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# How roots do and don't constrain the interpretation of Voice<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

A long-standing issue in syntactic theory, and argument structure in particular, involves the relationship between particular lexical items and the syntactic structures they are embedded in. Lexical roots seem to be choosy about the structures they are able to appear in, but are at the same time very flexible. Complicating the matter further, roots are in some cases able to appear in certain structures only with a certain special meaning. In this paper, I focus on the causative alternation in Icelandic, and propose that we can understand root distribution (the inability of certain roots to appear in certain structures) as a special case of root alloosemy (the special interpretation of certain roots in certain structures). This allows for a model where roots have no formal features whatsoever, even if they appear to select for particular structural features, and offers an explanation for cases where it is shown that the putative features of a root cannot be responsible for the interpretation of external arguments directly.

## 1 Introduction

The goal of this paper is to address a question that spans a variety of frameworks: what is the relationship between a particular “verb word” and the syntactic rules of a language? For example, English speakers have the intuition that *grow* but not *bloom* can occur in transitive sentences like the following:

- (1) a. Julia is growing tomato plants in our backyard.
- b. \* Julia is blooming tomato plants in our backyard.

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<sup>1</sup>For discussions directly related to this paper, special thanks to Einar Freyr Sigurðsson, Anton Karl Ingason, and Florian Schäfer. For ongoing discussions related to the material presented here, thanks to Alec Marantz, Neil Myler, Halldór Sigurðsson, and Itamar Kastner. Thanks to Sigríður Sigurjónsdóttir, Jóhannes Gísli Jónsson and Ásgrímur Angantýsson for providing native speaker judgments on several of the sentences discussed here. This paper is a write up of a talk given at the Roots IV workshop at New York University on June 30th, 2015. Thanks to the participants there for many lively discussions of the issues raised here and many related issues.

Along similar lines, Icelandic speakers have the intuition that ‘kill’ but not ‘murder’ can occur in intransitive sentences like the following:<sup>2</sup>

- (2) a. Hundurinn drapst.  
           dog.the.NOM killed-ST  
           ‘The dog died / dropped dead.’  
       b. \* Maðurinn myrti(st).  
           man.the.NOM murdered-ST

What is responsible for contrasts like (1) and (2)? In this paper, I will address this question in a way that divides it into two kinds of issues. On the one hand, there is the distribution and interpretation of lexical roots in different structures. On the other hand, there is the interpretation of Voice in the context of different verb phrases. I will propose that the burden of explanation for both of these issues lies in the rules for interpreting syntactic structures in the semantics.

The specific proposal is as follows. Roots bear no structural features related to argument structure. From a syntactic perspective, any root can merge in any structure. However, the rules that interpret syntactic structure restrict the distribution of roots, and the interpretation of verbs and verb phrases. The interpretation of a root can be sensitive to surrounding syntactic features. The distribution of a root across structures is derived by the absence of an “elsewhere” interpretation. Finally, the interpretation of Voice is determined by the overall interpretation of the vP, but not any specific root or feature within the vP.

The paper is organized as follows. In §2, I discuss the causative alternation in Icelandic. In §3, I introduce the issue of non-alternating roots—that is, roots that can only be anticausative, and generally not causative. In §4, I discuss the idiosyncratic interpretation of roots in particular structures. In §5, I discuss how contextual allosemy of roots is responsible for the phenomena discussed in the

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<sup>2</sup>Abbreviations/symbols used:  $\gamma$  = web-attested example (Horn, 2013), ACC = accusative, AGR = agreement morphology, COS = change of state, DAT = dative, EXPL = expletive, F = feminine, INTR = intransitive, NA = *-na* morphology, NOM = nominative, PASS = passive, PST = past, REFL = reflexive, SBJV = subjunctive, ST = *-st* morphology, TR = transitive.

previous two sections. In §6, I turn to the interpretation of Voice, focusing first on the agentive *vera með* ‘be with’ construction, and second on the interaction between Voice and roots in the causative alternation. §7 concludes.

## 2 The causative alternation in Icelandic

The causative alternation is an argument structure alternation whereby a verb can take either an agent/causer and a theme, as in (3a), or just a theme, as in (3b).

- (3) a. John broke the window.  
b. The window broke.

Following a long line of work, I assume that the causative alternation is a Voice alternation, having fundamentally to do with whether or not an external argument is projected (Alexiadou and Anagnostopoulou, 2004; Schäfer, 2008; Alexiadou et al., 2015). More specifically, assuming with Kratzer (1996) and much subsequent work that the external argument is projected syntactically by a Voice head, I propose that Voice comes in two syntactic flavors (Wood, 2015):

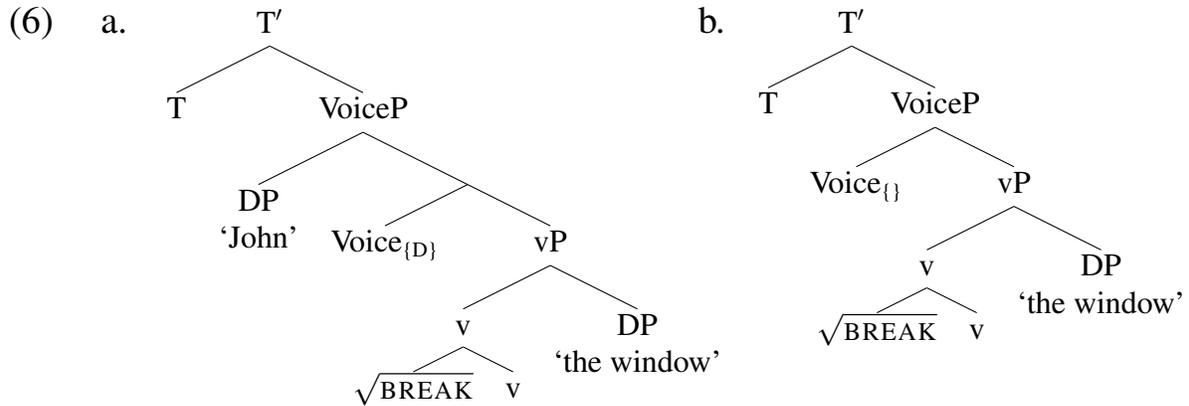
- (4) a. **Voice<sub>{D}</sub>** has a D-feature that must be checked—usually by merging something of category “D” in SpecVoiceP.  
b. **Voice<sub>∅</sub>** has no D-feature, and may not take a specifier.

A typical causative alternation, such as that in (5), will then look like (6):<sup>3</sup>

- (5) a. John broke the window.  
b. The window broke.

---

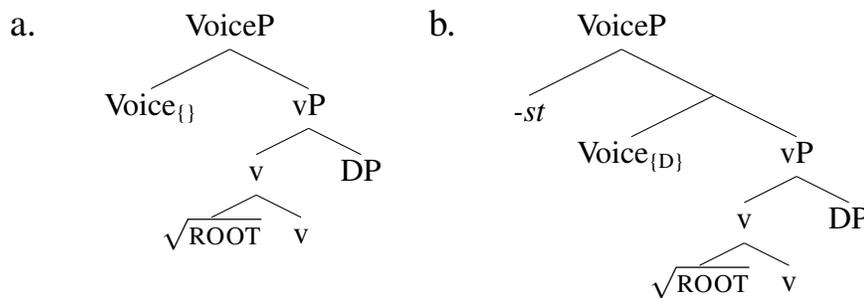
<sup>3</sup>In this paper, I follow Marantz (2013b) in assuming that a verbal root is generally adjoined to *v*, and not merged in the complement of *v*; the major points do not hinge on this, however.



In (6a),  $\text{Voice}_{\{D\}}$  merges and a DP merges in its specifier, deriving the causative variant. In (6b), the defective  $\text{Voice}_{\{\}}$  merges, which takes no specifier, deriving the anticausative variant.<sup>4</sup>

There is, however, at least one other way to derive an anticausative: by merging an “expletive” in the specifier of  $\text{Voice}_{\{D\}}$  (Schäfer, 2008). In Icelandic, the *-st* clitic serves this function (Sigurðsson, 2012; Wood, 2015).

(7) Two kinds of anticausative structures in Icelandic



The structure in (7a) is realized morphologically in at least three different ways in Icelandic. These are illustrated in (9a).

(8)  $\text{Voice}_{\{\}}$  is realized as *-na /-nu*

- a. Jón            **braut**        gluggana.  
 John.NOM break.PST windows.the.ACC  
 ‘John broke the windows.’

<sup>4</sup>An alternative would be to say that in the anticausative variant, no Voice head is merged at all. See Wood (2015, 152–155) for reasons not to adopt this approach.

- b. Gluggarnir           **brot-nu-ðu.**  
 windows.the.NOM break-NA-PST  
 ‘The windows broke.’
- (9) Voice<sub>{}</sub> conditions distinct stem morphology
- a. Þeir           **brenndu**   bókina.  
 they.NOM burn.TR.PST book.the.ACC  
 ‘They burned the book.’
- b. Bókin           **brann.**  
 book.the.NOM burn.INTR.PST  
 ‘The book burned.’ (Sigurðsson, 1989, 277)
- (10) No morphological distinction
- a. Fólk           **dýp-ka-ði**   skurðinn.  
 people.NOM deep-en-PST ditch.the.ACC  
 ‘People deepened the ditch.’
- b. Skurðurinn   **dýp-ka-ði.**  
 ditch.the.NOM deep-en-PST  
 ‘The ditch deepened.’ (Thráinsson, 2007, 299)

The structure in (7b) is realized morphologically in one way: with transitive stem morphology (cf. (9a)) and *-st* encliticized to the verbal complex.

- (11) a. Hún           **opna-ði**   hurðina.  
 she.NOM open-PST door.the.ACC  
 ‘She opened the door.’
- b. Hurðin           **opna-ði-st.**  
 door.the.NOM open-PST-ST  
 ‘The door opened.’

As proposed more generally in Alexiadou et al. (2015), there seem to be no consistent semantic differences between the two anticausative structures (Wood, 2015). Given that, we still need some way to understand how roots “choose” which anticausative structure to occur in.

Before concluding this section, it is important to note that “inherent *-st* verbs” are not inherent reflexives. In Icelandic, inherent (and “natural”) reflexives

involve a case-marked reflexive pronoun, and not *-st*. Nor can naturally disjoint verbs, which ordinarily form reflexives only with the complex ‘self’ morpheme, form reflexive *-st* verbs. These facts are illustrated in (12)–(14) below.

(12) **Inherent Reflexive**

- |                            |                      |
|----------------------------|----------------------|
| a. Jón hegðar sér vel.     | b. *Jón hegðast vel. |
| John behaves REFL.DAT well | John behaves-ST well |
| ‘John behaves well.’       |                      |

(13) **Natural Reflexive**

- |                      |                   |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| a. Jón rakaði sig.   | b. *Jón rakaðist. |
| John shaved REFL.ACC | John shaved-ST    |
| ‘John shaved.’       |                   |

(14) **Naturally Disjoint**

- |                              |                    |
|------------------------------|--------------------|
| a. Jón elskaði sjálfan sig.  | b. *Jón elskaðist. |
| John loved self.ACC REFL.ACC | John loved-ST      |
| ‘John loved himself.’        |                    |

This shows that *-st* is not a general “reflexive marker” in Icelandic. See Wood (2014) and Wood (2015, 171–204, 283–298) for discussion of the cases where *-st* does appear on a limited class of verbs with apparent reflexive meanings.

### 3 Non-Alternating Roots

The problem of how roots choose an anticausative structure is nowhere more pronounced than in cases of non-alternating anticausatives. For alternating anticausatives, one can identify various factors that affect the choice. Verbs that are more frequent in the causative use will tend to take Voice<sub>{D}</sub>+*-st* in the anticausative (Haspelmath et al., 2014). This is part of a more general phenomenon of “marking the unexpected form.” We might then expect that non-alternating anticausatives would always appear with Voice<sub>{}</sub>, but this is in fact not the case. While some non-alternating roots indeed occur with *-na* morphology or without anticausative morphology, others occur with *-st* instead.

(15) **No anticausative morphology**

- a. \* *María* hefur grænkað bílinn.  
Mary.NOM has greened car.the.ACC
- b. *Bíllinn* hefur **grænkað**.  
car.the.NOM has greened  
'The car has become more green.' (Sigurðsson, 1989, 272)

(16) **-na morphology on anticausative**

- a. \* *Aldurinn* stirðir höndina.  
age.the.NOM stiffens hand.the.ACC
- b. *Höndin* **stirð-na-r** (með aldrinum).  
hand.the.NOM stiffen-NA-AGR (with age.the)  
'Your hand stiffens with age.' (Sigurðsson, 1989, 273)

(17) **-st morphology on anticausative**

- a. \* *Sólin* hefur blómgað seljuna.  
sun.the.NOM has bloomed willow.the.ACC
- b. *Seljan* hefur **blómgast**.  
willow.the.NOM has bloomed-ST  
'The willow has bloomed.'

A list of some verbs that occur in each class is given in (18).

- (18) a. **Like *grænka/stirðna***: *blána* 'turn blue', *bruma* 'bud', *fölna* 'wilt/pale', *freyða* 'foam', *roðna* 'blush', *rotna* 'rot', *ryðga* 'rust', *slakna* 'become slack', *visna* 'wither', *þrútna* 'swell'.
- b. **Like *blómgast***: *daprast* 'worsen (eyesight)', *fiðrast* 'get feathers', *fullorðnast* 'grow up', *gerjast* 'ferment', *horast* 'become emaciated', *reiðast* 'become angry', *tærast* 'corrode', *veslast upp* 'wither away'.

The question, then is how is it that verb roots are able to “choose” between (7a) and (7b)? Moreover, why would there be a class of roots that don't take an external argument, but nevertheless prefer to form their anticausatives with Voice<sub>{D}</sub>?

Before beginning to address these questions, I should briefly address the question of whether these roots really are non-alternating—that is, whether they really do not allow an external argument. Recent work has shown that many roots

once thought to be non-alternating in fact do alternate, sometimes under restricted circumstances (Rappaport Hovav, 2014; Alexiadou, 2010, 2014). In this respect, the examples in (19) are of some interest:

- (19) a.  $\gamma$  ef hún er ræktuð og **gerjuð** af natni.  
 if it.F is cultivated and fermented with care  
 ‘if it (=the Malbec grape) is cultivated and fermented with care.’<sup>5</sup>
- b.  $\gamma$  bakteríur í munni **gerja** sykurrinn  
 bacteria in mouth ferment sugar.the  
 í matvælum sem við neytum.  
 in foods that we consume  
 ‘bacteria in our mouths process the sugar  
 in the foods that we consume.’<sup>6</sup>

Ordinarily, *gerjast* ‘ferment’ appears as an intransitive *-st* verb. But in (19a), the modifier *af natni* ‘with care’ suggests an agentive passive, and (19b) appears in the transitive active. Examples like this seem to be rare in Icelandic, possibly because Icelandic generally restricts the types of external arguments it allows. (See Barðdal 2001, 73 on the oddness of instrument subjects, and see also Svenonius 2002, 200 on several other types.) Not all speakers I have consulted accept the attested examples in (19). Though further research is needed, we will see below that they are in principle compatible with the proposal below, since I will propose that external arguments cannot be “lexically banned” or “syntactically banned” in the first place. Therefore, since there is no principled lexical or syntactic reason why a particular root fails to occur with an external argument, the occasional, restricted appearance of external arguments with roots that are ordinarily non-alternating is entirely expected.

---

<sup>5</sup><http://goo.gl/mgmj9P>

<sup>6</sup><http://goo.gl/GxAse0>

#### 4 Idiosyncratic Root Interpretation

In some cases, the same root may form two kinds of anticausatives, one in the (7a) structure and another in the (7b) structure. In such cases, the root tends to contribute a special, idiosyncratic meaning in one of the structures. Consider first the example in (20).

- (20) a.  $\gamma$  Hún **gleður** mig með tónlist sinni.  
 she.NOM gladdens me.ACC with music REFL.POSS  
 ‘She gladdens me with her music.’<sup>7</sup>
- b.  $\gamma$  Ég **gleðst** yfir að sjá þig.  
 I.NOM gladden-ST over to see you  
 ‘I gladden over seeing you.’<sup>8</sup>
- c.  $\gamma$  Himinn **glað-na-ði**.  
 sky.NOM glad-NA-PST  
 ‘The heavens cleared.’<sup>9</sup>
- d. Það **glað-na-ði** yfir honum.  
 EXPL glad-NA-PST over him  
 ‘His face brightened up.’

In (20a–b), we see that *gleðja(st)* ‘gladden’ can occur in the transitive causative or the intransitive anticausative, with basically the same meaning when *-st* marks the anticausative. In (20c), we say that when *-na* marks the anticausative, the verb gets a special meaning, distinct from the meaning found in (20a–b). In (20d), we see another special meaning of the *-na* anticausative. There, the meaning is not that he becomes glad, necessarily, but that his face changes visibly. Assuming that *-na* and *-st* markings reflect distinct syntactic structures, this shows that the interpretation of the root can be affected by the structure it is embedded in.

We see another of this kind of difference in the sentences exemplified in (21) and (22).

<sup>7</sup><http://goo.gl/feVr0C> (adapted; originally *Hún gleður mig líka með tónlistinni sinni*)

<sup>8</sup><http://goo.gl/PLONxl>

<sup>9</sup><http://goo.gl/4T6Xie>

- (21) a. Þú **beygir** orðið svoleiðis.  
 you bend word.the like.this  
 ‘You inflect the word like this.’
- b. Orðið **beygist** svoleiðis.  
 word.the bends-ST like.this  
 ‘The word inflects like this.’
- (22) a. Þú **beygir** hilluna.  
 you bend shelf.the  
 ‘You bend the shelf.’
- b. Hillan **bog-na-r**.  
 shelf.the bend-NA-AGR  
 ‘The shelf bends.’

(21a) and (22a) show that *beygja* ‘bend’ can occur, in the transitive forms, with at least two distinct meanings. In (21a) it means ‘inflect’. In (22a) it means, more literally, ‘bend’. In the (b) examples we see that in the anticausative, the different interpretations are marked differently. The ‘inflect’ meaning takes the *-st* clitic, while the ‘bend’ meaning takes the *-na* suffix.

Cases like this show that we need to allow roots like  $\sqrt{\text{GLAÐ}}$  and  $\sqrt{\text{BEYG}}$  to occur in both structures, but get a special interpretation in one of them. So in this case, it is not about which structure does a root pick for the anticausative, but rather, which structures does it pick with certain meanings. I will argue in the next section that this fact is crucial to understanding the phenomenon of non-alternating roots discussed in the previous section because it is actually part of the same phenomenon.

## 5 Contextual Allosemy and Roots

In this section, I propose that the existence of non-alternating roots and special interpretations of roots are reflexes of the same phenomenon: root allosemy selection. The idea stems from a line of work going back at least to Arad (2003, 2005), and explored in depth in recent work (Marantz, 2013a; Anagnostopoulou





that needs to be integrated semantically.<sup>11</sup>

## 6 The Interpretation of Voice

In this section, I would like to provide initial support for the idea that the interpretation of Voice is determined by the overall interpretation of the vP, but not any specific root or feature within the vP. That is, like lexical roots, functional heads like Voice are subject to allosemy at the semantics: their interpretation is determined post-syntactically by rules such as (30).

- (30) a.  $\text{Voice}_{\{D\}} \leftrightarrow \lambda x_e \lambda e_s. \text{AGENT}(x,e) / \_ \text{ (agentive vP)}$   
 b.  $\text{Voice}_{\{D\}} \leftrightarrow \lambda x_e \lambda s_s. \text{HOLDER}(x,s) / \_ \text{ (stative vP)}$   
     {... other meanings in other contexts. ... }  
 c.  $\text{Voice}_{\{D\}} \leftrightarrow \lambda P_{\langle s,t \rangle}. P / \_ \text{ elsewhere}$

These rules say that when the vP complement of  $\text{Voice}_{\{D\}}$  is interpreted as denoting an agentive event,  $\text{Voice}_{\{D\}}$  gets the ‘AGENT’ alloseme. When the vP complement of  $\text{Voice}_{\{D\}}$  is interpreted as denoting a stative eventuality,  $\text{Voice}_{\{D\}}$  gets the ‘STATE-HOLDER’ alloseme.<sup>12</sup> (30c) is essentially the  $\emptyset$  interpretation, which is “expletive voice.” That is, it means that in this case,  $\text{Voice}_{\{D\}}$  introduces no thematic interpretation at all.<sup>13</sup> It is the alloseme that appears in anticausative contexts.

The point of this section is to argue that the choice of interpretation for  $\text{Voice}_{\{D\}}$  is not encoded on any specific feature of  $\text{Voice}_{\{D\}}$ , or any feature within the vP or on any lexical verb root. Rather, the choice is based entirely on the semantics of the vP, which is computed on the basis of root alloseme selection, the

<sup>11</sup>This explanation is similar in nature to the explanation offered in Alexiadou (2010, 2014), but note that we still do not have any explanation for German, which, like Icelandic, has “expletive voice,” but which, like English, disallows anticausatives of ‘kill’ and ‘destroy’.

<sup>12</sup>This is essentially the proposal of Kratzer (1996), recast in terms of late interpretation.

<sup>13</sup>The consequence is that if  $\text{Voice}_{\{D\}}$  has a specifier, it had better be an argument expletive like *-st*, or else whatever is in its specifier needs some other way of being integrated semantically in the vP. See Wood and Marantz (to appear) for detailed discussion of such cases.

structural semantics of the other arguments in the vP, and the overall event construal.

