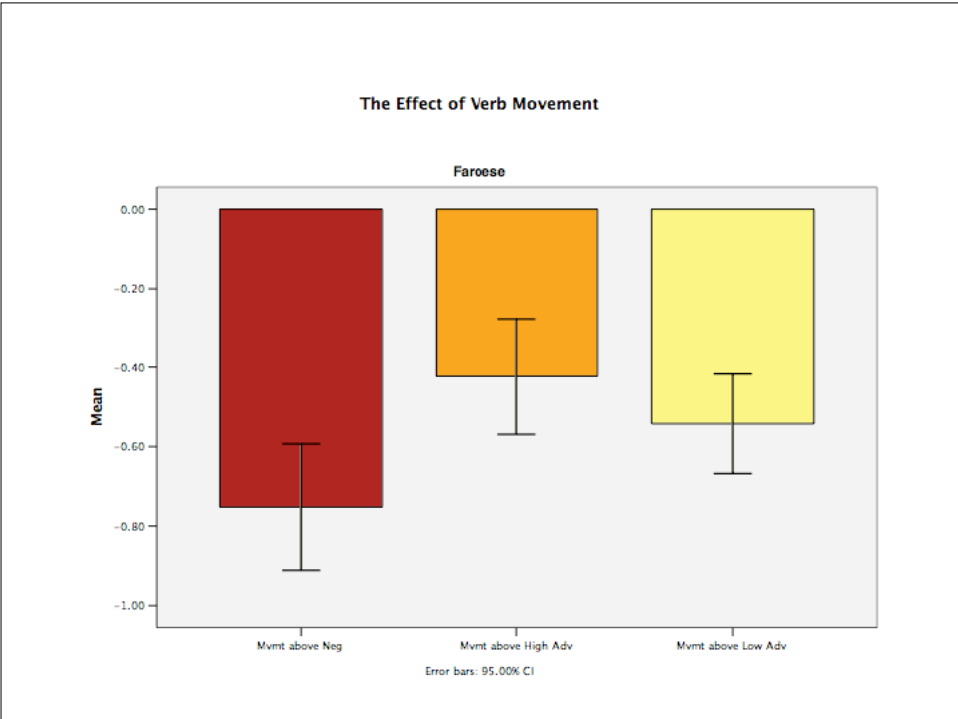
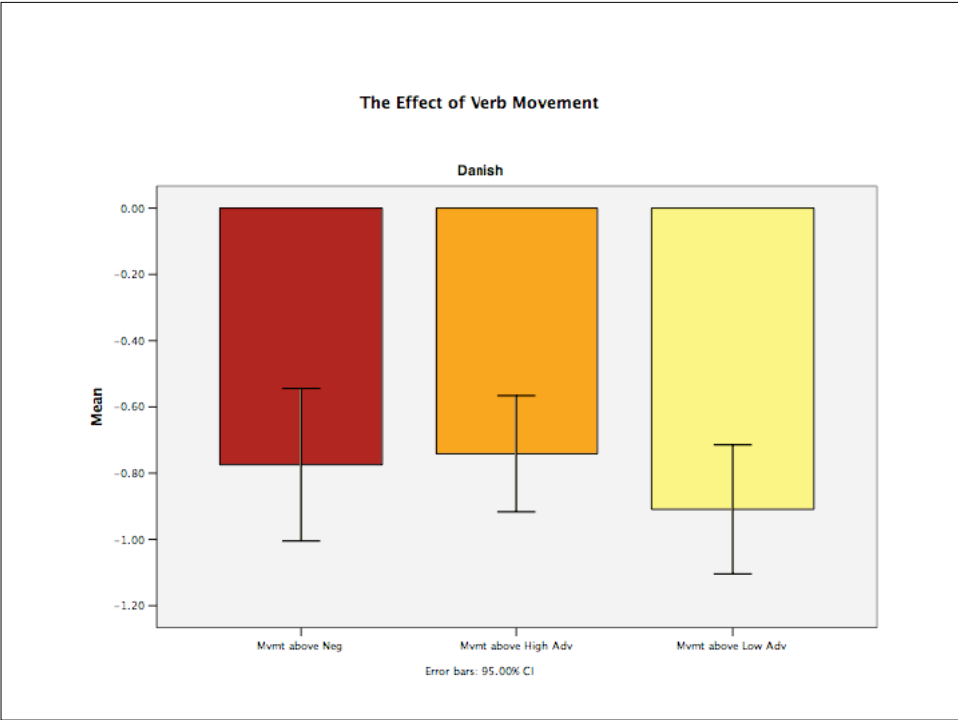
- There is a significant interaction between language and order of the verb with respect to Negation/Adverb.
- I.e. the effect of the different orders is different, depending on the language...