I will start by providing general support for this view from the *vera með* ‘be with’ construction in Icelandic. This construction may or may not be agentive, but the decision cannot be blamed on any specific root in the structure. I will then turn back to the causative alternation and discuss how the general idea works there.

### 6.1 Agentive Constructions with *No Agentive Root*

The *vera með* ‘be with’ construction is best known for its uses expressing certain kinds of possession (Irie, 1997; Levinson, 2011; Myler, 2014; Myler et al., in prep).

- (31) a. Hann er með rautt hár.  
 he.NOM is with red hair.ACC  
 ‘He has red hair.’
- b. Þeir eru með kvef.  
 they.NOM are with cold.ACC  
 ‘They have a cold.’
- c. Hún er með fimm bækur á sér.  
 she.NOM is with five books.ACC on her  
 ‘She has five books on her.’

However as pointed out to me by Einar Freyr Sigurðsson (p.c.), it can also be used to express agentive activities. This is exemplified with the sentence in (32).

- (32) Hann var alltaf með einhver furðulegheit.  
 he was always with some weirdness  
 ‘He was always acting weird.’

Importantly, this sentence refers to active behavior. It is not enough for the subject to possess the quality of weirdness. What it describes is the subject’s actions—that he is acting weird.

Strikingly, there is evidence that the subject in these constructions is not only agentive, but is actually externally merged in SpecVoiceP. The evidence comes

from the fact that the construction may be passivized, as shown in (33a). Attested passivized examples of this use are shown in (33b–c).<sup>14</sup>

- (33) a. Það var alltaf verið með einhver furðulegheit.  
EXPL was always been with some weirdness  
'There were always people acting weird.'
- b. γ ...að ekki sé verið með neinar hótanir...  
...that not is.SBJV been with any threats...  
'... that threats are not being made...'<sup>15</sup>
- c. γ ...eins og það væri verið með kveikjara  
...like EXPL was.SBJV been with lighters  
upp við húðina á sér...  
against her skin...  
'... [felt] like lighters were being held against her skin...'<sup>16,17</sup>

In Icelandic, impersonal passivization is generally possible when there is an external argument and it is agentive (Sigurðsson 1989, 315–321; Thráinsson 2007, 266–269). For example, it is not enough to have a [+HUMAN] implicit argument.

- (34) a. Páll blá-na-ði af bræði.  
Paul.NOM blue-NA-PST from anger  
'Paul went blue from anger.'
- b. \*Það var blá-na-ð af bræði.  
EXPL was blue-NA-PASS from anger  
INTENDED: 'People went blue from  
anger.' (Sigurðsson, 1989, 317)

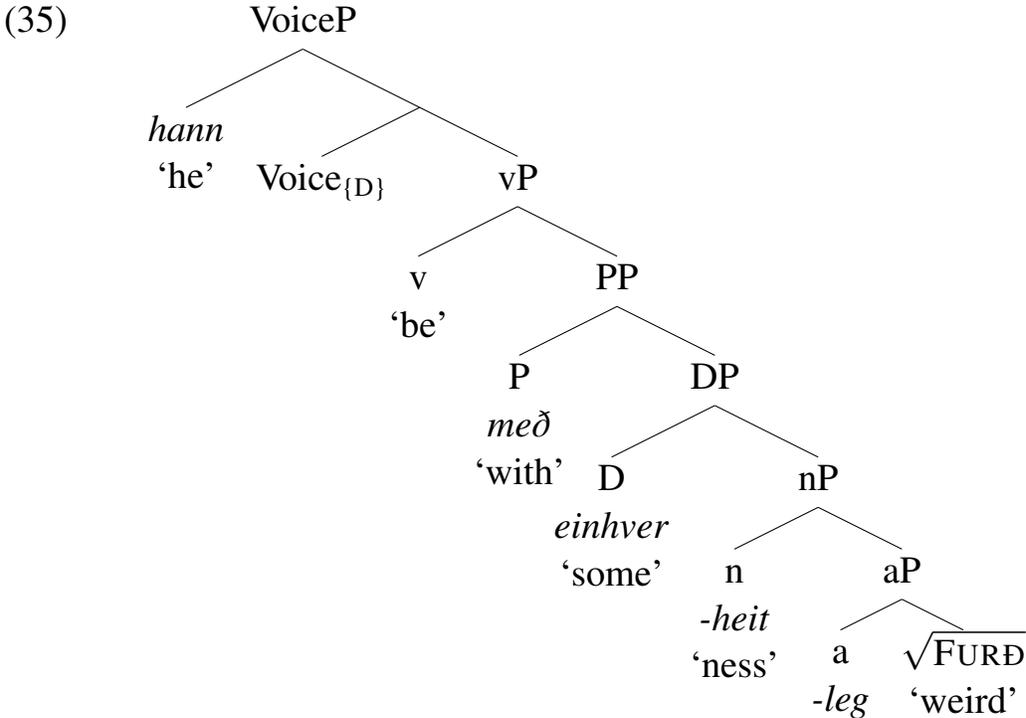
The passivization facts suggest the structure in (32) for the *vera með* 'be with' construction.

<sup>14</sup>Halldór Sigurðsson (p.c.) points out that these examples, to him, seem more "active" than agentive. I will investigate the distinction further in future work, but for now, what is important is that the interpretation of the external argument is determined by the vP meaning as a whole, and not from any one, specific root within the vP.

<sup>15</sup><http://goo.gl/v3ti1I>

<sup>16</sup><https://goo.gl/2MPH0v>

<sup>17</sup>For some context, the author here is describing his sister's account of what it feels like to have a tattoo removed with lasers.



In this structure, the root is plausibly too embedded to make specific semantic demands on  $\text{Voice}_{\{D\}}$ . Moreover, in some cases, the roots build deadjectival nouns: such roots are not normally eventive, let alone agentive. So it would be odd to associate them with some diacritic specifying what kind of Voice head to combine with.

Instead, what seems to be going on is that Voice is interpreted as agentive because it is combining with a vP that is understood as agentive. In the case of the agentive *vera með* ‘be with’ construction, this vP meaning is constructed compositionally from its parts, but not from a specific verb that is listed lexically as forming agentive events. Rather, the lexical root builds up some kind of nP (and then DP) meaning, and that is embedded in a possessive construction, and the overall result is the agentive, eventive interpretation of the vP.

While I cannot go too deeply into the details of how the eventive interpretation of the *vera með* ‘be with’ construction works, a few brief remarks may help clarify what is going on. In general, the *vera með* ‘be with’ construction expresses accompanied possession. This typically includes (a) body parts, (b) illnesses, and (c) possessed entities currently being carried by the possessor. Naturally, body

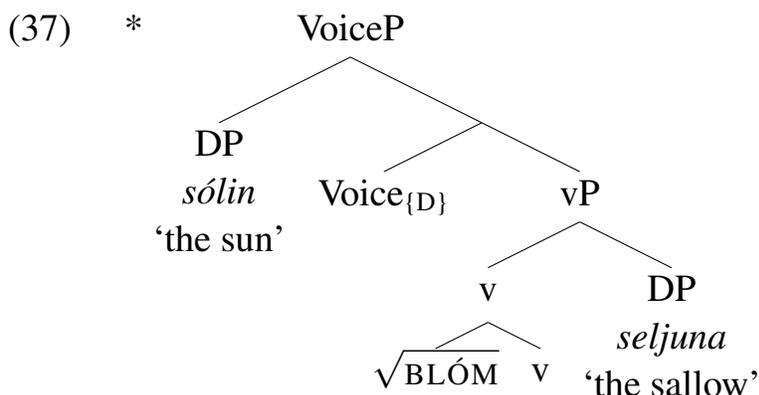
parts and illnesses accompany the possessor. As for (c), the meaning is something like English *She has got five books on her* (even when the PP is not overtly expressed). This is generally construed as temporary possession.

In the agentive *vera með* ‘be with’ construction, we have temporary possession of, say, “weirdness”. The subject is then temporarily accompanied by weirdness, as if the subject is “bringing weirdness with him”. To the extent, then, that the vP in a *vera með* ‘be with’ is construed as denoting an agentive event,  $\text{Voice}_{\{D\}}$  will be interpreted as agentive (and passivization will be possible). But there is no lexical root that is directly to blame for the agentive interpretation of  $\text{Voice}_{\{D\}}$ . It is the vP that is agentive.

## 6.2 Voice and Roots in the Causative Alternation

Returning to the causative alternation, we are now in a position to show how the system will determine whether a root will form an alternating verb in the first place. (27), for example, says that  $\sqrt{\text{BLÓM}}$  will get a meaning like ‘bloom’ in the context of  $\text{Voice}_{\{D\}}$ . But what rules out (36a) with the structure in (37)?

- (36) a. \* *Sólin* hefur blómgað *seljuna*.  
 sun.the.NOM has bloomed *salow.the.ACC*
- b. *Seljan* hefur **blómgast**.  
*salow.the.NOM* has bloomed-ST  
 ‘The salow has bloomed.’



Note that nothing, up until this point, rules this out.  $\sqrt{\text{BLÓM}}$  is in the context of  $\text{Voice}_{\{D\}}$ , so it should well be able to get an interpretation in this structure.

One kind of explanation is that verbs like ‘bloom’ describe internally caused events (Levin and Rappaport Hovav, 1995). Internally caused events are events construed in such a way that external causers will be semantically odd. We see the other direction as well: agentive events only allow the transitive structure.

- (38) a. Konan                    myrti        manninn.  
           woman.the.NOM murdered man.the.ACC  
           ‘The woman murdered the man.’
- b. # Hraunstraumurinn myrti        manninn.  
           lava.stream.the.NOM murdered man.the.ACC
- c. \* Maðurinn        myrti(st).  
           man.the.NOM murdered-ST

(38b) is odd because what we typically understand about murdering events is that they are caused by an agentive, sentient being (though see below), and lava streams are normally not construed as agentive or sentient.

This basic explanation is on the right track. In the present framework, (36a) is out because  $\text{Voice}_{\{D\}}$  cannot be thematic (i.e., cannot get an interpretation other than the  $\emptyset$ , expletive interpretation) and (38c) is out because  $\text{Voice}_{\{D\}}$  must be thematic (agentive, in this case). However, the way that the root determines this is indirect.  $\text{Voice}_{\{D\}}$  has no agentive features; it is in principle compatible with either an agentive interpretation or an expletive interpretation. Neither VERBS nor VERB ROOTS are categorized as “internally caused”, “agentive”, etc. Rather, the entire VERB PHRASE gets an interpretation that may be construed as compatible with various allosemes of  $\text{Voice}_{\{D\}}$ .

- (39) a.  $\text{Voice}_{\{D\}} \leftrightarrow \lambda x_e \lambda e_s. \text{AGENT}(x,e) / \_$  (agentive vP)
- b.  $\text{Voice}_{\{D\}} \leftrightarrow \lambda x_e \lambda s_s. \text{HOLDER}(x,s) / \_$  (stative vP)
- {... other meanings in other contexts...}
- c.  $\text{Voice}_{\{D\}} \leftrightarrow \lambda P_{\langle s,t \rangle}. P$                     /  $\_$  elsewhere

What it means to be “internally caused” is, essentially, to be the kind of vP that is not readily compatible with an agent, causer, state-holder, etc. So *myrða* ‘murder’ generally disallows anticausatives because it generally forms agentive verb phrases. That is, a vP like [<sub>vP</sub> *murder the man* ] is generally construed as denoting a kind of event where the man dies due to agentive planning. Once this interpretation is determined, Voice<sub>{D}</sub> must get the AGENT alloeme.

However, some speakers allow an anticausative of *myrða* ‘murder’ with a special interpretation:

- (40) a.  $\gamma$  Ég er að **drepa** úr spenningi, ÁFRAM ÍSLAND!!!  
 I am to kill-ST from excitement, GO ICELAND  
 ‘The excitement is killing me. GO ICELAND!!!’<sup>18</sup>
- b.  $\gamma$  ég er að **myrðast** úr spenningi!!!  
 I am to murder-ST from excitement  
 ‘The excitement is murdering me!!!’<sup>19</sup>

Such speakers appear to be moving from (40a), a fairly well-established metaphorical use of the word *drepa* ‘kill’, to (40b), by treating ‘murder’ not as an agentive version of ‘kill’, but more like a “more extreme” version of ‘kill’. That is, when  $\sqrt{\text{MYR}}$  ‘murder’ is involved in building a different kind of vP (through some extension of the root), it can occur as an *-st* anticausative. Put yet another way, (40b) is possible precisely because the vP [<sub>vP</sub> [<sub>vP</sub> *murder I* ] *from excitement* ] is not an agentive vP. So we do not want to say that  $\sqrt{\text{MYR}}$  is an agentive root, at least not directly; what we say instead is that  $\sqrt{\text{MYR}}$  usually forms agentive vPs. It is the vP interpretation that determines how Voice<sub>{D}</sub> is interpreted.

We see the same consideration in the other direction. The root  $\sqrt{\text{BLÓM}}$  can, in fact, occur with an external argument in some cases, but only when it builds a different kind of vP from those seen above.

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<sup>18</sup><https://goo.gl/fnmnSu>

<sup>19</sup><https://goo.gl/QxuW4n>

- (41) a.  $\gamma$  peningaskorturinn [...] blómgaði skoskan fótbolta.  
 the.money.shortage bloomed Scottish football  
 ‘the money shortage [...] bloomed Scottish football.’<sup>20</sup>
- b.  $\gamma$  [...] með það að markmiði að blómga gamla hafnarsvæðið.  
 [...]with it as goal to bloom old harbor.area.ACC  
 ‘... with the goal of blooming the old harbor area.’<sup>21</sup>

In these vPs, the notion of “blooming” is metaphorical, and this metaphorical “blooming” is compatible with some kinds of external arguments: a causer in (41a) and an agent in (41b).<sup>22</sup>

The broader point is that we do not really categorize a root independently of the syntactic structure it is embedded in. Putting this together with the previous observations, we have essentially the following flow of information:

- (42) a. **Step 1:** Build the vP.
- b. **Step 2:** Merge VoiceP layer.
- c. **Step 3:** Spellout vP (assign its terminals a phonological and a semantic interpretation).
- i. **Step 3.1** Determine the “structural semantics” (“COS event”).<sup>23</sup>
- ii. **Step 3.2** Determine the set of root allosemes available.
- iii. **Step 3.3** Choose the root alloseme based on 3.1 and 3.2.
- d. **Step 4:** Choose the appropriate alloseme of Voice, given the overall meaning computed in Step 3.

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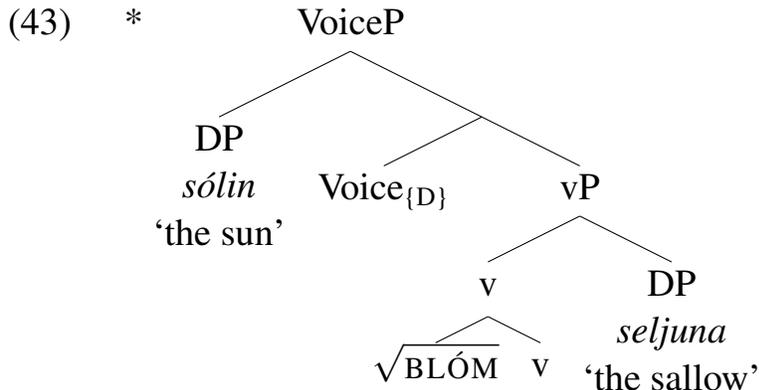
<sup>20</sup><http://goo.gl/7ugEqT>

<sup>21</sup><http://goo.gl/qoaVTo>

<sup>22</sup>I have not yet found examples of transitive ‘bloom’ with an “ambient conditions” type of subject (Rappaport Hovav, 2014); initial investigations suggest that this kind of subject is not as readily available in Icelandic as in English (see also Svenonius 2002, 200), but more research is needed.

<sup>23</sup>See Wood and Marantz (to appear) for a detailed analysis of how the semantics of change-of-state vPs are read off of the tree.

Applying (42) to (43), we can now see where things go wrong.



- a. **Step 3.1:** “COS” event; little *v* denotes a change of state on the DP complement.
- b. **Step 3.2:** In the context of  $\text{Voice}_{\{D\}}$ ,  $\sqrt{\text{BLÓM}}$  is compatible with a literal or metaphorical “blooming”.
- c. **Step 3.3:** Given that the COS applies to a willow tree, the literal alloeme is selected.
- d. **Step 4:** Since the *vP* denotes an internally caused event,  $\text{Voice}_{\{D\}}$  is interpreted as “expletive” ( $=\lambda P_{\langle s,t \rangle}. P$ ).

What goes wrong is that Step 4 has consequences: if  $\text{Voice}_{\{D\}}$  is expletive, then the DP in  $\text{SpecVoiceP}$  cannot be integrated into the semantics of  $\text{Voice}'$  (cf. Alexiadou et al., 2015, 110). In (41a), things go differently. Given that the change of state applies to Scottish football, the metaphorical meaning is chosen, so that the overall *vP* denotes an event of Scottish football “coming into its own”; this is not necessarily internally caused, so for that *vP*,  $\text{Voice}_{\{D\}}$  can introduce a causer.

## 7 Conclusion

There are essentially two ways that semantic interpretation governs the relationship between particular roots and the structures they are embedded in. First, the root’s interpretive contribution is governed by contextual alloemy. This can have at least two effects: (i) a root may make an idiosyncratic contribution in some contexts, and

(ii) a root may make no contribution at all in some contexts. Second, the overall interpretation of the vP will determine which alloeme of Voice is selected.

These two things may interact. For example, a particular internal argument (e.g. Scottish football) may affect the interpretation of the root (metaphorical). This will affect the overall interpretation of the vP (externally caused), which will in turn affect the interpretation of Voice (causer). Nevertheless, the two are, strictly speaking, distinct: nothing about the overall interpretation of the vP explains why  $\sqrt{\text{BLÓM}}$  requires Voice<sub>{D}</sub> (more neutrally, the *-st* version of the anticausative). Likewise, no structural diacritic on the root  $\sqrt{\text{MYR}}$  ‘murder’ should force Voice<sub>{D}</sub> to be interpreted as agentive; the vP interpretation alone suffices for this.

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# Displacement and Subject Blocking in Verbal Idioms: Evidence from Passive-Like Constructions in Icelandic\*

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## Abstract

This paper examines passive-like constructions in Icelandic and argues that idioms cannot be interpreted via traces and that the loss of idiomatic interpretation under passivization depends on the availability of displacement. We develop a mechanism of Late Transfer of Idioms which accounts for the observed facts.

## 1 Introduction

This paper uses evidence from passive-like constructions in Icelandic to shed light on the mechanisms that constrain idiomatic interpretation. We argue that idioms cannot be interpreted via traces and that the loss of idiomatic interpretation depends on the availability of displacement.

Example (1) shows the Icelandic idiom *taka þátt* ‘participate’, literally ‘take part’. The idiomatic meaning is lost in a Canonical Passive (CanP) as shown in (2), but a passive-like New Impersonal Passive (NIP)<sup>1</sup> (3) retains the idiomatic meaning.<sup>2</sup> Note that we use # throughout to indicate the loss of idiomatic meaning.

- (1) Jón            tók þátt        í hlaupinu.  
John.NOM took part.ACC in run.the  
‘John participated in the run.’

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\*Thanks to Höskuldur Thráinsson and Helgi Skúli Kjartansson for comments and discussions.

<sup>1</sup>The NIP has been investigated in detail in recent years. See, e.g., Kjartansson (1991), Maling and Sigurjónsdóttir (2002, 2012, 2013, 2015), Maling et al. (2011), Barðdal and Molnár (2003), Benediktsdóttir (2008), Eythórsson (2008), Jónsson (2009), H.Á. Sigurðsson (2011), E.F. Sigurðsson (2012), Ingason et al. (2013), Legate (2014), Thráinsson et al. (2015).

<sup>2</sup>This contrast between the NIP and the CanP was observed in Kjartansson (1991) and further explored in E.F. Sigurðsson (2012). See also Indriðadóttir (2014).

- (2) # Þáttur var tekinn í hlaupinu.  
 part.NOM was taken in run.the  
 Intended: ‘Somebody participated in the run.’
- (3) ✓ Það var tekið þátt í hlaupinu.  
 there was taken part.ACC in run.the  
 ‘Somebody participated in the run.’

We assume that the idiom consists of the verb and its direct DP object here. Note that the accompanying PP *í DP* ‘in DP’ generally involves the preposition *í* ‘in’. Although this modifier usually has a fixed form we assume that it is in some sense more loosely connected with the idiomatic structure than the DP object, perhaps by virtue of being a structural adjunct. The same applies to other similar idiom modifiers.

For Chomsky (1981:194), certain verbal idioms require that the verb and its direct object are adjacent at LF. We adopt a version of this position below and suggest that idiomatic phrases cannot in general be interpreted via traces. The NIP provides a novel type of evidence in favor of such an analysis because most accounts assume that some kind of a covert subject is present in NIP sentences like (3) (Maling and Sigurjónsdóttir 2002; H.Á. Sigurðsson 2011, E.F. Sigurðsson 2012; Ingason et al. 2013; Legate 2014).<sup>3</sup> The covert subject blocks displacement of the direct object to the subject position and thus it ensures that the verb and its object are adjacent. No underlying subject is present in a CanP so even if the underlying object stays low in such a construction, as in (4), the availability of displacement revokes the idiomatic interpretation.

- (4) # Það var tekinn þáttur í hlaupinu.  
 there was taken part.NOM in run.the  
 Intended: ‘Somebody participated in the run.’

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 presents some background on verbal idioms. Section 3 develops our analysis that the loss of idiomatic

<sup>3</sup>Although see Eythórsson (2008); Jónsson (2009) for an alternative point of view.

interpretation depends on the availability of displacement. Section 4 discusses the analysis of idioms where the determiner is part of the idiomatic phrase. The section furthermore proposes a theory of Late Transfer of Idioms. Section 5 concludes.

## 2 Verbal idioms

Several types of expressions can be considered to be idiomatic. We constrain our discussion to the so-called verbal idiom as defined by Harwood et al. (2016).

- (5) a. It must contain a lexical verb.
- b. It must have a non-literal interpretation.
- c. It must be able to interact with productive syntax.
- d. It must be comprised of lexical items that are found outside of the context of the idiom.
- e. It must be formed in a manner that obeys the regular syntactic rules of the language.

Verbal idioms are known to split into two classes based on whether the idiomatic meaning is retained if the direct object undergoes displacement such as in passivization. For example, the English expression *kick the bucket* ‘die’ can only be interpreted literally in the passive (6) whereas *spill the beans* ‘reveal the secret’ can be interpreted idiomatically regardless of the active/passive distinction (7).

- (6) a. John kicked the bucket.
- b. # The bucket was kicked (by John).
  
- (7) a. Mary spilled the beans.
- b. The beans were spilled (by Mary).

Nunberg et al. (1994) observe that it is important whether the idiomatic material is mapped onto a special meaning as a whole or whether subparts of the idiom can be mapped onto subparts of the resulting interpretation. Descriptively, we can say that *kick the bucket* is mapped onto ‘die’ by some mechanism but in the case of

*spill the beans*, *spill* is mapped onto ‘reveal’ and *the beans* onto ‘the secret’. The former type is referred to as an *idiomatic phrase* whereas the latter is referred to as an *idiomatically combining expression*.

Consistently with the idea that *idiomatic phrases* form a whole, Lebeaux (2009:xix) finds that the availability of passivization correlates with whether the determiner position is fixed as part of the idiom, as in (8), or free to vary, as in (9).

- (8) a. kick the bucket  
 b. # kick all the bucket  
 c. # Some men kicked some buckets.

- (9) a. take advantage of  
 b. take some advantage of  
 c. take a lot of advantage of

A fixed idiom-internal determiner as in *kick the bucket* is generally incompatible with passivization which preserves the special meaning whereas a variable determiner slot as in *take advantage of* generally allows for passivization.

- (10) a. # The bucket was kicked.  
 b. Advantage was taken of John.

Although the full details of how idiomaticity works are without doubt more nuanced than this description suggests, the general tendency, which seems too systematic to be a coincidence, is along the following lines.

(11)	<b>Idiomatic Phrases</b> Verb-Noun interpreted as one Lose meaning in passivization Idiom-internal determiner	<b>Idiomatically Combining Expressions</b> Verb-Noun interpreted compositionally Retain meaning in passivization Variable determiner position
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The verb and its object are in some sense interpreted separately in Idiomatically Combining Expressions. In contrast, Idiomatic Phrases form one semantic unit and

it is of interest to understand the mechanism that revokes their idiomatic interpretation in a Canonical Passive.

### 3 LF adjacency and the availability of displacement

According to Chomsky (1981:194), certain verbal idioms require the verb and its direct object to be adjacent at LF. This includes *kick the bucket*.

(12) # The bucket was kicked.

Let us assume that the verbal idioms in question are true *Idiomatic Phrases* in contrast to *Idiomatically Combining Expressions*. We can then generalize the LF adjacency requirement as follows.

(13) **LF adjacency requirement for idioms**  
Idioms cannot be interpreted via traces.

The reason that Idiomatically Combining Expressions allow for passivization, then, is that the idiomatic interpretation is resolved separately for the verb and its object.

(14) ✓ The beans were spilled.

Here, *the beans* resolves to ‘the secret’ and *spilled* to ‘revealed’. The trace of the object can express the ‘secret’ meaning via the trace because the verb and the object are not interpreted as one whole.

Let us now refine the proper characterization of the preconditions for the special meaning of Idiomatic Phrases, building on Chomsky’s proposal. Under our account, the loss of idiomatic interpretation depends on the availability of displacement of the direct object. If the object can move, idiomatic interpretation is lost. The verbal idiom *taka þátt* ‘take part’  $\approx$  ‘participate’ is demonstrated in the following example.

- (15) Jón tók þátt í hlaupinu.  
 John.NOM took part.ACC in run.the  
 ‘John participated in the run.’  
 ‘take part’ ≈ ‘participate’

The phrase ‘take part’ does not retain the special meaning ‘participate’ when passivized with a Canonical Passive.

- (16) # Þáttur var tekinn í hlaupinu.  
 part.NOM was taken in run.the  
 Intended: ‘Somebody participated in the run.’

The loss of the ‘participate’ meaning in the passive is consistent with the view that the loss of idiomatic interpretation depends on the availability of movement for the direct object.

We can observe evidence that it is the availability of movement rather than actual overt movement that is relevant by considering a passive of ‘take part’ in which the underlying object stays low.<sup>4</sup>

- (17) # Það var tekinn þáttur í hlaupinu.  
 there was taken part.NOM in run.the  
 Intended: ‘Somebody participated in the run.’

The example shows that the availability of displacement is sufficient to lose the idiomatic interpretation even if the surface position of ‘part’ is low. It should be noted here that there is some speaker variation in whether individual verbal idioms lose their special meaning when the theme remains low in a Canonical Passive and this means that there exist speakers who do in fact get the special meaning in examples like (17). Importantly, for those speakers it is crucial that the theme does not move overtly, meaning that displacement is still important, although for them it is overt movement that counts rather than just the availability of movement (see also

<sup>4</sup>An indefinite DP can stay in situ in expletive constructions in Icelandic, even if it is the structurally highest argument. This includes the expletive (canonical) passive, as in (17), where an indefinite argument stays in object position (see, e.g., H.Á. Sigurðsson 1996, Thráinsson 2007:271–273, Eythórsson 2008).

Kjartansson's (1991) discussion of, e.g., *drepa tittlinga*, literally 'kill buntings', which means 'blink one's eyes').

An analysis in terms of the availability of displacement is further supported by the New Impersonal Passive (NIP) which is similar to a Canonical Passive (CanP) but it contrasts with the CanP in that it always retains the special meaning of verbal idioms (see Kjartansson 1991; E.F. Sigurðsson 2012). The meaning of the CanP and the NIP is truth-conditionally equivalent, although some contrast in discourse function has been detected (Sigurjónsdóttir and Nowenstein 2016).

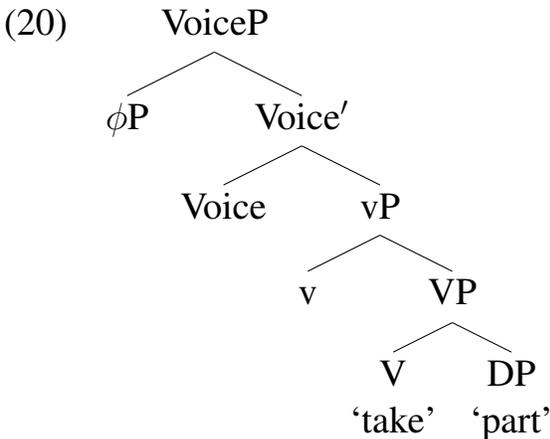
- (18) ✓ Það var tekið þátt í hlaupinu (af Einari).  
 there was taken part.ACC in run.the (by Einar)  
 'Somebody (/Einar) participated in the run.'

The NIP combines characteristics of actives and passives. The NIP resembles a CanP in that the main verb shows passive morphology, the verb 'be' is involved and by-phrases can be used to express the agent.<sup>5</sup> It resembles an active in that the underlying object is realized with accusative case and it stays in a low  $vP$ -internal position even if it is definite, a configuration which is ruled out in passives due to the Definiteness Effect (Milsark 1977). The Definiteness Effect rules out low definite themes in Canonical Passives.

- (19) Það var étið brauð(\*-ið).  
 there was eaten bread(-the)  
 'Some (\*the) bread was eaten.'

We follow Legate (2014) in accounting for these mixed properties by positing a silent pronoun in Spec, Voice of NIP which is smaller than a full DP pronoun. This small pronoun is a  $\phi$ -bundle of semantic type  $\langle e, t \rangle$  which restricts the agent role without saturating it. The compositional semantics of  $\phi P$  and Voice' is formally driven by the operation Restrict in the sense of Chung and Ladusaw (2004).

<sup>5</sup>Although early work on the NIP did not assume that by-phrases were available in the construction (Maling and Sigurjónsdóttir 2002), subsequent work has revealed that NIP speakers can indeed use by-phrases in the NIP (Jónsson 2009; E.F. Sigurðsson and Stefánsdóttir 2014; see also discussion in Eythórsson 2008).



The presence of  $\phi$ P in Spec,Voice accounts for why the theme in the NIP stays an object despite the passive appearances of the construction. Its semantics furthermore explains why the NIP is compatible with a by-phrase because the agent role remains unsaturated at the VoiceP level.

Furthermore, the element in Spec,Voice crucially blocks the underlying object from being able to move to the subject position and thus it explains why verbal idioms always retain their idiomatic interpretation in the NIP even if they do not in the Canonical Passive. A few more examples of true Idiomatic Phrases in Icelandic are given below.

- (21)
- a. Jón reif kjaft við Maríu.  
John.NOM tore mouth.ACC with Mary  
'John directed foul language at Mary.'  
'tear mouth'  $\approx$  'use foul language'
  - b. Siggí braut heilann um gátuna.  
Siggí.NOM broke brain.the.ACC about puzzle.the  
'Siggí thought hard about the puzzle.'  
'break the brain'  $\approx$  'think hard'
  - c. Jim tók upp hanskann fyrir Anton.  
Jim took up glove.the.ACC for Anton  
'Jim defended Anton.'  
'take up the glove'  $\approx$  'defend'

The examples demonstrate the verbal idioms *rífa kjaft* 'tear mouth'  $\approx$  'use foul language', *brjóta heilann* 'break the brain'  $\approx$  'think hard', and *taka upp hanskann*

‘take up the glove’  $\approx$  ‘defend’ as used in the active voice. None of these special meanings are compatible with a Canonical Passive (22) but all of them are preserved in the New Impersonal Passive (23).

- (22) a. # *Kjaftur* var rifinn við *Maríu* (af *Jóni*).  
 mouth.NOM was torn with *Mary* (by *John*)  
 Intended: ‘Somebody (/John) directed foul language at *Mary*.’
- b. # *Heilinn* var brotinn um *gátuna* (af *Sigga*).  
 brain.the.NOM was broken about puzzle.the (by *Siggi*)  
 Intended: ‘Somebody (/Siggi) thought hard about the puzzle.’
- c. # *Hanskinn* var tekinn upp fyrir *Anton* (af *Jim*).  
 glove.the.NOM was taken up for *Anton* (by *Jim*)  
 Intended: ‘Somebody (/Jim) defended *Anton*.’
- (23) a. ✓ *Það* var rifið *kjaft* við *Maríu* (af *Jóni*).  
 there was torn mouth.ACC with *Mary* (by *John*)  
 ‘Somebody (/John) directed foul language at *Mary*.’
- b. ✓ *Það* var brotið *heilann* um *gátuna* (af *Sigga*).  
 there was broken brain.the.ACC about puzzle.the (by *Siggi*)  
 ‘Somebody (/Siggi) thought hard about the puzzle.’
- c. ✓ *Það* var tekið upp *hanskann* fyrir *Anton* (af *Jim*).  
 there was taken up glove.the.ACC for *Anton* (by *Jim*)  
 ‘Somebody (/Jim) defended *Anton*.’

As far as we know, the contrast above is exceptionless. All verbal idioms which lose their special meaning in the CanP, retain it in the NIP. This fact supports our account that the loss of idiomatic interpretation depends on the availability of movement. The NIP has an unpronounced subject which blocks the raising of the theme to the subject position.

Independent evidence for our proposal that the availability of displacement is crucial comes from PP complement idioms. The object of a preposition cannot raise out of its base generated position by A-movement and accordingly such idioms always preserve their special meaning under passivization. We can demonstrate this by considering the Icelandic idioms *taka í taumana*, literally ‘take in

the reins’, which means ‘put an end to something (by some kind of an intervention)’, and *spýta í lófana*, literally ‘spit in one’s own palms (of the hands)’, which means ‘work harder’, shown in the active voice below. Note that Icelandic *í* ‘in’ is a preposition in the examples in (24) and it takes an accusative complement; *taka í eitthvað*, ‘take in something’, literally means ‘pull at something’.

- (24) a. Íslendingar tóku í taumana.  
Icelanders took in reins.the  
‘The Icelandic people put an end to something.’  
‘take in the reins’ ≈ ‘put an end to something’
- b. Liðið spýtti í lófana.  
team.the spat in palms.the  
‘The team worked harder.’  
‘spit in one’s own palms’ ≈ ‘work harder’

The idiomatic interpretation is unaffected if we passivize these sentences as shown in (25) below.<sup>6</sup>

- (25) a. ✓ Það var tekið í taumana (af Íslendingum).  
There was taken in reins.the (by Icelanders)  
‘Somebody (/the Icelandic people) put an end to something.’
- b. ✓ Það var spýtt í lófana.  
there was spat in palms.the  
‘Somebody worked harder.’

The conclusion of this section is that the loss of idiomatic interpretation depends on the availability of displacement.

<sup>6</sup>Note that we follow Árnadóttir et al. (2011:72–73) in taking by-phrases to be available in impersonal passives (including PP passives), see our example (25a), even though they are not always felicitous and their use in impersonal passives may be more restricted than in other types of passives. For attested examples, see Árnadóttir et al. (2011:73, n. 40). For the view that by-phrases in impersonal passives are normally ungrammatical or infelicitous, see H.Á. Sigurðsson (1989:322, n. 48), Thráinsson (2007:270), Jónsson (2009:294).

#### 4 Idiom-internal determiners

According to a generalization by Lebeaux (2009:xix), the availability of passivization which preserves idiomatic meaning correlates with whether the determiner position is a fixed part of a verbal idiom, as in (8), repeated as (26), or free to vary, as in (9), repeated as (27).

- (26) a. kick the bucket  
 b. # kick all the bucket  
 c. # Some men kicked some buckets.

- (27) a. take advantage of  
 b. take some advantage of  
 c. take a lot of advantage of

The systematicity with which Lebeaux's generalization is borne out seems to be too robust to be a coincidence. The relevant passivization judgments for (26) and (27) are shown below; (10) is repeated as (28).

- (28) a. # The bucket was kicked.  
 b. Advantage was taken of John.

The generalization extends to Icelandic as shown below for idioms which require the definite article to be in the determiner position. The following are examples of idioms which do not preserve their special meaning when passivized, as shown above in (22), and the special meaning also depends on a specific element in the determiner position.

- (29) a. að brjóta [✓heilann/#∅ heila/#einhvern heila/#allan heilann]  
 to break [brain.the/a brain/some brain/all brain.the]  
 'to think hard'  
 b. að taka upp [✓hanskann/#∅ hanska/#einhvern hanska]  
 to take upp [glove.the/a glove/some glove]  
 'to defend'

The definite article in Icelandic is usually expressed as a suffix on the noun whereas there is no overt indefinite article in the language. Note that while the definite article is realized as a suffix, we assume that it is base generated at a canonical D projection above *nP* and subsequently merges with the noun, e.g., via a morphological operation of Local Dislocation as proposed in Ingason (2016).<sup>7</sup>

The generalization does not involve the definite article in particular but rather the situation when the determiner position is fixed. This means that there are also verbal idioms which require an indefinite object and the Icelandic examples below demonstrate this.

- (30) a. að taka [✓ þátt/#þáttinn/#einhvern þátt/#allan þáttinn]  
to take [a part/part.the/some part/all part.the]  
'to participate'
- b. að rífa [✓ kjaft/#kjaftinn/#einhvern kjaft/#allan kjaftinn]  
to tear [a mouth/mouth.the/some mouth/all mouth.the]  
'to use foul language'

Again, a fixed determiner position, here with the indefinite article which is realized phonologically as  $\emptyset$ , correlates with the unavailability of (canonical) passivization that retains the idiomatic interpretation, cf. (2) and (22). These examples are interesting because the indefinite article works the same as the definite article for the purpose of Lebeaux's generalization even if it is not pronounced.

As is often the case with generalizations, there exist examples which at first sight seem to prove them wrong. For example, even if *taka þátt* 'take part'  $\approx$  'participate' normally requires an indefinite  $\emptyset$  article, it is possible to construct a scenario where *einhver* 'some' appears in the determiner position.

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<sup>7</sup>For other analyses of the morphosyntax of the internal structure of the Icelandic (and Scandinavian) noun phrase, see H.Á. Sigurðsson (1993, 2006); Delsing (1993); Vangsnes (1999); Julien (2005); Harðarson (2014); Pfaff (2015).

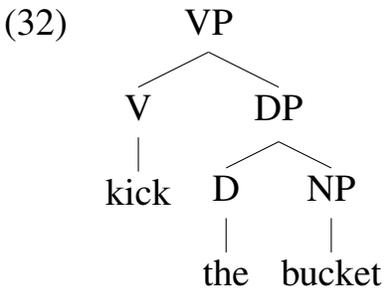
(31) (Context: Talking about a chess tournament.)

Jóhannes tók **einvern** þátt í mótinu en hætti svo.  
 Jóhannes took some part in competition.the but quit then

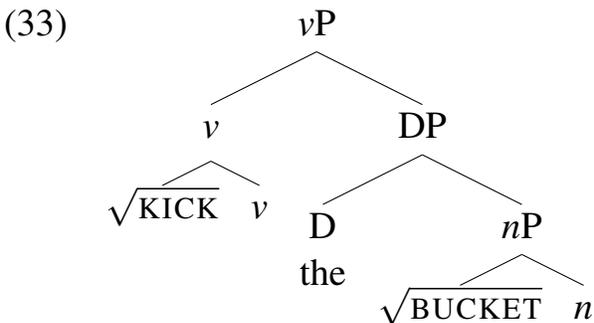
‘Jóhannes participated in some part of the competition but then he quit.’

This example, which was pointed out to us by Höskuldur Thráinsson (p.c.), looks like a counterexample to Lebeaux’s generalization because the determiner position varies in a verbal idiom that does not passivize. However, there is something special about this example that makes it different from other examples with the same idiom and therefore we do not believe that its availability is reason enough to immediately abandon the generalization. We will not develop an extensive account of this example here, but it is suggestive that ‘some’ seems to be quantifying over something eventive whose locus is presumably higher in the clause, rather than the direct object glossed as ‘part’. The sentence could be uttered felicitously to describe a situation in which Jóhannes played the first few rounds in a chess tournament before quitting. In that case, ‘some’ may have undergone Quantifier Raising to a position in which it quantifies over the events which describe the rounds in the competition. Note that it is possible to manipulate the context for (30b) in a similar way to make the use of *einvern kjaft* ‘some mouth’ felicitous by having the quantification apply to some eventive/temporal aspect of the structure rather than the direct object. We leave further analysis of this phenomenon for future work.

The fact that verbal idioms involve the verb and the DP which is its complement raise questions about phase theory (Chomsky 2000, 2001), because the phase is generally considered to define the amount of material which undergoes Transfer to the interfaces. This issue is discussed in Harwood et al. (2016) and their references. The details of the problems that arise depend on the implementation of the theory of syntax and phases, but under basic assumptions, if the edge of the noun phrase, e.g., DP, defines a phase boundary (Svenonius 2004, 2005; Chomsky 2008), then *kick* and *bucket* do not undergo Transfer to LF in the same phase cycle, yet they seem to be interpreted as one unit.



The D phase is a problem if we believe that the phase determines the possible size of idiomatically interpreted structure. As an example of theoretical assumptions which make the problem even more severe, some analyses assume that lexical roots combine with category-defining heads which also define phase boundaries (Marantz 2001, 2007). If *kick the bucket* involves a necessarily phase-local configuration of the lexical material denoted by the roots  $\sqrt{\text{KICK}}$  and  $\sqrt{\text{BUCKET}}$ , then it is puzzling if the two are separated by a  $v$ -phase, a D-phase and a  $n$ -phase.



Again, tweaking the implementation in various ways can of course get us closer to having the two pieces be closer to each other, but our tweaks run into the danger of weakening the explanatory power that motivated the relevant phase boundaries in the first place. A theory with category-defining heads as phase boundaries successfully accounts for various phenomena in allomorphy and interpretation (Arad 2003; Embick 2010; Marantz 2013; Ingason and E.F. Sigurðsson 2015; Ingason 2016) and therefore we should not walk lightly down a path which abandons them.

Canonical verbal idioms as defined above are interesting because they can be compared directly and systematically with respect to syntactic operations which apply to verbs and their direct objects, such as passivization. However, we should

try to not forget, while developing our theory of idiomatic interpretation, that special interpretation properties sometimes do appear to be associated with larger structures which clearly cross phase boundaries, according to at least some theories, as evidenced by idiomatic phrases like the following.

(34) give the devil his due (Bruening 2010:536)

The status of such expressions will without doubt remain an active area of investigation, but they do raise reasonable concerns about the role of phases in idiomatic interpretation. Here, it appears that both objects of a ditransitive form a part of an idiomatic expression. If we assume an applicative structure for ditransitives in which Appl is a phase head—as proposed for some Appl heads in McGinnis 2001, and all Appl heads in H.Á. Sigurðsson 2012; Wood and H.Á. Sigurðsson 2014—the two objects are separated, at least, by both the Appl phase and the phase defined by the edge of the direct object noun phrase, e.g., D.