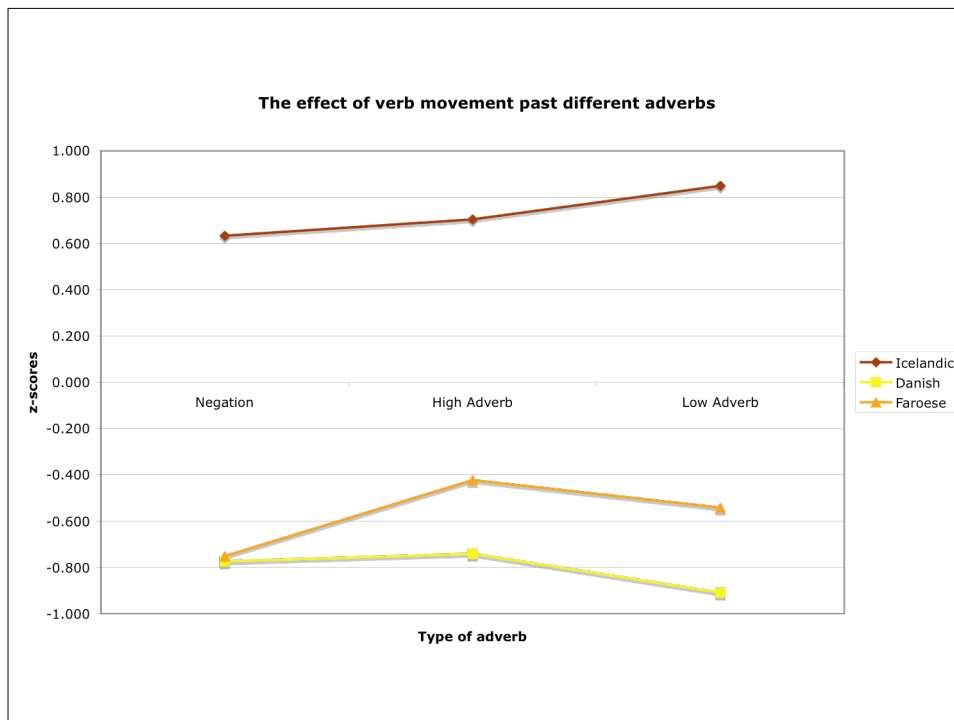


Comparing Verb/Adverb orders

- To see where there is any difference between the different adverbs in terms of whether or not the verb can move past them, we can look at the **difference** between the **Verb-Adverb** and **Adverb-Verb** orders with respect to each of the three adverbs
- We'd expect no difference between verb movement over the three adverbs in **Icelandic** (all should be good) and in **Danish** (all should be bad)
- If **Faroese** is just intermediate between Icelandic and Danish, we'd also expect no effect of the different adverb types here.