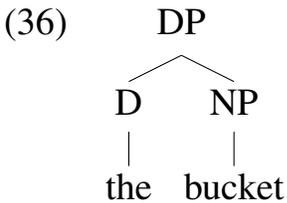
It seems, then, that perhaps it is more fruitful to admit that phases, even if they constrain polysemy resolution in the interpretation of related meanings of individual roots (Marantz 2013; Ingason and E.F. Sigurðsson 2015; Ingason 2016), do not limit the size of structure which gets a special interpretation of the *kick the bucket* type. According to Marantz (2013:105), “For the issue of root [...] polysemy, the relevant domain for ‘fixing’ meaning appears to be the phase, while for idioms, the domain is clearly larger.” Marantz goes on to discuss *kick the bucket* in particular, and proposes that idiom formation is “on top” of polysemy resolution.

We propose an alternative analysis which allows for delayed Transfer to LF if the structure which has been built at the phase head is a part of an idiom. This approach is similar to the mechanism which manages delayed Transfer to PF in the analysis of suppletive allomorphy in Bobaljik (2012).

(35) **Late Transfer of Idioms**

If a phase head is part of an idiom, Transfer to LF is delayed until the next higher phase.

We should note that while Late Transfer of Idioms allows for large idioms, it does not allow for idioms in which an embedded position in the idiom is variable, cf. Marantz (1984) and Harley and Stone (2014) on the lack of ‘agent idioms’ and Lebeaux’s generalization discussed above. In order to delay LF Transfer at the D-phase, the whole structure built so far must be a proper subpart of an idiomatic phrase. For example, the following subtree is an exact subpart of the idiom *kick the bucket*, and thus it allows for Late Transfer.<sup>8</sup>



If the determiner is replaced with something else, like *kick some bucket*, or if the direct object position contains a trace, as in the passive, rather than the exact subtree which the idiom demands, delayed transfer at DP is not permitted and this means that idiomatic interpretation is unavailable.

Our Late Transfer of Idioms hypothesis is further supported by fMRI studies of embodied action semantics and premotor cortex activation which have demonstrated the absence of congruent somatotopic activation in idioms like *kick the bucket* (Aziz-Zadeh et al. 2006; Nevins 2015). A kicking-associated activation which is found with the verb *kick* is not triggered by the idiom, suggesting that idiomatic phrases are indeed shipped to LF in one piece. Consider, for example, the following examples.

- (37) a. John kicked the ball.  
       b. John kicked the bucket.

The finding is essentially that an example like (37a) triggers the kind of a response

<sup>8</sup>Interestingly, our approach does raise the possibility that phase edges are excluded from this “exact subpart” requirement, if edges are in spellout domains distinct from their heads and complements, as proposed by Marantz (2007, 2008). This could capture idioms with open embedded specifier positions, such as *pull X’s leg*. We set investigation of this possibility aside for future research.

that is associated with a physical kicking activity whereas (37b) does not. This contrast would be surprising if the root  $\sqrt{\text{KICK}}$  in each case was already processed as part of the Transfer of the root to LF but it is an expected consequence of our Late Transfer of Idioms. Thus, our analysis gains independent support from neurolinguistic evidence.

## 5 Conclusion

In this paper, we used evidence from passive-like constructions in Icelandic to clarify the status of idiomatic interpretation and its relationship with the grammar. We argued that idiomatic phrases cannot be interpreted via traces and that the loss of idiomatic interpretation in passivization depends on the availability of displacement. We proposed that Late Transfer of Idioms permits the grammar to delay shipping a structure off to LF if the phase which has been built is an exact substructure of an idiomatic phrase. According to this analysis, traces do not count for licensing Late Transfer of Idioms and the determiner position must contain exactly what is specified as part of the idiomatic phrase. One apparent counterexample which we encountered with a variable determiner seems to be related to quantification in which the quantifier raises to a higher position to quantify over events and does not participate in the semantics of the noun phrase where it appears on the surface.

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# Clausal Ellipsis and Case (Mis)Matching in Icelandic

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## Abstract

In this paper, we take a detailed look at clausal ellipsis in Icelandic, a hitherto understudied phenomenon. We focus on case-matching facts that seem to suggest two things. First, robust case-matching effects suggest that clausal ellipsis requires some amount of island repair. Secondly, and perhaps even more interestingly, constrained instances of case-*mismatching* strongly suggest that there must be silent structure in the ellipsis site. After outlining these patterns in some detail, we provide a brief discussion of what an analysis of clausal ellipsis in Icelandic must look like.

## 1 Introduction

In one of the earliest papers taking a generative approach to the study of Icelandic, Thráinsson (1975) focused on gapping constructions of the sort in (1) (strike-through represents elided material).

- (1) a. Sigurður treystir á Guðmund til að rata í skólann og  
Sigurður.NOM trusts on Guðmundur.ACC for to find to school and  
Sigurður treystir á Hörð til að rata heim.  
Sigurður.NOM trusts on Hörður.ACC for to find home  
'Sigurður is depending on Guðmundur to find the way to school, and  
Sigurður is depending on Hörður to find the way home.'
- b. Sigurður treystir á Guðmund til að rata í skólann og  
Sigurður.NOM trusts on Guðmundur.ACC for to find to school and  
Hörður treystir á Guðmund til að rata heim.  
Hörður.NOM trusts on Guðmundur.ACC for to find home  
'Sigurður is depending on Guðmundur to find the way to school, and  
Hörður is depending on Guðmundur to find the way home.'

Thráinsson's primary focus was on the fact that gapping of the sort in (1a) is possible in both English and Icelandic, whereas gapping of the sort in (1b) is rejected

by many English speakers.

Since then, however, not much research has been done on Icelandic ellipsis constructions, despite the explosion of work on ellipsis in recent decades. E.F. Sigurðsson and Stefánsdóttir (2014) briefly discuss fragment answers/responses. Norris et al. (2014) briefly discuss noun phrase ellipsis. Platzack (2008) briefly discusses the absence of VP-ellipsis (and VP-topicalization) in Icelandic; see also Thoms (2012). Gengel (2007) has a fairly extensive discussion of pseudogapping in Icelandic.<sup>1</sup> Ott (2014) and Ott and de Vries (2016) argue that contrastive left-dislocation and right dislocation in Icelandic and related languages should be analyzed as clausal ellipsis (essentially on par with sluicing and fragment responses). But overall, ellipsis phenomena has been very much in the background in the Icelandic syntax literature.<sup>2</sup>

With respect to clausal ellipsis, the subject which we will study here, it turns out that Icelandic is of substantial general interest. On the one hand, case-matching facts seem to suggest that clausal ellipsis requires some amount of island repair, a conclusion that has been controversial in the literature. On the other hand, constrained instances of case-*mismatching* strongly suggest that there must be silent structure in the ellipsis site, another controversial conclusion. The goal of the present paper, then, is to introduce the basic facts of Icelandic clausal ellipsis, outline their theoretical relevance, and briefly outline what an account of Icelandic clausal ellipsis must look like.

The paper is structured as follows. In section 2, we provide a brief background on clausal ellipsis and the relevance of case-matching to the phenomenon. In section 3, we present a variety of basic data, showing that Icelandic clausal ellipsis looks basically like what we would expect from other languages. In section 4, we show that robust case-matching facts seem to point quite strongly to the con-

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<sup>1</sup>Thanks to Gísli Rúnar Harðarson for pointing this out.

<sup>2</sup>There has been considerably more work on null arguments, which in some cases could be considered a kind of ellipsis (cf. Rögnvaldsson 1982, 1990, 1993; H.Á. Sigurðsson and Egerland 2009), but we set aside that matter here.

clusion that such ellipsis repairs island-violations, in consonance with claims since Ross (1969), and contra Merchant (2001) (for a subset of island types), Fukaya (2007), Barros (2012), Barros et al. (2013), Barros et al. (2014). In section 5, we discuss instances of case *mismatching*, which are shown to be possible under certain constrained circumstances. In section 6, we outline the implications of the Icelandic facts for the broader theory of case-marking and ellipsis. Section 7 concludes.

## 2 Background

Clausal ellipsis is where the sentential part of an utterance (i.e., IP, S, or TP depending on one's preferred terminology) goes missing from the speech signal, leaving some sub-part of the sentence overt. In (2), we have a simple case of sluicing in English, where a Wh-question goes missing from the speech signal, leaving just the Wh-phrase overt (called the 'remnant,' adopting Merchant's 2001 terminology). The remnant undergoes Wh-movement as usual to the left periphery followed by TP ellipsis.

- (2) Jack saw someone, but I don't know [ $_{CP}$   $who_i$  [ $_{TP}$  Jack saw  $t_i$ ]].

Following Merchant (2004) and Griffiths and Lipták (2012), fragments receive the same analysis, with the pronounced material undergoing A'-movement to the left periphery prior to TP deletion:<sup>3</sup>

- (3) A: Who did Jack see?  
 B: [ $_{CP}$  Sally<sub>i</sub> [ $_{TP}$  Jack saw  $t_i$ ]].

Here, we survey the empirical landscape in Icelandic, reproducing the various subtypes of sluicing and fragments which have been attested in other languages with clausal ellipsis. We discuss the implications of the Icelandic facts for extant the-

<sup>3</sup>See Hankamer (1971), Morgan (1973), for non-movement precedents where the fragment is pronounced in-situ, with the rest of the clause undergoing non-constituent deletion.

ories of clausal ellipsis, paying extra attention to what have been called ‘case-matching’ effects.

In clausal ellipsis, the remnant typically corresponds, in some intuitive sense, to a (typically) indefinite phrase in the antecedent, called the ‘correlate.’ In (2), the correlate for *who* is *someone* and, in (3), the correlate for *Sally* is *who*. Ross (1969) was the first to note that in sluicing, the remnant and correlate must match in case. We will refer to this as the ‘Case-Matching Generalization’ (CMG). The CMG is detectible in languages that overtly mark case on nominals, illustrated below with a German sluice. Merchant 2004 shows the same facts hold for fragments. German *schmeicheln* ‘flatter’ assigns dative case to the correlate, whereas *loben* ‘praise’ assigns accusative; in (4a)–(4b) we see that the remnant must bear whichever case its correlate does.

- (4) a. Er will jemandem schmeicheln, aber sie wissen nicht,  
 he wants someone.DAT flatter but they know not  
 { \*wer /\*wen /wem }.  
 { \*who.NOM /\*who.ACC /who.DAT }  
 ‘He wants to flatter someone, but they don’t know who.’
- b. Er will jemanden loben, aber sie wissen nicht,  
 he wants someone.ACC praise but they know not  
 { \*wer /wen /\*wem }.  
 { \*who.NOM /who.ACC /\*who.DAT }  
 ‘He wants to praise someone, but they don’t know who.’

(Merchant, 2001, 89)

The CMG is standardly taken as evidence for the presence of unpronounced syntactic material in ellipsis, as opposed to ‘interpretive’ approaches, which reject this assumption (Ginzburg and Sag 2000; Culicover and Jackendoff 2005; Barker 2013; Jacobson 2013). Under the assumption that the remnant is extracted from fully present, though unpronounced, syntactic structure, we expect its case to match that of the correlate, since they both share identical base positions at the relevant level of representation (5a)–(5b). On the other hand, an interpretive theory must stipu-

late case matching, perhaps as an anaphoric property of remnants. (See the above cited literature for various implementations.)

- (5) a. Sie wissen nicht, { \*wer / \*wen / wem } er schmeicheln  
 they know not { \*who.NOM / \*who.ACC / who.DAT } he flatter  
 will.  
 wants
- b. Sie wissen nicht, { \*wer / wen / \*wem } er loben will.  
 they know not { \*who.NOM / who.ACC / \*who.DAT } he praise wants  
 (Merchant, 2001, 90)

These assumptions make an interesting prediction in languages where case-alternations are available in what otherwise appears to be the same syntactic position, like Icelandic. In short, all else being equal, we might expect to see violations of the CMG in sluicing and fragments in these languages. However, in recent work on case mismatches in sluicing in Hungarian, Nykiel and Sag (2012) (citing Jacobson 2013) note that case-alternations in Hungarian fail to license case-mismatch in sluicing.

- (6) a. Mari segített egy { fiunak / fiut }.  
 Mary helped a { boy.DAT / boy.ACC }  
 ‘Mary helped a boy.’
- b. Mari segített egy fiunak,  
 Mary helped a boy.DAT  
 de nem tudom, hogy { kinek / \*kit }.  
 but not I.know.DEF Q { who.DAT / \*who.ACC }  
 ‘Mary helped a boy, but I don’t know who.’

As discussed in Jacobson (2013), for at least some speakers, the alternants differ slightly in meaning, which might mean that this paradigm resembles the one found with Icelandic direct object case mismatches, discussed further in section 5 below. We will show there that such mismatches are generally degraded, at least for many speakers. However, we will also illustrate in section 5 that Icelandic does tolerate case mismatches under clausal ellipsis in some cases. We argue that such data

automatically follow from “silent structure” approaches to elliptical phenomena, in further support of the standard assumptions about case matching effects.<sup>4</sup>

### 3 Icelandic Sluicing and Fragment Responses: Basic Data

In this section we show that Icelandic is like other languages within which clausal ellipsis has been attested. We show here that well known sub-types of sluicing and fragments are found in Icelandic, which is as expected if what appears to be clausal ellipsis in Icelandic actually is.

#### 3.1 Basic Sluicing

In (7), we show some basic examples of sluicing in Icelandic. What we take to be a “basic” sluice in Icelandic is a sluice with a nominal Wh-phrase remnant with an explicit indefinite correlate argument in the antecedent.<sup>5</sup> (7a)–(7c) show that, generally, the remnant has to match the correlate in case. (We will return to exceptions to the CMG in section 5.) (7b)–(7c) show that for subjects, it does not matter if the subject is low, as in an unaccusative expletive construction (7c), or high, in the ordinary subject position (7b). (7d) shows (unsurprisingly) that sluicing is fine when nominative and accusative are syncretic.<sup>6</sup> (7e) shows that case matching is required for dative objects as well.

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<sup>4</sup>To our knowledge, case matching effects are robustly attested in languages with overt case marking. However, some counterexamples have been uncovered thus far in a few languages. Ince (2012) notes that Turkish genitive correlates correspond to nominative remnants obligatorily in sluicing; Barros (2014) and Thoms (2015) uncover abstract Case mismatches in English sluices; Vicente’s (2015) short survey cites counterexamples attested in Mongolian, Korean, Uzbek, Japanese, German and Chamorro (though it has been argued for some of these, namely Japanese and Uzbek, that what appears to be sluicing is actually a reduced copular clause, so that the relevance of these languages to the status of the CMG is questionable).

<sup>5</sup>Corresponding to the “merger” cases of Chung et al. (1995).

<sup>6</sup>Syncretism in case matching has been appealed to on occasion as a licensing context for syntactic mismatches between the antecedent structure and the elided clause; see especially van Craenenbroeck 2012 and references therein for discussion.

- (7) a. Jón sá **einvern**, en ég veit ekki  
 John.NOM saw someone.ACC, but I.NOM know not  
 { \*hver / **hvern** / \*hverjum }.  
 { \*who.NOM / who.ACC / \*who.DAT }  
 ‘John saw someone, but I don’t know who.’
- b. **Eihver** fór, en ég veit ekki  
 someone.NOM left, but I.NOM know not  
 { **hver** / \*hvern / \*hverjum }.  
 { who.NOM / \*who.ACC / \*who.DAT }  
 ‘Someone left, but I don’t know who.’
- c. Það fór **einhver**, en ég veit ekki  
 EXPL left someone.NOM, but I know not  
 { **hver** / \*hvern / \*hverjum }.  
 { who.NOM / \*who.ACC / \*who.DAT }  
 ‘Someone left, but I don’t know who.’
- d. Jón borðaði **eiðthvað**, en ég veit ekki  
 John.NOM ate something.NOM/ACC, but I know not  
 { **hvað** / \*hverju }.  
 { what.NOM/ACC / \*what.DAT }  
 ‘John ate something, but I don’t know what.’
- e. Jón breytti **einhverju**, en ég veit ekki  
 John.NOM changed something.DAT, but I.NOM know not  
 { \*hvað / **hverju** }.  
 { \*what.NOM/ACC / what.DAT }  
 ‘John changed something, but I don’t know what.’

The same basic fact holds for fragment responses. We illustrate this with an accusative direct object in (8), a dative direct object in (9), and a dative indirect object in (10). We will discuss subjects (non-nominative subjects in particular) in more detail in section 5.

- (8) A: Jón sá **bílinn**.  
 John.NOM saw car.the.ACC  
 ‘John saw the car.’

- B: { \*Rútan / **Rútuna** / \*Rútunni } líka.  
 { \*coach.the.NOM / coach.the.ACC / \*coach.the.DAT } too  
 ‘The coach too.’
- (9) A: Höfundurinn breytti **byrjuninni**.  
 author.the.NOM changed beginning.the.DAT  
 ‘The author changed the beginning.’
- B: { \*Endirinn / \*Endinn / **Endinum** } líka.  
 { \*ending.the.NOM / \*ending.the.ACC / ending.the.DAT } too  
 ‘The ending too.’
- (10) A: Jón gaf **mér** bókina.  
 John.NOM gave me.DAT book.the.ACC  
 ‘John gave me the book.’
- B: { \*Ég / \*Mig / **Mér** } líka.  
 { \*I.NOM / \*me.ACC / me.DAT } too  
 ‘Me too.’ (I.e. ‘He gave it to me too.’)

### 3.2 Sprouting

Sprouting describes a situation where the remnant of a sluice lacks a correlate. Sprouting is possible in Icelandic just as it is in other languages with sluicing.

- (11) Jón fór, en ég veit ekki { með hverjum /  
 John.NOM left but I know not { with whom.DAT /  
 hvenær / hvert / hvernig / hvers vegna / af hverju }.  
 when / where.to / how / why / why }  
 ‘John left, but I don’t know {with whom/when/where to/how/why}.’

When the sluice remnant is a DP, it must be case-marked with whatever case would have been expected from the verb in the antecedent clause. (12a) shows this with an ordinary inanimate object, which is case-syncretic for nominative and accusative. (Note that the verb *borða* ‘eat’ takes an object in the accusative case in the active.) (12b) shows this for an animate object, which is not case-syncretic. (If it helps, one can imagine that Jón is a people-eating troll.)

- (12) a. Jón borðaði, en ég veit ekki  
 John.NOM ate but I know not  
 { **hvað** / \*hverju }.  
 { what.NOM/ACC / \*what.DAT }  
 ‘John ate, but I don’t know what.’
- b. Jón borðaði, en ég veit ekki  
 John.NOM ate but I know not  
 { \*hver / **hvern** / \*hverjum }.  
 { \*who.NOM / who.ACC / \*who.DAT }  
 ‘John ate, but I don’t know who.’

Sprouting is also possible for fragment responses, as illustrated in (13).

- (13) A: Jón borðaði loksins.  
 Jón ate finally  
 ‘John finally ate.’
- B: Í alvöru?  
 in seriousness  
 ‘Really?’
- A: Já, { \*ávextir / ávexti / \*ávöxtum }.  
 Yes, { \*fruit.NOM / fruit.ACC / \*fruit.DAT }  
 ‘Yes, fruit.’

### 3.3 SWIPING

SWIPING describes sluicing where the remnant is a prepositional phrase where the word order of the prepositional object and the preposition are inverted from the canonical order.<sup>7</sup> An example from English is given in (14) below.

- (14) John left, but I don’t know who with.

Ross (1969) originally analyzed this sort of word order in sluicing as non-constituent deletion. Abstracting away from the details of Ross’s original analysis and framework, this essentially gives us an analysis for the elided material in (14) as in (15):

<sup>7</sup>The term is due to Merchant (2001). It stands for S(luicing) W(ith) I(nversion) of P(repositions) in N(orth) G(ermanic).

- (15) John left, but I don't know who ~~John~~ left with.

Such an analysis suggests a correlation between the possibility of preposition stranding under Wh-movement in a given language, and the availability of SWIPING under ellipsis. As Merchant (2002) illustrates, SWIPING is unavailable in Icelandic, Swedish, and Frisian, all of which are languages in which preposition stranding is allowed under regular Wh-movement. This casts doubt on the relationship between the availability of preposition stranding and SWIPING.<sup>8</sup> Our own investigations into Icelandic sluicing are consistent with Merchant's results:

- (16) a. \* Jón fór, en ég veit ekki hverjum með.  
 Jon.NOM left but I know not who.DAT with  
 Intended: 'John left, but I don't know who with.'
- b. \* Jón gerði við bílinn, en ég veit ekki hverju með.  
 John fixed P car.the.ACC but I know not what.DAT with  
 Intended: 'John fixed the car, but I don't know what with.'

We do not discuss this further here, except to note that our observations are consistent with Merchant's.

### 3.4 Contrastive Sluicing

Contrast sluices are sluices where the remnant and correlate are contrastively focused, as in (17). Unlike non-contrastive sluices, the interpretation of the correlate and remnant must contrast in some way, shape, or form. For example, the distinction between dogs and cats is relevant in (17).

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<sup>8</sup>Though it does appear to be the case that only a subset of preposition stranding languages allow SWIPING, so perhaps the correlation is mostly correct (i.e., that perhaps there is, in fact, an implicational relationship between the availability of SWIPING, and the availability of preposition stranding), and independent principles in languages in which this expectation is not borne out are to blame for the counterexamples mentioned here.

- (17) Hún á þrjá ketti,  
 she.NOM has three cats.ACC  
 en ég veit ekki hversu marga hunda.  
 but I know not how many.ACC dogs.ACC  
 ‘She has three cats, but I don’t know how many dogs.’

A subtype of contrastive sluicing involves ‘else’-modification, as in the examples in (18).

- (18) a. Hún kallaði Hlynur fífl,  
 she.NOM called Hlynur.ACC fool.ACC  
 en ég veit ekki hverja aðra.  
 but I know not who.PL.ACC else.PL.ACC  
 ‘She called Hlynur a fool, but I don’t know who else.’
- b. Henni finnst gaman að lesa í eldhúsinu,  
 her.DAT finds fun to read in kitchen.the.DAT  
 en ég veit ekki hvar annars staðar.  
 but I know not where else place  
 ‘She likes reading in the kitchen, but I don’t know where else.’

Contrastive sluices are interesting because they have slightly different properties than non-contrastive sluices. In particular, unlike non-contrastive sluices, contrastive sluices are island sensitive (Fukaya 2007; Merchant 2008). See Merchant (2001) especially for in-depth discussion of contrastive sluices and their consequences for theories of ellipsis identity. While it would be worthwhile to see if this holds in Icelandic as well, we must set this aside at the moment for reasons of space and time.

### 3.5 Interim summary

To summarize, we find all the usual sub-types of sluicing and fragments in Icelandic that are found in other languages in which these constructions have been attested. We have, furthermore, gone some way in illustrating that the known properties of these sub-types behave as expected in Icelandic. In what follows we fo-

cus on two construction-specific properties of clausal ellipsis as instantiated in Icelandic, namely, the phenomenon of “island-repair” under clausal ellipsis, and case-matching effects between remnants and correlates.

## 4 Potential Island Violations

It has long been observed that sluicing appears to ‘repair’ island violations (Ross 1969; Chung et al. 1995; Merchant 2001 (for some islands); Lasnik 2001; Fox and Lasnik 2003). That is, if we understand sluicing as being derived from movement, but deletion of what is left over, then that movement appears in some cases to violate island constraints.<sup>9</sup> In this section, we show that the same holds for Icelandic, and that the case-matching discussed in the previous sections seems to hold in these cases as well. We take no particular stance on the analysis of these apparent island repair phenomena.

### 4.1 Relative Clauses

Sluicing appears to repair relative clause islands, as shown in (19a). (19b) shows that relative clauses of the relevant sort are extraction islands. (19c) and (19d) show that such cases cannot be derived by assuming that the deleted clause was really a cleft. This addresses a vein in the literature that aims to explain the appearance of island repair under ellipsis as illusory, stemming from non-island containing structures in the ellipsis site, such as clefts or copular clauses (Erteschik-Shir 1977; Fukaya 2007; Barros 2012; Barros et al. 2013, 2014). However, case-matching is fully unacceptable for all speakers in short clefts, as shown in (19c), and most speakers reject a long cleft as well, as shown in (19d).

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<sup>9</sup>In this section, a judgment of ‘?’ means that speakers varied, ranging from rejecting to accepting. Other than Einar, the judgments in this section come partially from Gísli Harðarson, Sigríður Sigurjónsdóttir, Halldór Sigurðsson and Ásgrímur Angantýsson. The sentences we asked them about were the short and long it-cleft sentences, since the other judgments were totally clear.

- (19) a. Þeir réðu einhvern sem talar sænska mállýsku...  
 they hired someone.ACC who speaks Swedish dialect.ACC  
 ...en ég veit ekki hvaða { mállýsku / \*mállýska }.  
 ...but I know not which { dialect.ACC / \*dialect.NOM }  
 ‘They hired someone who speaks a Swedish dialect,  
 but I don’t know which dialect.’
- b. \* ...en ég veit ekki hvaða mállýsku þeir réðu einhvern  
 ...but I know not which dialect.ACC they hired someone.ACC  
 sem talar \_\_.  
 who speaks \_\_
- c. ...en ég veit ekki hvaða { \*mállýsku /mállýska } það var.  
 ...but I know not what { \*dialect.ACC /dialect.NOM } it was  
 ‘...but I don’t know which dialect it was.’
- d. ...en ég veit ekki hvaða { <sup>??!</sup>mállýsku /mállýska } það  
 ...but I know not what { <sup>??!</sup>dialect.ACC /dialect.NOM } it  
 var sem hann talar.  
 was that he speaks  
 ‘...but I don’t know which dialect it was that he speaks.’

This suggests that the apparent island-violation in (19a) cannot be explained by assuming a cleft source. Worth noting is that these results are also consistent with the view where the elided structure must be syntactically identical to its antecedent, which would rule out cleft or copular sources whenever the antecedent is not itself a cleft or copular clause.

An alternative possibility that has been explored in the literature (Merchant 2001; Fukaya 2007; Barros 2012; Barros et al. 2013, 2014) is that such cases are derived from a “short source” such as the English example in (20a) or its Icelandic counterpart in (20b):

- (20) a. They hired someone who speaks a Swedish dialect, but I don't know which dialect he speaks.
- b. Þeir réðu einhvern sem talar sænska mállýsku  
 they hired someone.ACC who speaks Swedish dialect.ACC  
 en ég veit ekki hvaða mállýsku hann talar.  
 but I know not which dialect.ACC he.NOM speaks  
 'They hired someone who speaks a Swedish dialect,  
 but I don't know which dialect he speaks.'

This possibility—at least the short source given in (20)—is, however, undermined by sentences like (21),<sup>10</sup> in which there is no referent that can correspond to the pronoun in the deleted clause. That is, since no one was hired (21a), it is not possible to have something like 'he or she speaks' in the deleted clause.

- (21) a. Þeir réðu ekki neinn sem talar ákveðna sænska mállýsku,  
 they hired not anyone who speaks certain Swedish dialect  
 en ég veit ekki hvaða mállýsku.  
 but I know not which dialect.ACC  
 'They didn't hire anyone who speaks a certain Swedish dialect,  
 but I don't know which dialect.'
- b. Enginn var með nemanda í bekknum sínum sem talar  
 no.one was with student in class REFL.POSS who speaks  
 ákveðna sænska mállýsku, en ég man ekki hvaða  
 certain Swedish dialect but I remember not which  
 mállýsku.  
 dialect.ACC  
 'No one had a student in their class who speaks a certain Swedish  
 dialect, but I don't remember which dialect.'

The same appears to hold for fragment answers, as illustrated in (22).

<sup>10</sup>Adapted from Lasnik (2001, 315) (his example (42)) in English, which makes the same point.

- (22) A: Þeir réðu einhvern sem talar íslensku.  
 they hired someone who speaks Icelandic.ACC  
 ‘They hired someone who speaks Icelandic.’
- B: { \*Þýska / Þýsku } líka.  
 { \*German.NOM / German.ACC } too  
 ‘German too.’

This response is ambiguous. It can mean either (i) that the person they hired also speaks German, or (ii) that they also hired someone who speaks German. The second reading is salient in the context of a conversation where A and B are discussing a situation where a number of people have been hired. It is reading (ii) that appears to be an island violation, assuming that fragment responses are derived by movement plus deletion. The Icelandic facts thus seem to support the view that ellipsis can repair relative clause island violations.

## 4.2 Left Branch Violations

Sluicing and fragment responses also appear to violate constraints against left branch extraction. Consider the following sentences. (23a) shows that a phrase like *hversu ríkum* ‘how rich’ cannot be moved out of the phrase containing the head, *manni* ‘man’. (23b), however, shows that this phrase can be stranded by sluicing. It also shows that the case on ‘how rich’ must match the case of the associate in the antecedent clause. Such data is troubling for the view where left branch sluices actually stem from predicative copular clauses, with no left branch violation, as argued for in Barros et al. (2014). In (23b), the case on the remnant must be dative. (23c) shows that a short source like ‘...how rich he is’ would not be a possible source for the sluice in (23b), since case matching is impossible in (23c). In predicative sentences of this type, nominative is required.

- (23) a. \* Hversu ríkum giftist hún manni?  
 how rich.DAT married she.NOM man.DAT
- b. Hún giftist ríkum manni, en ég veit ekki  
 she.NOM married rich.DAT man.DAT but I know not  
 hversu { ríkum / \*ríkur }.  
 how { rich.DAT / \*rich.NOM }  
 ‘She married a rich man, but I don’t know how rich.’
- c. ...en ég veit ekki hversu { \*ríkum / ríkur } hann er.  
 ...but I know not how { \*rich.DAT / rich.NOM } he is  
 ‘...but I don’t know how rich he is.’

Another possible source for (23b) would be to front the whole DP object, and then elide the NP. Thus, if ellipsis of *manni* ‘man’ in (24a) were possible in a context licensing sluicing, then we would not be forced to assume that there was a violation of the left branch constraint. However, the exchange in (24b) casts doubt on this idea, since NP-ellipsis is normally not available in a way that strands the degree phrase and adjective phrase.

- (24) a. Hversu ríkum manni giftist hún?  
 how rich.DAT man.DAT married she.NOM  
 ‘How rich a man did she marry?’
- b. A: Hún giftist rosalega ríkum manni.  
 she.NOM married very rich man  
 ‘She married a very rich man.’
- B: \* Hversu ríkum giftist hún?  
 how rich.DAT married she.NOM

The data in (25) and (26) replicate the data in (23) and (24), only with an accusative object.

- (25) a. \* Hversu ríkan þurfti hún mann?  
 how rich.ACC needed she.NOM man.ACC
- b. Hún þurfti ríkan mann, en ég veit ekki  
 she.NOM needed rich.ACC man.ACC but I know not  
 hversu { ríkan / \*ríkur }.  
 how { rich.ACC / \*rich.NOM }  
 ‘She needed a rich man, but I don’t know how rich.’
- c. ...en ég veit ekki hversu { \*ríkan / ríkur } hann er.  
 ...but I know not how { \*rich.ACC / rich.NOM } he is  
 ‘...but I don’t know how rich he is.’
- (26) a. Hversu ríkan mann þurfti hún?  
 how rich.ACC man.ACC needed she.NOM  
 ‘How rich a man did she need?’
- b. A: Hún þurfti rosalega ríkan mann.  
 she.NOM needed very rich.ACC man.ACC  
 ‘She needed a very rich man.’
- B: ?? Hversu ríkan þurfti hún?  
 how rich.ACC needed she.NOM

In (27) and (28), we show that left branches can also be stranded in fragment responses. As before, case matching is required, and this holds for both dative and accusative objects.

- (27) A: Hún giftist ríkum manni.  
 she married rich man.DAT  
 ‘She married a rich man.’
- B: Já, mjög { \*ríkur / \*ríkan / ríkum }.  
 yes very { \*rich.NOM / \*rich.ACC / rich.DAT }  
 ‘Yes, very rich.’
- (28) A: Hann þarf ríka konu.  
 he needs rich woman.ACC  
 ‘He needs a rich woman.’
- B: Já, mjög { \*rík / ríka / \*ríkri }.  
 yes very { \*rich.NOM / rich.ACC / \*rich.DAT }  
 ‘Yes, very rich.’

Thus, the Icelandic facts seem to support the view that ellipsis can repair left branch violations.

### 4.3 Embedded Question Island

Embedded questions are islands in Icelandic, as illustrated in (29b). The sluice in (29a) shows that sluicing seems to fix a violation of such an island, as expected under the island-repair view. Examples (29c)–(29d) illustrate that an account of the apparent repair effect in terms of copular clauses fails to account for the case matching facts. This forces us to the conclusion that we do, indeed, once again, have apparent island repair in Icelandic sluices.

- (29) a. Sandra var að reyna að átta sig á hvaða kona  
 Sandra.NOM was to try to figure REFL out what woman  
 ætlaði að hitta ákveðinn mann,  
 intended to meet certain man.ACC  
 en ég man ekki hvaða { mann / \*maður }.  
 but I remember not what { man.ACC / \*man.NOM }  
 ‘Sandra was trying to figure out which woman was trying to meet a  
 certain man, but I don’t remember which man.’
- b. \* ...en ég man ekki hvaða mann hún var að reyna  
 ...but I remember not what man.ACC she.NOM was to try  
 að átta sig á hvaða kona ætlaði að hitta \_\_\_  
 to figure REFL out what woman intended to meet \_\_\_
- c. ...en ég man ekki hvaða { \*mann / maður } það  
 ...but I remember not what { \*man.ACC / man.NOM } it  
 var.  
 was  
 ‘...but I don’t remember which man it was.’

- d. ...en ég man ekki hvaða { <sup>??/%</sup>mann / maður } það  
 ...but I remember not what { <sup>??/%</sup>man.ACC / man.NOM } it  
 var sem konan ætlaði að hitta.  
 was that woman.the intended to meet  
 ‘...but I don’t remember which man it was  
 that the woman was going to meet.’

Thus, the Icelandic facts seem to support the view that ellipsis can repair movement out of embedded question islands.

#### 4.4 Adjunct Island

As (30b) illustrates, adjuncts are islands to extraction in Icelandic, which appear to be repairable under sluicing (30a). As before, (30c)–(30d) illustrate that a copular source for the remnant fails to meet case-matching requirements (at least for those speakers who reject such cases on long-cleft pivots).<sup>11</sup>

- (30) a. Jón verður reiður ef Sara talar við einn af kennurunum,  
 John will.be mad if Sara talks with one.ACC of teachers.the.DAT  
 en hún getur ekki munað { hvern / \*hver }  
 but she can not remember { which.ACC / \*which.NOM }  
 ‘John will be mad if Sara talks with one of the teachers, but she  
 can’t remember which.’
- b. \* ...en hún getur ekki munað hvern hann verður reiður ef  
 ...but she can not remember which.ACC he will.be mad if  
 hún talar við \_\_\_  
 she talks with \_\_\_
- c. ...en hún getur ekki munað { \*hvern / hver } það er.  
 ...but she can not remember { \*who.ACC / who.NOM } it is  
 ‘...but she can’t remember who it is.’

<sup>11</sup>Granted, it is conceivable that other sorts of copular sources aside from clefts in Icelandic yield the right case facts under sluicing. We leave exploring this question aside here for future work.

- d. ...en hún getur ekki munað { ??/%hver / hver } það  
 ...but she can not remember { ??/%who.ACC / who.NOM } it  
 er sem hún á ekki að tala við.  
 is that she ought not to talk with  
 ‘...but she can’t remember who it is that she shouldn’t talk to.’

Fragments show a similar pattern. In (31), the nominative response is grammatical only on the reading where Guðmundur will get angry—corresponding to the the nominative correlate *Jón*. Under the reading where Jón gets mad if Sara talks with Bjartur and Guðmundur, only accusative is possible on the fragment in (31B).

- (31) A: Jón verður reiður ef Sara talar við Bjart.  
 John becomes angry if Sara talks to Bjartur.ACC  
 ‘John will get angry if Sara will talk to Bjartur.’  
 B: { \*Guðmundur / ?Guðmund / \*Guðmundi } líka.  
 { \*Guðmundur.NOM / ?Guðmundur.ACC / \*Guðmundur.DAT } too  
 ‘Guðmundur, too.’

Thus, this seems to support the view that ellipsis can repair adjunct island violations.

#### 4.5 Coordinate Structure Constraint

Another kind of constraint that might be violable under clausal ellipsis is the Coordinate Structure Constraint (CSC; Ross 1967), which says that it is impossible to extract only one conjunct from a coordinated phrase. (32a) shows that a sluicing remnant can indeed correspond to (and match the case of) one correlate in a conjunction phrase. (32b) shows that a continuation that extracts such a conjunct directly is ungrammatical; if such a continuation is the source for (32a), then it appears that the illicit CSC violation is repaired by ellipsis. (32c)–(32d) show that short and long clefts would not be possible sources for (32a), since they do not allow case-matching.

- (32) a. Þeir sannfærðu Kennedy og einhvern annan þingmann  
 they convinced Kennedy and some.ACC other.ACC senator.ACC  
 um að styðja (í sameiningu) frumvarpið,  
 on to support (in unison) bill.the  
 en ég man ekki hvaða { þingmann / \*þingmaður }.  
 but I remember not which { senator.ACC / \*senator.NOM }  
 ‘They convinced Kennedy and some other senator to support the bill  
 (together), but I don’t remember what senator.’
- b. ...en ég man ekki hvaða þingmann (\*þeir sannfærðu  
 ...but I remember not which senator.ACC (\*they convinced  
 hann og \_\_ um að styðja (í sameiningu) frumvarpið)  
 him and \_\_ on to support (in unison) bill.the)
- c. \* ...en ég man ekki hvaða þingmann það var.  
 ...but I remember not what senator.ACC it was
- d. <sup>??/%</sup> ...en ég man ekki hvaða þingmann það var sem þeir  
 ...but I remember not what senator.ACC it was that they  
 sannfærðu.  
 convinced  
 ‘...but I don’t remember which senator it was that they convinced.’

The same facts—i.e., case matching and apparent island repair—hold for fragment responses. (33) replicates the context from above.

- (33) A: Þeir sannfærðu Kennedy og einhvern annan þingmann  
 they convinced Kennedy and some.ACC other.ACC senator.ACC  
 um að styðja (í sameiningu) frumvarpið.  
 on to support (in unison) bill.the
- B: Já, { \*Bjartur / Bjart / \*Bjarti }.  
 yes { \*Bjartur.NOM / Bjartur.ACC / \*Bjartur.DAT }

However, it is possible that the elided continuation does not require a CSC violation. Depending on one’s view of the identity condition, (33B) could be derived from something like (34).

- (34) Já, Bjartur sannfærðu þeir um að styðja frumvarpið.  
 yes, Bjartur.ACC convinced they on to support bill.the  
 ‘Yes, Bjartur they convinced to support the Bill.’

This alternative is undermined by the example presented in (36). (35) shows that a predicate like *skila að* ‘separate’ requires a plural internal argument. Thus, in (36B), the fragment response would seem to have to be fed by a CSC violating structure; it could not, for example, be derived from something like (35a), since that is not a grammatical sentence to begin with.

- (35) a. \* Þeir skildu Bjartur að.  
 they separated Bjartur.ACC at  
 b. Þeir skildu Bjartur og Páll að.  
 they separated Bjartur.ACC and Páll.ACC at  
 ‘They separated Bjartur and Páll.’
- (36) A: Þeir skildu Páll og einhvern annan að.  
 they separated Páll.ACC and someone other.ACC at  
 ‘They separated Páll and someone else.’  
 B: Já, { \*Bjartur / Bjartur / \*Bjarti }.  
 yes { \*Bjartur.NOM / Bjartur.ACC / \*Bjartur.DAT }  
 ‘Yes, Bjartur.’

The same goes for sluicing, as illustrated in (37).

- (37) Þeir skildu Bjartur og einhvern annan þingmann að,  
 they separated Bjartur.ACC and some other senator.ACC at,  
 en ég man ekki hvaða þingmann.  
 but I remember not what senator.ACC  
 ‘They separated Bjartur and some other senator,  
 but I don’t remember which senator.’

Thus, the facts presented in this section seem to support the view that ellipsis can repair CSC violations.

## 5 Case Mismatches and Dative Substitution

Ordinarily, case mismatches are not possible in Icelandic fragment answers/responses. This holds for verbs selecting oblique subjects, as illustrated in (38), and for verbs that take ordinary nominative subjects, as illustrated in (39)–(40).

- (38) A: { \*Ég / \*Mig / Mér } leiðist.  
 { \*I.NOM / \*me.ACC / me.DAT } bores  
 ‘I’m bored.’  
 B: { \*Ég / \*Mig / Mér } líka.  
 { \*I.NOM / \*me.ACC / me.DAT } too  
 ‘Me too.’
- (39) A: { Hver / \*Hvern / \*Hverjum } skemmdi sjónvarpið?  
 { who.NOM / \*who.ACC / \*who.DAT } broke television.the.ACC  
 ‘Who broke the TV?’  
 B: { Ég / \*Mig / \*Mér }.  
 { I.NOM / \*me.ACC / \*me.DAT }  
 ‘Me.’
- (40) A: { Ég / \*Mig / \*Mér } vil fara.  
 { I.NOM / \*me.ACC / \*me.DAT } want go  
 ‘I want to go.’  
 B: { Ég / \*Mig / \*Mér } líka.  
 { I.NOM / \*me.ACC / \*me.DAT } too  
 ‘Me too.’

Under theories of ellipsis identity where only semantic content is relevant (Merchant 2001 in particular), one might have imagined that accusative or dative would be possible in (40B), given that another verb meaning ‘want’, namely *langa*, takes either an accusative subject (standardly) or a dative subject (under Dative Substitution).<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup>It should be noted that Dative Substitution refers to verbs that prescriptively take an accusative subject. There is, however, a lot of both inter- and intra-speaker variation, such that some speakers may find dative ungrammatical with these verbs, whereas others may only find dative grammatical. Many speakers, however, show intra-speaker variation. (See discussion in, e.g., Svavarsdóttir 1982; Jónsson 2003; Barðdal 2001, 2011; Jónsson and Eythórsson 2003, 2005; Eythórsson and Jónsson 2009; Viðarsson 2009; Ingason 2010; Nowenstein 2012, 2014a,b.)

- (41) { Mig / Mér } langar að fara.  
 { me.ACC / me.DAT } wants to go  
 ‘I want to go.’

However, (41) does not make accusative or dative available in (40B).