Comparing Verb/Adverb orders

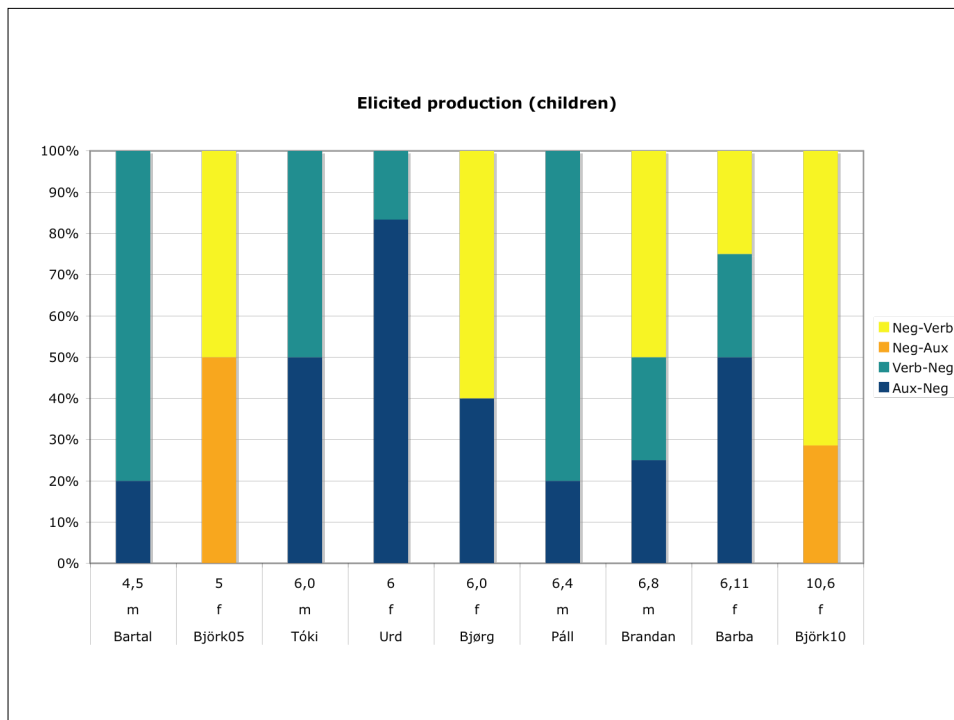
- Our Faroese subjects dispreferred the order Finite Verb - Negation in an unambiguously non-V2 context to the same extent that the Danish subjects did.
- However, our Faroese subjects found Verb-Adverb orders better than Verb-Negation orders (this effect was found neither in Danish nor in Icelandic).
- It is possible that to the extent that IP-internal verb movement is still grammatical in Faroese, for some speakers it is to an intermediate position.

How is verb movement acquired?

- Because it has been reported that at least some adult Faroese speakers optionally allow V-to-I (even though so far we have found that it is significantly dispreferred), we wanted to investigate whether the V-to-I option arises late, after extensive contact with the written variety.
- As part of this, we will be gathering data from children of pre-school age.
- So far we have pilot data from 9 children, aged between 4,5 and 10,6, from a guided elicitation task

How is verb movement acquired?

- To our surprise, we have found so far that **many of the pre-school children produce the Verb - Negation order in indirect questions** (the test context).
- As Westergaard & Bentzen 2007 found for two children speaking Regional Northern Norwegian, who showed a similar pattern, these children are not simply taking indirect questions to have the syntax of main clause questions (with V-to-C), since they never invert the verb past the subject in these contexts.



A Neg-Verb example

INV: Nilli, minnst tú, hvør tað er? Tað er tann lítla apan, ha? Hon hjálpir Pippi at baka siropskakur, sært tú? Men hesturin sleppur ikki at hjálpa til, tí at hann býr úti á altanini, hann tímir ikki at vera inni. Tað minnst vit, men heldur tú, at Gudny minnst hví? Hví, hví sleppur hesturin ikki at hjálpa til? Spyr Gudny! Minnst tú, hví...

CHILD: Minnst tú, hví hesturin **ikki sleppur** inn?

A slip up by the investigator, but...

INV: Ja, hesturin tímir ikki at vera inni...heldur tú, heldur tú at mamma minnist hví...hví hesturin ikki tímir at vera inni? Spyr hana: mamma, minnist tú...

CHILD: ... um hesturin **tímdi ikki** at vera inni?

In conclusion

- We have as yet found **no difference between dialect areas** with respect to V-to-I in Faroese.
- For the subjects we have tested to date, moving the verb higher than **Negation** is as dispreferred in Faroese as it is in Danish.
- There is some (currently limited) evidence that some Faroese speakers may allow verb movement to a position **above adverbs but below Negation**.
- We have some new evidence that Icelandic and Faroese do allow **V2** in more contexts than Danish.
- If further evidence from **children** shows the same pattern as our pilots, the diachronic loss of V-to-I may be despite an initial tendency for children to generalise V-to-I to embedded contexts.

Original experiment sites

- <http://www.lel.ed.ac.uk/~heycock/intro-ice.shtml>
- <http://www.lel.ed.ac.uk/~heycock/intro-dan.shtml>
- Please note that we are no longer gathering data for these experiments—but you are welcome to try them out just to see how the materials are presented.

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