And yet, the availability of accusative or dative with a verb like *langa* ‘want’ does make available a case mismatch of its own: case mismatches based on Dative Substitution are clearly okay:

- (42) A: Mig langar að fara.  
 me.ACC wants to go  
 ‘I want to go.’  
 B: Mér líka.  
 me.DAT too  
 ‘Me too.’
- (43) A: Hverjum langar að fara?  
 who.DAT wants to go  
 ‘Who wants to go?’  
 B: { \*Ég / Mig / Mér }!  
 { \*I.NOM / me.ACC / me.DAT }  
 ‘Me!’

This is even possible within one sentence, as illustrated in (44a).<sup>13</sup> (44b) shows that such mismatching is not possible with a verb like *vilja* ‘want’, which, as illustrated in (40) above, only takes a nominative subject.

- (44) a. Hana langar að fara, og honum líka.  
 her.ACC wants to go, and him.DAT too  
 ‘She wants to go, and he does too.’  
 b. Hún vill fara, og { hann / \*honum } líka.  
 she.NOM wants go and { he.NOM / \*him.DAT } too  
 ‘She wants to go, and he does too.’

<sup>13</sup>Note that although (44) is translated using verb phrase ellipsis, that is not what is going on in the Icelandic examples, as Icelandic doesn’t even have verb phrase ellipsis (Thoms, 2012).

It is not enough that a verb can assign two different cases (to the same argument), however. What appears to be crucial in allowing case mismatches is that in the case of Dative Substitution, the change in case has no semantic consequences. It has long been known that some kinds of case alternations do have semantic consequences. For example, there is a class of verbs which can take either an accusative or a dative object (H.Á. Sigurðsson, 1989; Barðdal, 1993; Maling, 2002; Svenonius, 2002). If the dative is chosen, the object is understood to benefit from the event. Consider the example in (45):

- (45) Hún klóraði { mig / mér }  
 she.NOM scratched { me.ACC / me.DAT }  
 ‘She scratched me.’

If accusative is chosen, it means she affected me physically, and probably hurt me or damaged my skin. If dative is chosen, it means I benefitted from the event, as if she had scratched me kindly or scratched an itch. With case alternations like this, a case mismatch in fragment answers is not possible.

- (46) A: Hún klóraði mig.  
 she.NOM scratched me.ACC  
 ‘She scratched me.’  
 B: { \*Ég / Mig / \*Mér } líka.  
 { \*I.NOM / me.ACC / \*me.DAT } too  
 ‘Me too.’
- (47) A: Hún klóraði mér.  
 she.NOM scratched me.DAT  
 ‘She scratched me.’  
 B: { \*Ég / \*Mig / Mér } líka.  
 { \*I.NOM / \*me.ACC / me.DAT } too  
 ‘Me too.’

Another example comes from cases discussed by Jónsson (2013a), drawing in part on the references above. Jónsson (2013a) noticed that verbs of contact, like

*skalla* ‘(hit with one’s) head’, can take either accusative or dative objects.<sup>14</sup>

- (48) Messi skallaði { boltann / boltanum } í netið.  
 Messi headed { ball.the.ACC / ball.the.DAT } in net.the  
 ‘Messi headed the ball into the net.’ (Jónsson, 2013a, 145)

According to Jónsson (2013a, 154), “While both the accusative and the dative variant assert contact with the object, only the latter variant asserts motion of the object.” Thus, a sentence with the dative entails the corresponding sentence with an accusative, but not vice-versa.

- (49) a. Jón skallaði boltann  
 John.NOM headed ball.the.ACC  
 án þess að skalla honum neitt.  
 without to head it.DAT anywhere  
 ‘John headed the ball without heading it anywhere.’  
 b. \* Jón skallaði boltanum (burt) án þess að skalla hann.  
 John.NOM headed ball.the.DAT (away) without to head it.ACC  
 ‘John headed the ball away without heading it.’  
 (Jónsson, 2013a, 155)

Similarly to *klóra* ‘scratch’ above, case mismatches with *skalla* ‘head’ are not possible (although the contrast is perhaps sharper with *klóra* ‘scratch’ than with *skalla* ‘head’, as pointed out to us by Jóhannes Gísli Jónsson).<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup>Note, however, that not all speakers accept dative in sentences like (48). The tests based on it, therefore, can only be judged by speakers who do accept both dative and accusative.

<sup>15</sup>However, Hlíf Árnadóttir (p.c.) tells us that she finds the following exchange acceptable.

- (i) A: Jón mokaði stéttina.  
 John.NOM shoveled sidewalk.the.ACC  
 ‘John shoveled the sidewalk.’  
 B: Já, snjónum líka.  
 Yes, snow.the.DAT too  
 ‘Yes, the snow too.’

Since the alternation between accusative and dative in this case is thought to be determined semantically (Svenonius, 2002), on par with the *skalla* ‘head’ examples above, this suggests that case-mismatches might be slightly less restricted than we are indicating here. For now, we leave a

- (50) A: Jón skallaði fjólubláa boltanum.  
 John.NOM headed purple ball.the.DAT  
 ‘John headed the purple ball.’  
 B: { ??Gráa boltann / Gráa boltanum } líka.  
 { ??gray ball.the.ACC / gray ball.the.DAT } too  
 ‘The gray ball too.’
- (51) A: Jón skallaði fjólubláa boltann.  
 John.NOM headed purple ball.the.ACC  
 ‘John headed the purple ball.’  
 B: { Gráa boltann / ??Gráa boltanum } líka.  
 { gray ball.the.ACC / ??gray ball.the.DAT } too  
 ‘The gray ball too.’

The contrast between Dative Substitution, which seems to trigger/allow case-mismatches, and the other cases, which do not, seems to relate to the fact that in the latter cases, a difference in case assignment correlates with a difference in interpretation, whereas in the former case, it does not (though see footnote 15). This lends itself to an account which takes the difference in semantic interpretation to have syntactic correlate, whereas Dative Substitution is a purely morphological process. Consider why. In the case where a case difference entails a semantic difference, there must be some marking in the syntax that the semantics is drawing from. If the case alternation were a purely PF process, there would be no way for the semantics to be directly sensitive to it. In contrast, Dative Substitution could be a purely PF process, since the semantics needn’t be sensitive to it.

Icelandic, then, can be seen as a mixed language with respect to whether it robustly supports or counterexamples the CMG—it does both. In the following section we discuss the theoretical consequences of these facts for extant theories of ellipsis and ellipsis identity, and the standard conception of the CMG, in light of the Icelandic counterexamples, and supporting examples just discussed.

better understanding for future research.

## 6 Towards an Explanation, and Theoretical Consequences

The facts above receive the most natural explanation if TP ellipsis requires syntactic identity of the ellipsis site with an antecedent, but that the factors deciding between accusative and dative are not encoded in the syntax. For example, suppose that the experiencer of a verb like *langa* ‘want’ is introduced in the specifier of an Appl(icative) head, as proposed in Wood (2015). In many cases, the specifier of experiencer Appl is assigned dative. However, there is another variety of Appl, even with an experiencer interpretation, which does not assign dative to its specifier. H.Á. Sigurðsson (2012) gives the following notation: Appl\* assigns dative, while Appl\*<sup>+</sup> assigns accusative.<sup>16</sup> H.Á. Sigurðsson (2012) argues, however, that the distinction between Appl\* and Appl\*<sup>+</sup> is made post-syntactically, in the PF branch of the derivation.

If so, then the rule adding the marked, ‘+’ feature to Appl\* would only apply to a certain, limited set of verbs. Failure to apply this extra, marked rule would lead to dative rather than accusative.

Another possibility is that there is no syntactic featural difference between the two varieties of Appl. Rather, in the spirit of McFadden (2004, 2006), there would be a general post-syntactic rule to the effect that dative case is added to a DP base-generated in SpecAppIP. (See McFadden (2004) for a formalization of how the case feature assigned to a DP will be realized on all the appropriate heads internal to that DP.)

$$(52) \quad \text{DP} \rightarrow \text{DP}_{\text{DAT}} / [\text{AppIP} \text{ — } [\text{AppI}' \dots ]]$$

Accusative subjects would then involve some way of suppressing the rule in (52) for particular verbs. One way of suppressing such a rule, which retains the intuition

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<sup>16</sup>Wood (to appear) proposes that accusative subjects are in fact structural accusative, assigned not by Appl itself but by virtue of the presence of a silent external argument. The difference does not matter for the present point, though, except that if there is a silent external argument present, it would have to be present in both the accusative and dative variants, at least for syntactic identity to hold in ellipsis contexts.

that (52) is the general case, would be to apply the rule everywhere, but then apply an impoverishment rule in the context of certain, specific verbs.

(53)  $DP_{\text{DAT}} \rightarrow DP / \_ \{ \textit{langa}$  ‘want’, etc. }

In the absence of a dative feature, accusative will appear automatically in the account of Wood (to appear). Alternatively, we could specify accusative directly, as in McFadden (2004). McFadden (2004) argues that dative is really [+OBLIQUE, +INFERIOR], while accusative is simply [+INFERIOR]. He proposes that Dative Substitution is a result of the following impoverishment rule:

(54)  $[+CASE, +OBLIQUE, +INFERIOR] \rightarrow [+CASE, +INFERIOR] / \_ \{ \textit{langa}$  ‘want’, etc. }

The general situation would be to add dative (i.e. [+CASE, +OBLIQUE, +INFERIOR]) to a DP in SpecAppIP, but in the context of particular verbs—which speakers would have to learn individually—the [+OBLIQUE] feature would be deleted. This captures the fact that speakers really do have to learn on a case-by-case basis which verbs take accusative, but the general system pushes in the direction of dative for applied arguments.

An advantage to this approach is that it has a clear way of approaching some other case-mismatches, such as those discussed in detail by Jónsson (2013b). He discusses examples where DP modifiers carry a different case from the DP they modify. An example is presented in (55) and (56). Ordinarily, the intensifier ‘self’ must match the DP it modifies in case (and number/gender as well). The examples in (55) are, in this respect, what we would expect. (55a) would be the standard variant, with accusative on the subject pronoun, and a matching accusative on the ‘self’ modifier. (55b) would be the expected form in the context of Dative Substitution (which *langa* ‘want’ permits): dative on the subject pronoun and a matching dative on the ‘self’ modifier. These examples, are, as we expect, both possible.

- (55) a. Mig sjálfan langar að vita það.  
me.ACC self.ACC want to know that  
'I myself want to know that.'
- b. Mér sjálfum langar að vita það.  
me.DAT self.DAT want to know that  
'I myself want to know that.'

However, Jónsson (2013b) also claims that case-mismatches are possible, but with a twist: an accusative subject pronoun is possible with a dative 'self' modifier, but a dative subject pronoun is highly degraded with an accusative 'self' modifier.

- (56) a. Mig sjálfum langar að vita það.  
me.ACC self.DAT want to know that  
'I myself want to know that.'
- b. ?? Mér sjálfan langar að vita það.  
me.DAT self.ACC want to know that  
'I myself want to know that.'

Jónsson (2013b) presents several other, similar examples, with floating quantifiers and secondary predicates of various sorts. The approach here would suggest an asymmetry in how the impoverishment rule that turns underlyingly dative DPs into accusative ones applies. Essentially, there would be some rule stating that impoverishment must apply to the head DP before it can apply to any of the dependents that agree with it. We must leave a more in-depth development of this idea for future work, noting only that treating Dative Substitution as the absence of impoverishment seems promising.<sup>17</sup>

Under all of the above possibilities, however, the narrow syntax makes no distinction between dative and accusative. As far as the syntax is concerned, the

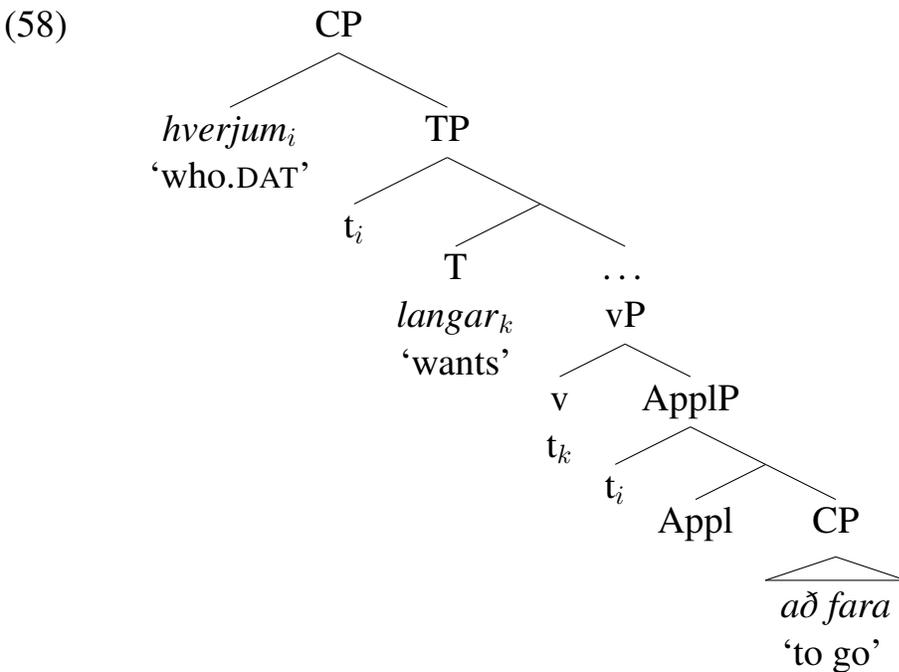
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<sup>17</sup>Another possibility is that the agreeing dependents themselves get their case features under agreement at PF, in which case the variation could be a matter of timing: either agreement occurs before impoverishment, generating (56a), or after impoverishment, generating (55a), or else there is no impoverishment, generating (55b). The marked, degraded option in (56b), however, is the only option that would require impoverishment directly on the modifier—and that in the absence of impoverishment on the head.

structure is the same whether the DP ended up being dative or accusative. This structure is enough to license ellipsis. Consider (43), repeated in (57).

- (57) A: Hverjum langar að fara?  
 who.DAT wants to go  
 ‘Who wants to go?’  
 B: { \*Ég / Mig / Mér }!  
 { \*I.NOM / me.ACC / me.DAT }  
 ‘Me!’

Speaker A’s utterance would have the structure in (58).



Speaker B’s utterance would be identical, except that the specifier of Appl would be a 1st person pronoun. The case of that pronoun would be determined post-syntactically, on the basis of the surrounding structure—dative because it is in the specifier of ApplP, possibly followed by accusative (under impoverishment or case-star augmentation) due to the presence of the specific verb *langa* ‘want’. But the syntax of the TP would be the same: not even the features, let alone the structure of ApplP and its arguments would be different in the narrow syntax.

Now consider the other kind of case-alternation, the one where mismatches

are not possible in fragment answers. We repeat examples in (50)–(51) above in (59)–(60).

- (59) A: Jón skallaði fjólubláa boltanum.  
 John.NOM headed purple ball.the.DAT  
 ‘John headed the purple ball.’  
 B: { ??Gráa boltann / Gráa boltanum } líka.  
 { ??gray ball.the.ACC / gray ball.the.DAT } too  
 ‘The gray ball too.’
- (60) A: Jón skallaði fjólubláa boltann.  
 John.NOM headed purple ball.the.ACC  
 ‘John headed the purple ball.’  
 B: { Gráa boltann / ??Gráa boltanum } líka.  
 { gray ball.the.ACC / ??gray ball.the.DAT } too  
 ‘The gray ball too.’

In this example, the case distinction makes a semantic difference, even if it is a very subtle one. This would mean that there would have to be some feature in the syntax that distinguished between them. For example, Schäfer (2008) proposes that the dative case version involves a special  $\text{Voice}_{\text{DAT}}$  head. Svenonius (2006), Jónsson (2013b) and Wood (2015) propose that the [DAT] feature is on a special kind of little *v*. E.F. Sigurðsson (2015) proposes that the dative version is actually structurally distinct from the accusative one, in that the dative argument is generated in a lower position in the tree.<sup>18</sup> For all these proposals, however, there is some syntactic difference between the accusative and dative structures that the semantics can be sensitive to. Thus, ruling such cases out on the basis of syntactic identity promises to be relatively straightforward if we assume such semantic differences entail a syntactic one, a natural assumption.

Note, in passing, that this does not entail that case is *assigned* in the syntax. Rather, post-syntactic case assignment can be sensitive to the presence of, say  $v_{\text{DAT}}$

<sup>18</sup>Jónsson (2013b) also proposes that the dative version is structurally distinct from the accusative, but for him, it is not about the position of the object: rather his *v*-DAT occurs as an extra head in addition to the heads present in the accusative version.

or Voice<sub>DAT</sub>. In fact, Wood (2015) argues that certain case alternations between dative and nominative should be accounted for with an impoverishment rule applied to  $v_{\text{DAT}}$ , deleting the [DAT] feature prior to morphological case-assignment. This account requires that case assignment takes place post-syntactically, even in this case where a syntactic diacritic on  $v$  is necessary.

The claim, then, would be that whatever feature or structure distinguished accusative from dative in the *skalla* ‘head’-type examples, that is enough to bleed ellipsis. The structural distinction—even if it is just a case-feature diacritic on a head—prevents TP deletion of a structure that differs (e.g. in lacking that feature, or in the more structurally complex way proposed by E.F. Sigurðsson 2015).

Finally, we point out a theoretical consequence of the Icelandic case facts for non-silent structure theories (Ginzburg and Sag 2000; Culicover and Jackendoff 2005; Nykiel and Sag 2012; Barker 2013; Jacobson 2013). Case mismatch under ellipsis in Icelandic directly challenges “non-silent-structure” approaches, which reject the notion that there is regular, albeit unpronounced syntactic structure. Such approaches capture case matching by stipulating that the category of the remnant and correlate must match, with case features forming part of the category definition. That is, a nominative marked nominal would differ in category from an accusative marked one. This assumption leads us to expect case-matching across the board in Icelandic, contrary to fact.<sup>19</sup>

On the other hand, the standard account of case matching effects, which makes reference to silent structure, does a better job of correctly predicting the distribution of case mismatches we see in Icelandic. Crucial reference is made to the idiosyncratic properties of elided material. In sluices involving dative substitution predicates or otherwise, it is not the correlate that determines case marking possibilities for the remnant, but rather the copy of the antecedent predicate in the elided TP.

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<sup>19</sup>Barros (2014) adopts the standard assumption that there is silent structure in ellipsis, but adopts a semantic theory of identity with an additional case-matching stipulation in the spirit of non-silent structure approaches. The Icelandic facts would seem to argue against even this view of identity.

## 7 Conclusion

In this paper, we have explored the basic facts of Icelandic clausal ellipsis. For the most part, Icelandic clausal ellipsis is unexceptional in having the properties we expect from such constructions as found in many other languages. Independent properties of the Icelandic case system, however, shed potentially important light on the analysis of clausal ellipsis.

With respect to apparent cases of island repair under clausal ellipsis, the Icelandic facts support the view where such repair is not apparent, or illusory, as has been argued in recent work. To support this conclusion we drew on interpretive and morphological evidence in controlling for alternative non-island containing structures, such as short sources and copular clauses. Even when such structures are independently ruled out, island repair effects persist. It is always possible that there is some other, non-island-violating alternative at work, but our investigation so far casts doubt on some of the more prominent proposals.

Icelandic behaves largely as expected with respect to case matching effects in clausal ellipsis, requiring case on remnants and correlates to match in general. Case matching is standardly assumed to follow from two assumptions: first, that there is silent syntactic structure in ellipsis, and second, that this structure is identical to the structure of the antecedent for the ellipsis.

Together these two assumptions make a simple prediction, borne out in Icelandic Dative Substitution configurations, that case mismatches should be possible when the antecedent predicate (and its copy in the elided structure) allows case to alternate on one or more of its arguments. The Icelandic facts support the standard assumptions over approaches that reject silent structure and stipulate case matching between remnants and correlates in clausal ellipsis, with no reference to an elided predicate (Ginzburg and Sag 2000; Culicover and Jackendoff 2005; Nykiel and Sag 2012; Jacobson 2013; Barker 2013). Such approaches undergenerate in overpredicting matching across the board in Icelandic.

Importantly, the case matching facts also argue against purely semantic approaches that allow for structural mismatches between the antecedent and elided structure (provided they match in interpretation). Such approaches overgenerate, predicting unacceptable case mismatches. Consider, for instance, the discussion in section 5 surrounding examples (40) and (41) (repeated below as (61) and (62)). The verbs *vilja* and *langa* both mean ‘want,’ but come with distinct case properties. A purely semantic approach would predict an antecedent like that in (61A), with *vilja* ‘want’ as the main verb, should license deletion in a clause like (62), with *langa* ‘want’, erroneously predicting an acceptable accusative or dative remnant.<sup>20</sup>

- (61) a. A: { Ég / \*Mig / \*Mér } vil fara.  
           { I.NOM / \*me.ACC / \*me.DAT } want go  
           ‘I want to go.’  
       B: { Ég / \*Mig / \*Mér } líka.  
           { I.NOM / \*me.ACC / \*me.DAT } too  
           ‘Me too.’
- (62) { Mig / Mér } langar að fara.  
       { me.ACC / me.DAT } wants to go  
       ‘I want to go.’

It is worth noting that there is currently no consensus on precisely how the identity condition on ellipsis should be stated. Here, we have weighed just two alternatives in broad terms: a purely syntactic condition, and a purely semantic one. It is well established that either option alone runs into empirical trouble. Merchant (2001) shows that purely syntactic approaches undergenerate, whereas Chung (2006) shows that purely semantic approaches overgenerate. Various “hybrid” approaches have also been proposed, often adopting an overarching semantic identity condition alongside one or more syntactic codicils to reign in overgeneration (Merchant 2005; Chung 2006, 2013; AnderBois 2011; Barros 2014; Weir

<sup>20</sup>In this case, a semantic account might, however, make use of the more subtle semantic distinctions between *langa* and *vilja* discussed by Jónsson (2003, 138). It is well known in the Icelandic literature, however, that case-marking cannot be predicted on the basis of semantics, so we suspect that the point here will withstand closer scrutiny.

2014). The Icelandic facts we have uncovered are consistent with a purely syntactic approach, but we appreciate that a hybrid approach may be capable of countenancing the Icelandic facts as well. For space and time reasons, we leave exploration of the various hybrid proposals on the market for future research.

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# A Brief History of Icelandic Weather Verbs\*

## Syntax, Semantics and Argument Structure

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Weather verbs in Icelandic are not “no-argument” predicates, but occur with a quasi-argument (non-referential *pro*) and can also take full NPs, in nominative, accusative or dative case. The use of the cases can be explained by the different origins of these verbs, most of which can be traced back to verbs with a more general meaning. Importantly, weather verbs with a full NP have continued to exist from Old to Modern Icelandic. In the modern language the subjecthood of these NPs can be established, and a subject analysis is also possible for Old Icelandic. We argue that with a number of verbs there was a development from an intransitive taking either nominative or oblique subject NP to a weather verb without an overt argument. This development was triggered by the availability of *pro*-drop in Old Icelandic. By assumption, *pro* could be reanalyzed as a covert quasi-argument and, as a consequence, the coding of the weather event shifted from an Argument-Predicate Type to a Predicate Type (cf. Eriksen et al. 2010, 2012). Apparently, the covert pronoun (referential *pro*) and the covert quasi-argument coexisted for some time, until referential *pro* became severely restricted in early Modern Icelandic. This led to the emergence of “weather-*hann*”, which was originally a pronoun but was reanalyzed as an overt quasi-argument. There ensued a competition between structures with overt and covert quasi-arguments. Contrary to what might have been expected, weather-*hann* never gained ground in Icelandic, but the unexpressed quasi-argument remains the norm. This fact is comprehensible in light of the general diachronic stability of Icelandic grammar.

## 1 Introduction

Weather verbs in Icelandic have generally been considered to be “no argument predicates” (Thráinsson 2007:267, Sigurðsson 1989:315ff., Nygaard 1905:6–7). This goes for both prototypical weather verbs such as *rigna* ‘rain’ (1a) and other weather verbs which pattern with the former, e.g., *hvesa* ‘get windy’ and *kólna* ‘get cold’ (1b).

- (1) a. Í gær      rigndi.  
yesterday rained  
‘Yesterday it rained’  
b. Í gær      hvessti/kólnaði.  
yesterday got-windy/got-cold  
‘Yesterday it got windy/got cold.’

In this paper we argue against the standard view that weather verbs in Icelandic are “no-argument predicates”. Based on empirical evidence drawn from an extensive survey of weather

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verbs in Old and Modern Icelandic, we present data such as in (2), where weather verbs are accompanied by overt NPs, occurring either in the nominative, accusative or dative case.

- (2) a. **Vindurinn** kólnar.  
 the-wind.NOM gets-cold  
 ‘The wind gets cold.’  
 b. **Vindinn** hvessir.  
 the-wind.ACC gets-windy  
 ‘It gets windy.’  
 c. **Eldi** rignir.  
 fire.DAT rains  
 ‘It rains fire.’

It can be demonstrated that in Modern Icelandic both the nominative and the oblique NPs are syntactic subjects. Although examples like the ones in (2) are well attested throughout the history of Icelandic, they have so far received little scholarly attention.

A further fact to account for is the different distribution of the elements *það* and *hann* which emerged in early Modern Icelandic. While *það* does not only occur in clauses containing weather verbs but also in certain other types of declarative clauses (e.g., impersonal and existential constructions), *hann* is confined to meteorological expressions. Moreover, *það* is restricted to clause-initial position (3), but *hann* takes part in subject-verb inversion (4).

- (3) a. **Það** rignir mikið í dag.  
 it rains much today  
 ‘It rains a lot today.’  
 b. Í dag rignir (\***það**) mikið.  
 today rains it much
- (4) a. **Hann** rignir mikið í dag.  
 he rains much today  
 ‘It rains a lot today.’  
 b. Í dag rignir **hann** mikið.  
 today rains he much  
 ‘Today it rains a lot.’

Traditionally, the term “expletive” has been used about the element *það*, while *hann* with weather verbs has been called either a pronoun or simply *veður-hann* (“weather-*hann*”) (see, e.g., Thráinsson 2005:339, who says that *hann* is a pronoun although it is not clear what it refers to, and Barðdal 2015b:398, who claims that *hann* counts as an argument). In this paper we concur with the usual analysis of *það* as a “filler” or a “placeholder” without an argument status (e.g. Sigurðsson 2006), whereas we propose that weather-*hann* is a non-referential argument, i.e., a quasi-argument (cf. Chomsky 1981:325, Sigurðsson 1993, Rizzi 2000:43–44). We further claim that while quasi-arguments were covert in Old Icelandic, in Modern Icelandic they can be either covert (as non-referential *pro*) or overt (as weather-*hann*).

As our investigation shows, a considerable stability is observed with weather verbs in the history of Icelandic. Aside from the fact that the lexical items are nearly all the same, the continuity in syntax can in particular be detected in the use of NPs and quasi-arguments with weather verbs which has survived from Old to Modern Icelandic. The introduction of the filler *það* and of weather-*hann* can be regarded manifestations of more general syntactic changes in Icelandic, not special to weather verbs. These changes involve the rise of “expletive” constructions and the placement of severe restrictions on *pro-drop*. The only change specifically targeting weather verbs is the tendency – already present in Old Icelandic – to reanalyze referential pronouns as a non-referential ones. We attribute the fact that the non-prototypical weather verbs (1b) can occur without a visible subject to a reanalysis of *pro* in Old Icelandic as a quasi-argument.

The paper is organized as follows: In section 2 we present the empirical evidence based on our surveys of weather verbs in Old and Modern Icelandic. In section 3 we discuss some significant changes affecting weather verbs from in the history of Icelandic. Section 4 deals with the position of weather verb in main and embedded clauses. In section 5 we present our analysis of the subject properties which apply to weather verbs. Finally, in section 6, on the origins of weather verbs, we propose a hypothesis on how such verbs emerged historically. Section 7 concludes the paper.

## 2 The empirical evidence

### 2.1 The survey

The discussion and analysis in this paper is based on empirical evidence drawn from an extensive survey of weather verbs in Old and Modern Icelandic. We searched for the following verbs (including all inflectional forms, but omitting the present and past participle in an adjectival use), all of which are attested in Modern Icelandic:

- (5) *birta* ‘brighten’, *blása* ‘blow’, *dimma* ‘get dark’, *drífa* ‘snow’, *fenna* ‘snow’, *frysta* ‘freeze’, *hlána* ‘thaw’, *hlýna* ‘get warm’, *hvessa* ‘get windy’, *kólna* ‘get cold’, *lygna* ‘abate (of wind)’, *lýsa* ‘brighten’, *lægja* ‘abate (of wind)’, *myrkva* ‘get dark’, *rigna* ‘rain’, *rökkva* ‘get dark’, *skyggja* ‘get dark’, *snjóa* ‘snow’, *þiðna* ‘thaw, melt’

For reasons of space, our discussion in this article is focused on only a subset of these verbs.

In the Modern Icelandic part of the survey we used mainly two databases, *Tímarit.is* (an internet collection of Icelandic periodicals) and *Ritmálsskrá Orðabókar Háskólans* (ROH, The University of Iceland Lexicon Project Written Language Register), with the addition of the search engine *Google*. This search aimed at verifying the attestation of the relevant verbs in Modern Icelandic, as well as their syntactic behavior and their ability to occur with an NP. The verbs are shown in Table 1, where they are classified according to semantic field, with additional information on the case of the NP they may take. Note that although some of the verbs seem to have the same meaning, there may be fine semantic nuances which are not

captured by the relevant English gloss. Furthermore, while some verbs represent the default usage, others are mostly confined to certain contexts or registers.

Table 1. Weather verbs in Modern Icelandic taking an NP (nominative, accusative, or dative)

MODERN ICELANDIC							
		NOM	ACC	DAT			
		NOM	ACC	DAT	NOM	ACC	DAT
precipitation	<i>drífa</i> 'snow'	x	x		phase change	<i>frysta</i> 'freeze'	
	<i>fenna</i> 'snow'		x			<i>hlána</i> 'thaw'	x
	<i>rigna</i> 'rain'	x		x		<i>hlýna</i> 'get warm'	x
	<i>snjóa</i> 'snow'			x		<i>kólna</i> 'get cold'	x
					<i>þiðna</i> 'thaw, melt'	x	
wind	<i>blása</i> 'blow'	x	x		brightness	<i>birta</i> 'brighten'	x x
	<i>hvesa</i> 'get windy'	x	x			<i>dimma</i> 'get dark'	x x
	<i>lygna</i> 'abate (of wind)'	x	x			<i>lýsa</i> 'brighten'	x
	<i>lægja</i> 'abate (of wind)'	x	x			<i>myrkva</i> 'get dark'	
						<i>rökkva</i> 'get dark'	x
					<i>skyggja</i> 'get dark'	x	

In the Old Icelandic part of our investigation we made use of *Íslenskt textasafn* (ÍT, The Icelandic Text Collection) and *Ordbog over det norrøne prosasprog* (ONP, A Dictionary of Old Norse Prose).<sup>1</sup> In this article Old Icelandic examples are written in a normalized spelling, irrespective of the text sources. As a rule, it is indicated which collection they are taken from (ÍT or ONP).

The search in ÍT and ONP resulted in examples of all the verbs in (5), with only two exceptions, *hlýna* 'get warm' and *skyggja* 'get dark' (shown in brackets in the tables below). Moreover, while all the verbs in our Old Icelandic material, except *lægja* 'abate' and *þiðna* 'thaw, melt', occur without an NP, most of them also occur with an NP in nominative, accusative or dative case. The verbs are shown in Table 2, where they are classified in the same way as the Modern Icelandic ones in Table 1. In addition, Table 3 shows the frequency of a given verb occurring with or without an NP in Old Icelandic.

<sup>1</sup> In addition to ÍT and ONP, we also searched the Icelandic Parsed Historical Corpus (IcePaHC); however, this search only yielded a part of the results already obtained, but no new results.

Table 2. Weather verbs in Old Icelandic taking an NP (nominative, accusative, or dative)

OLD ICELANDIC									
		NOM	ACC	DAT			NOM	ACC	DAT
precipitation	<i>drífa</i> 'snow'	x	x	x	phase change	<i>frysta</i> 'freeze'		x	
	<i>fenna</i> 'snow'		x			<i>hlána</i> 'thaw'	x		
	<i>rigna</i> 'rain'	x		x		<i>(hlýna)</i> 'get warm'			
	<i>snjóa</i> 'snow'					<i>kólna</i> 'get cold'	x		
					<i>þiðna</i> 'thaw, melt'	x			
wind	<i>blása</i> 'blow'	x	x		brightness	<i>birta</i> 'brighten'			x
	<i>hvessa</i> 'get windy'		x			<i>dimma</i> 'get dark'			x
	<i>lygna</i> 'abate (of wind)'		x			<i>lýsa</i> 'brighten'			x
	<i>lægja</i> 'abate (of wind)'		x			<i>myrkva</i> 'get dark'			x
						<i>rökkva</i> 'get dark'			
					<i>(skyggja)</i> 'get dark'				

Table 3. Frequency of weather verbs in Old Icelandic with and without an NP (no NP is indicated by Ø)

OLD ICELANDIC									
		NP	Ø	SUM			NP	Ø	SUM
precipitation	<i>drífa</i> 'snow'	5	9	14	phase change	<i>frysta</i> 'freeze'	3	2	5
	<i>fenna</i> 'snow'	4	0	4		<i>hlána</i> 'thaw'	2	1	3
	<i>rigna</i> 'rain'	28	16	44		<i>(hlýna)</i> 'get warm'			
	<i>snjóa</i> 'snow'	0	6	6		<i>kólna</i> 'get cold'	7	3	10
					<i>þiðna</i> 'thaw, melt'	3	0	3	
wind	<i>blása</i> 'blow'	7	2	9	brightness	<i>birta</i> 'brighten'	5	4	9
	<i>hvessa</i> 'get windy'	7	5	12		<i>dimma</i> 'get dark'	1	9	10
	<i>lygna</i> 'abate (of wind)'	1	2	3		<i>lýsa</i> 'brighten'	1	70	71
	<i>lægja</i> 'abate (of wind)'	10	0	10		<i>myrkva</i> 'get dark'	4	25	29
						<i>rökkva</i> 'get dark'	0	7	7
					<i>(skyggja)</i> 'get dark'				

As shown in Table 3, the frequency of weather verbs in Old Icelandic varies considerably. Some of the verbs are relatively common, whereas other verbs are rare. What is perhaps most interesting is the low token frequency of weather verbs in Old Icelandic in general. On the other hand, weather nouns are more common, e.g., *veður* 'weather' (occurring 194 times according to ONP), *snjór/snær* 'snow' (126 times), *vindur* 'wind' (96 times) and *regn* 'rain' (71 times). Presumably, the rarity of weather verbs in Old Icelandic is, at least partly, a consequence of the fact that other methods were employed in weather descriptions. Instead of the verbs *hvessa* 'get windy' and *lygna* 'abate (of wind)', for example, one can find a

paraphrase with a verb with a more general meaning (*falla* ‘fall’, *gera* ‘do’) and a weather noun (*veðrið* ‘the weather’, *logn* ‘calm’), as in (6).

- (6) ...og er morgnaði, féll **veðrið** og gerði **logn**.  
 and when came-morning fell the-weather and made wind-still  
 ‘... and when it dawned the weather fell still.’ (ÍT, Egils saga, ch. 58)

The same can be said of *snjóa* ‘snow’ and *rigna* ‘rain’ which are often replaced by a verb and a weather noun, as in (7):

- (7) a. ...þá var það á einni nótt, að féll **snjór** mikill...  
 then was it on one night that fell snow much  
 ‘Then it happened one night that a lot of snow fell...’ (ÍT, Egils saga, ch. 72)  
 b. Þá gerði á **regn** mikið.  
 then made on rain much  
 ‘Then came a great rain.’ (ÍT, Droplaugasona saga, ch. 1)

## 2.2 Weather verbs without an NP

Weather verbs occurring without an NP are of two types: (i) prototypical weather verbs, such as *rigna* ‘rain’ and *snjóa* ‘snow’ (8), and (ii) verbs which have a more general meaning but pattern with the prototypical weather verbs in meteorological contexts. The verbs of the latter type include *hvesa* ‘get windy’ and *lægja* ‘abate’, which have the basic meaning ‘sharpen’ and ‘lower’ respectively, and *kólna* ‘get cold’ and *hlýna* ‘get warm’, both of which are also used in more general contexts. Examples of two of these verbs from Old Icelandic are given in (9). Corresponding usage is also found in Modern Icelandic, so there is no need to give examples here.

- (8) a. Þann tíma voru vætur svá miklar, at bæði rigndi nætr ok daga.  
 that time were rains so great that both rained nights and days  
 ‘During that time the rain was so great that it rained night and day.’  
 (ONP, Hák81 594<sup>11</sup>)  
 b. En áður þeir sigldu brott snjáfaði mjök á fjöll.  
 but before they sailed away snowed much on mountains  
 ‘But before they sailed away it snowed a lot up in the mountains.’ (ONP, ÓT<sup>I</sup> 256<sup>10</sup>)
- (9) a. Þá hvessti svo að varla var vaðhæft á konungsskipinu.  
 then got-windy so that hardly was wadeable on the-king’s-ship  
 ‘Then it got so windy that it was hardly possible to wade on the king’s ship.’  
 (ONP, HákFris 462<sup>28</sup>)  
 b. ...nú tók at kólna.  
 now took to get-cold.INF  
 ‘...now it started to get cold.’ (ONP, Jvs7 29<sup>32</sup>)

These examples are in accordance with traditional ideas that weather verbs occur without an NP. As shown in the following, however, these verbs can also be accompanied by NPs in Icelandic, either in nominative, accusative or dative case. This fact has so far received little attention, as stated in section 1 above.

## 2.3 Weather verbs with an NP

### 2.3.1 Nominative

An NP with the verb *kólna* ‘get cold’ is always in the nominative case, both in Old and Modern Icelandic. This is clear in the Old Icelandic example in (10a), where the noun *veðráttá* ‘weather condition, weather’ is unambiguously nominative. On the other hand, the noun *veðrið* ‘the weather’ in (10b) is identical in nominative and accusative case, and hence the form is ambiguous; in light of examples like (10a), however, it stands to reason that it is in fact nominative.

- (10) a. ...þá kólnar **veðráttá**.  
 then cools weather-condition.NOM  
 ‘...then the weather gets cold.’ (ONP, Enc<sup>II</sup>624 122<sup>11</sup>)
- b. En er hann kom upp á heiðina kólnaði **veðrið**.  
 but when he came up on the-heath got-cold the-weather.NOM  
 ‘But when he arrived up on the heath the weather got cold.’  
 (ÍT, Eyrbyggja saga, ch. 40)

The verb *hlýna* ‘get warm’ is not attested in our Old Icelandic data. In Modern Icelandic, however, it is found with a nominative, just like *kólna* ‘get cold’. In the Modern Icelandic examples in (11) both verbs are accompanied by the definite noun *vindurinn* ‘the wind’.

- (11) a. Á sama augnabliki var eins og **vindurinn** kólnaði.  
 on same moment was as if the-wind.NOM got-cold  
 ‘On the same moment it was as if the wind cooled.’  
 ([http://timarit.is/view\\_page\\_init.jsp?pageId=4365584](http://timarit.is/view_page_init.jsp?pageId=4365584))
- b. ...enda hlýnaði **vindurinn** með hækkandi sól.  
 since got-warm the-wind.NOM with rising sun  
 ‘...as a matter of fact the wind got warm when summer approached.’  
 (<http://dalsmynni.123.is/blog/2008/04/28/240472/>)

Note that a nominative NP with *kólna* and *hlýna* is a “theme” and has the meaning ‘something becomes cold/warm’. As an experiencer verb, however, *kólna* and *hlýna* can appear with a dative (*einhverjum kólnar/hlýnar* ‘somebody experiences cold/warmth’). Finally, it should be emphasized that the NP occurring with these verbs can be either indefinite or definite. This use is also observed with other weather verbs, both in Old and Modern Icelandic.

## 2.3.2 Accusative

Unambiguous accusative NPs can be found in Old and Modern Icelandic with the verbs *birta* ‘brighten’ and *lægja* ‘abate’. Note that the use of *birta* with a noun (e.g., *hríð* ‘snowstorm’) involves a different meaning than the use of the verb without a noun. When used without a noun the meaning is simply ‘there is more light’, but the addition of a noun yields a metaphorical reading, i.e., ‘the storm abates (and it becomes brighter)’. With the verb *lægja*, however, the meaning is the same irrespective of the presence or absence of an NP; i.e., it always means ‘abates’.

- (12) a. Birtir nú **hríðina**, ok kemr gott veðr.  
brightens now the-snowstorm.ACC and comes good weather  
‘Now the storm abated and the weather became good.’ (ÍT, Hrana saga hrings, ch. 8)
- b. Þá lægði **storminn** og kvómu þeir heilir til lands.  
then abated the-storm.ACC and came they whole to shore  
‘Then the storm abated and they arrived safely on shore.’  
(ÍT, Helga kviða Hundingsbana II)

The verbs *hvesa* ‘get windy’ and *dimma* ‘get dark’ are attested with an NP in Old and Modern Icelandic. In Old Icelandic the nouns accompanying these verb are ambiguous between being in the nominative and the accusative case, for example *veður* ‘weather’ and *nótt* ‘night’ in (13). In light of later Icelandic, however, we assume that the case of these NPs is accusative (14).

- (13) a. Litlu eftir þetta heyrðu þeir, at **veðr** tók at hvesa...  
little after this heard they that weather.ACC took to get-windy  
‘Shortly after this they heard that the weather started to get windy...’  
(ÍT, Göngu-Hrólf saga)
- b. ...er **nótt** tók at dimma en dag tók at skemma...  
when night.ACC took to get-dark but day.ACC took to shorten  
‘...when the night started to get dark and the day to get shorter...’  
(ONP, Hkr<sup>lx</sup> 256<sup>2</sup>: AM 37 fol<sup>x</sup> “J1”)
- (14) a. ...og brimið vex og **vindinn** hvesir.  
and the-surf grows and the-wind.ACC gets-windy  
‘...and the surf increases and it gets more windy.’  
([http://timarit.is/view\\_page\\_init.jsp?pageId=2138875](http://timarit.is/view_page_init.jsp?pageId=2138875)) (1898)
- b. Þegar **nóttina** dimmir, þá stækkar meira undirvöxtur...  
when the-night.ACC darkens then grows more root  
‘When the night gets darker the roots grow bigger...’  
(<http://www.malefnin.com/ib/topic/6799-nyr-goda-nott-thradur/?page=65>)

## 2.3.3 Dative

When denoting actual rain, the verb *rigna* ‘rain’ is used on its own. However, both in Old and Modern Icelandic *rigna* is also attested with a dative NP. When this dative NP denotes a liquid, it is usually ‘blood’, but NPs denoting more solid phenomena include ‘fire and brimstone’, ‘rocks’, and even ‘manna’ (an edible substance known from the Bible). In (15a) an Old Icelandic example is given of this verb with the noun *blóð* ‘blood’ and in (15b) with *rain* ‘rain’ (which in this case, however, is used metaphorically denoting ‘a battle’).

- (15) a. ...rignir **blóði**.  
 rains blood.DAT  
 ‘...it rains blood.’ (ÍT, Brennu-Njáls saga, ch. 157 (Darraðarljóð 1))
- b. ...rigna getr at **regni** / regnbjóðr, Hávars þegna.  
 rain.INF does to rain.DAT warrior Hávarr.GEN thane.GEN  
 ‘...warrior, it starts to rain the rain of Hávar’s thanes (i.e., a battle begins).’  
 (ÍT, Egils saga, ch. 44)

In Modern Icelandic a dative NP with *rigna* rarely denotes a liquid, although such instances are attested, as seen in (16a). Usually the dative NP denotes abstract concepts such as ‘scolding’ or ‘insults’, but occasionally more tangible phenomena like ‘dogs and cats’, as in (16b). The latter use is most likely due to English influence.

- (16) a. Það rigndi **blóði** í Írak í dag...  
 it rained blood.DAT in Iraq in today  
 ‘It rained blood in Iraq today...’  
 (<http://www.visir.is/blodbad-i-bagdad-i-dag/article/2005509140385>)
- b. ...nema hér rignir **hundum** og **köttum** dag eftir dag.  
 except here rains dogs.DAT and cats.DAT day after day  
 ‘...except here it rains cats and dogs day after day.’  
 (<http://madamhex.blog.is/blog/madamhex/entry/256021/>)

The verb *snjóa* ‘snow’ is not attested in Old Icelandic with an NP. Whether or not this is a coincidence is unclear (only six examples of this verb are known to us from Old Icelandic texts). In Modern Icelandic, however, *snjóa* is very frequent and sometimes appears with a dative NP (17).

- (17) Það snjóaði **fallegum** **stórum**, **hvítum** **flygsum**...  
 it snowed beautiful.DAT big.DAT white.DAT flakes.DAT  
 ‘It snowed beautiful big white flakes...’  
 ([http://bokmenntaborgin.is/?post\\_type=mapplace&p=498](http://bokmenntaborgin.is/?post_type=mapplace&p=498))

The use of a dative NP with *rigna* ‘rain’ and *snjóa* ‘snow’ is of common Germanic origin, as shown by comparative evidence in Old English and Gothic. This dative can in fact be traced back to instrumental case, which is marginally attested in Old English. The use of dative with *rignan/rīnan* ‘rain’ and *snīwan* ‘snow’ in Old English is demonstrated in (18) and the use of instrumental in (19).

- (18) a. Hit ágan rínan xl. daga and xl. nihta tósomne  
 it started rain.INF 40 days and 40 nights together  
**ðæm mæstan réne.**  
 the.DAT most.DAT rain.DAT  
 ‘It started to rain the greatest rain for 40 days and 40 nights.’  
 (Wulfstan, Napier 1883:21617)
- b. Swa **miclum** sniwde.  
 so much.DAT snowed  
 ‘So much snowed.’ (COE Alex 679 (Allen 1995:62))
- (19) And hit þa ongan rinan feowertig daga and feowertig nihta tosomne  
 and it then started rain.INF 40 days and 40 nights together  
**þy mæstan réne.**  
 the.INSTR most.INSTR rain.INSTR  
 ‘And then it started to rain with great rain for 40 days and 40 nights.’  
 (Wulfstan, Napier 1883:206)

### 3 Changes from Old to Modern Icelandic

#### 3.1 Changes in case marking

##### 3.1.1 Nominative Substitution

A change from accusative to nominative case marking is attested with the verbs *birta* ‘brighten’, *dimma* ‘get dark’, *hvessa* ‘get windy’ and *lægja* ‘abate’. Both *birta* and *lægja* appear with an unambiguous accusative already in Old Icelandic. The use of nominative with these verbs is very recent, attested only from the beginning of the 21st century (*lægja* from 2008 and *birta* from 2014).

- (20) a. ...svo nú er bara að bíða eftir að **vindur** lægir.  
 so now is just to wait after that wind.NOM abates  
 ‘So, now we just need to wait until the wind abates.’  
 (<http://gumpurinn.blog.is/blog/gumpurinn/entry/568562/>) (2008)
- b. ...**dagurinn** birtir alltaf þegar þú ert í kring.  
 the-day.NOM brightens always when you are in around  
 ‘... the day brightens when you are around.’  
 ([http://www.pikore.com/m/768905157634923330\\_12314837](http://www.pikore.com/m/768905157634923330_12314837)) (2014)

As mentioned above, the case marking of the nouns occurring with *dimma* ‘get dark’ and *hvessa* ‘get windy’ in Old Icelandic is ambiguous between nominative and accusative. Accusative is, however, attested in later Icelandic along with the more recent nominative (with *dimma* from 1909 and *hvessa* from 2011).

- (21) a. ...vitandi að **vindurinn** hvessir meðfram brúnum.  
 knowing that the-wind.NOM gets-windy along edges  
 ‘...knowing that the it gets windy along the edges.’  
 ([http://www.fjallgongur.is/aevingar/15\\_aefingar\\_jan\\_mars\\_2011.htm](http://www.fjallgongur.is/aevingar/15_aefingar_jan_mars_2011.htm)) (2011)
- b. Þá **nóttin** dimmir, draugar vakna...  
 when the-night.NOM darkens ghosts wake-up  
 ‘When the night gets darker, ghosts wake up...’  
 ([http://timarit.is/view\\_page\\_init.jsp?pageId=2141152](http://timarit.is/view_page_init.jsp?pageId=2141152)) (1909)

A change from an oblique case, including accusative, to nominative is a common tendency in Icelandic, termed Nominative Substitution, and mainly occurs with theme subjects (cf. Halldórsson 1982, Eythórsson 2000, 2002, Jónsson and Eythórsson 2003, 2005, Barðdal 2011, Dunn et al., to appear).

### 3.1.2 Impersonalization

In addition to Nominative Substitution, the reverse change, call it Impersonalization, is also found with Icelandic weather verbs. In Old Icelandic the verb *blása* ‘blow’ takes a nominative subject, as shown in (22), but in Modern Icelandic we occasionally find an accusative with this verb (23), which appears to be an innovation.

- (22) ...sem á blási **fagur** **sunnanvindur**.  
 as on blows fair.NOM southern-wind.NOM  
 ‘...as if a fair southern wind is blowing.’ (ONP, Thom<sup>2</sup> 433<sup>8</sup>)
- (23) **Vindinn** blés og bátnum velti um koll.  
 the-wind.ACC blew and the-boat.DAT turned on top  
 It was windy and the boat capsized.’  
 (<https://www.hugi.is/ljod/greinar/81337/oldukoss/>)

Impersonalization is a sporadic type of change and is attested with a handful of verbs, in particular the experiencer verbs *hlakka til* ‘look forward to’ and *kviða fyrir* ‘be anxious about’ (Eythórsson 2001, 2002, 2015, Barðdal 2011). The occurrence of Impersonalization with *blása* in (23) is of a different kind, as it involves a change from a verb taking an agentive nominative subject to a verb taking an accusative theme subject. Presumably this pattern is analogical to the one found with other “wind” verbs, notably *hvessa* ‘get windy’ and *lægja* ‘abate’ (see section 2.3.2 above).<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Note that *blása* ‘blow’ occurs with an accusative as an anticausative verb (Ottosson 2013, Sandal 2011, Barðdal 2015, Cennamo, Eythórsson and Barðdal 2015), which might have been a further motivation for the change.

- (i) ...hafði blásit hauginn.  
 had blown the-mound  
 ‘...the mound had eroded.’ (Cleasby og Vigfússon, Fm. IV, 57)

### 3.2 The filler *það*

The non-referential element *það*, homonymous with the third person neuter pronoun *það* ‘it’, only occurs initially in certain clause types in Modern Icelandic, including those containing weather verbs. It is often called “expletive” but we opt for the more neutral term “filler”; in any case, it is not a quasi-argument, as suggested by the fact that it does not participate in subject-verb inversion.

Unambiguous examples of the element *það* first appear in early Modern Icelandic, in a translation of English folktales from around 1500:

- (24) **Það** var einn mann í Englandi sem fleiri aðrir...  
 it was one man in England as more others  
 There was a man in England, just like many others...’ (Rögvaldsson 2002:22)

The oldest examples of *það* with weather verbs are found in the New Testament translation of Oddur Gottskálksson from 1540 (Rögvaldsson 2002:23). Unsurprisingly, the filler only appears clause-initially in front of the finite verb (25a) and is otherwise absent (25b).

- (25) a. ...og hann bað bænar að **það** skyldi eigi rigna,  
 and he asked prayer that it should not rain  
 og **það** rigndi ekki yfir jörðina í þrjú ár og sex mánaði.  
 and it rained not over the-earth in three years and six months  
 ‘...and he prayed that it would not rain and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months.’ (Nýja testamenti Odds Gottskálkssonar, James 5:500)
- b. En þann dag er Lot fór út af Sódóma rigndi ofan  
 but that day when Lot went out from Sodom rained from-above  
 eldi og brennisteini...  
 fire.DAT and brimstone  
 ‘That day, when Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone...’  
 (ÍT, Nýja testamenti Odds Gottskálkssonar, Luke 17:163)

Since these examples occur in translations, it would seem likely that the filler *það* found its way into Icelandic due to foreign influence (Rögvaldsson 2002:23). In other Scandinavian languages there is evidence from the 15th century onwards of a comparable element – an expletive or a quasi-argument (Falk 1993, Larsson 2014) – and in other Germanic languages there are even older examples of such phenomena (e.g., Light 2010).

The use of the expletive had become widespread in Icelandic by the 19th century, as in the text in (26), which dates from 1837.

- (26) ...snjóaði í Kantónarborg (Kanton)í fyrsta sinn í næstliðin 80 ár;  
 snowed in Canton in first time in previous eighty years  
 héldu landsmenn fyrst að **það** rigndi viðarull...  
 thought inhabitants first that it rained wood-wool  
 ‘It rained in Canton for the first time in 80 years. The inhabitants first thought that it rained wood wool...’ ([http://timarit.is/view\\_page\\_init.jsp?pageId=1993996](http://timarit.is/view_page_init.jsp?pageId=1993996))

Given the fact that the *það* is not an argument, we will not discuss its distribution further in this paper.<sup>3</sup>

### 3.3 The quasi-argument *hann* in Icelandic and other Scandinavian languages

Whereas the emergence of the expletive *það* in Icelandic has been investigated previously (cf. Rögnvaldsson 2002, Viðarsson 2009), we do not know of any special diachronic study of the quasi-argument *hann*, which is homonymous with the third person masculine pronoun *hann* ‘he’. A search in the relevant databases (ROH, ÍT, IcePaHC and Tímarit.is) reveals that there are examples of *hann* in meteorological contexts already by the 17th century. In some of the early attestations, *hann* is plausibly analyzed as a referential pronoun; for example, in (27a) *hann* occurs with the verb *drífa* ‘snow’ and seems to refer to the noun *snjó* ‘snow’ in the preceding clause. This is supported by the fact that there is another example in the same document (27b) where the verb *drífa* takes the noun *snjó* (in accusative case).

- (27) a. ... **snjó** kom anno 1581, eptir það minnsta grasár; **hann** dreif  
 snow came in-year 1581 after that smallest grass-year he snowed  
 allan góu þrælinn.  
 all Góa’s the-slave.ACC  
 ‘Snow came in the year 1581, after that very little grass; it snowed constantly the last day of the month Góa.’
- b. Þá **dreif** **snjó** þann dag svo mikinn...  
 then snowed snow.ACC that day so much  
 ‘Then it snowed so much that day...’
- (ROH, Safn til sögu Íslands I-IV) (17th century)

Already by the 17th and the 18th centuries *hann* is attested with no apparent antecedent with the verbs *blása* ‘blow’ (28a) and *hvessa* ‘get windy’ (28b). However, given that these verbs are known to occur with a masculine NP, e.g., *vindur* ‘wind’, the element *hann* might be regarded as a referential pronoun.

- (28) a. Þorra dægur þykja löng, / þegar **hann** blæs á norðan.  
 Þorri.GEN days seem long when he blows from north  
 ‘The days of the month Þorri seem long, when the wind blows from the north.’
- (ROH, Hrólfs rímur kraka) (late 17th c., early 18th c.)

<sup>3</sup> It may be mentioned that in recent years there are indications that the distribution (and therefore also the argument status) of *það* might be changing. In (i) an apparently non-referential *það* occurs to the right of the verb *rigna* ‘rain’ (here in the subjunctive), which deviates from the standard use. Such examples are, however, very rare.

- (i) Rigni það, rigni það bara.  
 rain it, rain it just  
 ‘May it rain, may it rain!’ ([http://timarit.is/view\\_page\\_init.jsp?pageId=4563729](http://timarit.is/view_page_init.jsp?pageId=4563729))

- b. **Hann** er að hvessa.  
 he is to get-windy.INF  
 ‘It’s getting windy.’ (ROH, Sigurður Pétursson 1950:77) (1798)

In the late 19th-century texts given in (29) *hann* is found with *snjóa* ‘snow’ (29a) and *rigna* ‘rain’ (29b) which never occurred with a masculine NP. In these cases *hann* has clearly been reanalyzed as a non-referential argument.

- (29) a. **hann** snjóaði hjer mest síðari part dags...  
 he snowed here most latter part day.GEN  
 ‘It snowed the most here during the latter part of the day...’  
 ([http://timarit.is/view\\_page\\_init.jsp?issId=273382](http://timarit.is/view_page_init.jsp?issId=273382))
- b. Þetta er ljóta illviðrið – **hann** rignir allt af jafnt og þjett!  
 this is ugly the-bad-weather he rains always evenly and tightly  
 ‘This is shitty weather. It rains constantly.’  
 ([http://timarit.is/view\\_page\\_init.jsp?issId=273816&pageId=3942300](http://timarit.is/view_page_init.jsp?issId=273816&pageId=3942300))

Interestingly, there is a time span of about two hundred years between the oldest examples in our data collection of *hann* preceding a finite verb (28a) and *hann* following a finite verb (30). The inversion here involves the verb *rigna* in a conditional clause (without the complementizer *ef* ‘if’); significantly, with that verb *hann* is clearly a quasi-argument.

- (30) ...sama er að segja, rigni hann...  
 same is to say rains he  
 ‘...the same applies when it rains...’  
 ([http://timarit.is/view\\_page\\_init.jsp?pageId=2021816](http://timarit.is/view_page_init.jsp?pageId=2021816)) (1848)

Weather-*hann* is not only found in Icelandic; a similar phenomenon also exists in other Scandinavian languages, Faroese and West-Norwegian, Swedish and Jutlandic dialects (cf. Bandle 1973). The example in (31) is from Faroese (Thráinsson et al. 2012:287-9).

- (31) **Hann** kavar.  
 he snows  
 ‘It snows.’

As in Icelandic, *hann* in Faroese occurs in inversion, e.g., when a phrase like *i dag* ‘today’ is topicalized (32) (Thráinsson et al. 2012:287–9).

- (32) a. **Hann** er høgur í dag.  
 he is high today  
 ‘The wind blows from the north today.’
- b. Í dag er **hann** høgur.  
 today is he high  
 ‘Today the wind blows from the north.’

In West-Norwegian dialects the distribution is the same, and *hann* occurs both in clauses with a neutral word order and in inversion, see (33) (Helge Sandøy, p.c.):

- (33) a. **Hann** går seg på sør no.  
 he goes self on south now  
 ‘The wind is turning to the south now.’  
 b. No begynner **han** å tjukne til i vest.  
 now begins he to thicken.INF to in west  
 ‘Now it’s getting overcast in the west.’

Furthermore, it may be mentioned that weather-*hann* can occur in dative case following a preposition in Norwegian dialects, as in (34). This is reminiscent of the expression *það slítur úr honum* ‘there are scattered drops (lit. it tears from him)’ in Icelandic (35):

- (34) Det kom ikkje dropen utor **honum** i går.  
 it came not the-drop out-of him yesterday  
 ‘It didn’t rain a drop yesterday.’

- (35) Himinn er lágur og blakkur, og öðru hverju slítur úr  
 the-sky is low and dark and now-and-then tears from  
**honum** hret.  
 him.DAT cold-spell

‘The sky is overcast and dark and every now and then there is scattered rain.’

([http://timarit.is/view\\_page\\_init.jsp?pageId=5968285](http://timarit.is/view_page_init.jsp?pageId=5968285))

From the example in (35) it appears that the dative form *honum* is a real pronoun referring to the noun *himinn* ‘sky’ in the preceding clause. On the other hand, it is unclear what weather-*hann* in the other Icelandic (29–30), the Faroese (31–32) and Norwegian (33) examples refers to.

Earlier scholarship often assumed that weather-*hann* was a personal pronoun. Thus, Kopperstad (1920), for example, imagined that *hann* had a general reference to ‘sky’ (*himinn*) and ‘air temperature’ (*lofthiti*), or even to pagan gods like Njörðr. Although such ideas nowadays appear to have been discarded (cf. already Olsen 1920), the idea that weather-*hann* is a personal pronoun can still be found, notably in Barðdal (2015b:398), Þráinsson (2005:339) and Tráinsson et al. (2012:287-288). In both of the latter works the fact that *hann* cannot be omitted in Icelandic (36) and Faroese (37) is used to support a pronominal analysis of weather-*hann* in these languages.

- (36) \*Í gær var kaldur.  
 yesterday was cold.MASC

- (37) \*Í dag er høgur.  
 today is high.MASC

The analysis of *hann* as a personal pronoun in the modern languages is not convincing in our view. By the same argument it would, for example, be possible to claim that the quasi-argument *it* in English is referential, just because it cannot be omitted (*it rains* vs. *\*rains*).

As already stated, we believe that weather-*hann* was originally a referential pronoun and first emerged with verbs which could occur with a masculine noun, e.g., *vindur* ‘wind’ and *snjór* ‘snow’ (cf. Bandle 1973:47-48); later on this pronoun was reanalyzed as a non-referential quasi-argument. This assumption is supported by the oldest attestation in Icelandic of *hann* in weather clauses, given in (27a) and (28), where *hann* appears with verbs that are known to occur with a masculine noun. The use of weather-*hann* then spread to other weather verbs which did not occur with a masculine NP. In this way expressions like *hann rignir* ‘(lit.) he rains’, *hann snjóar* ‘(lit.) he snows’, *hann frystir* ‘(lit.) he freezes’ emerged. A further fact suggesting that *hann* is really a quasi-argument and not a personal pronoun is that sometimes speakers express uncertainty as to what it refers to, as seen in (38), where the person writing the text asks directly what the referent of *hann* is.

- (38) ..loksins héltst “hann” (himinn?? Hver er þessi hann??) nógu þurr...  
 finally remained he (the-sky) who is this he enough dry  
 ‘Finally “he” (the sky?? Who is this *he*??) stayed dry enough...’  
 ([http://oskimon.com/2003\\_07\\_01\\_gamalt.html](http://oskimon.com/2003_07_01_gamalt.html))

Thus, although weather-*hann* is a quasi-argument in Modern Icelandic, there are good reasons to believe that it originated as a referential pronoun.

#### 4 The syntactic position of weather verbs

As is well known, Icelandic has been a strict V2 language since its earliest attestation, with the finite verb obligatorily occurring in second position after the first constituent in both main and embedded clauses (e.g., Eythórsson 1995). A significant variation on this major theme is V1, whereby the finite verb occurs in initial position, in particular in certain syntactically and pragmatically conditioned contexts in declarative main clauses. A common subtype of V1 is the so-called Narrative Inversion (39), which, as its name implies, is found in narrative contexts in both Old and Modern Icelandic (cf. Thráinsson 1986, Sigurðsson 1990, 1994 [1983]).

- (39) Komu þeir þá að helli einum.  
 came they then to cave certain  
 ‘Then they came to a certain cave.’

Weather verbs, however, are very uncommon in clause-initial position in Old Icelandic. In our sources we have only found four such examples in main clauses (two of which in poetry) and one in an embedded clause. The example in (40), which is from a poem, is the only one of a single weather verb in clause-initial position in a main clause in Old Icelandic.

- (40) ...rignir mest, at regni / røkk, áðr heimrinn søkkvisk.  
 rains most at rain gets-dark before the-world sinks  
 ‘...it rains excessively, it gets dark with rain, before the world goes down.’  
 (ÍT, Bergbúa þáttur, Hallmundarkviða 6)

In the following examples a finite verb occurs initially in a main clause, with the NP following the verb. In (41) the NP *veðrit* ‘the weather’ is presumably accusative (based on our knowledge of later Icelandic), whereas *blóði* ‘blood’ in (42) is clearly dative. Assuming that the NPs are subjects, these clauses would seem to instantiate Narrative Inversion. The example in (40), on the other hand, only contains a single verb and therefore does not involve an inversion.

- (41) ok stóð Haraldr á búlkabrún ok skipaði land.  
 and stood Haraldr on freight-edge and ordered land  
Hvessti þá svá **veðrit**...  
 got-windy then so the-weather  
 ‘...and stood on the edge of the freight and ordered (his men to the) land. Then it got so windy...’ (ONP, Stu<sup>II</sup>R11127<sup>x</sup> 118<sup>25</sup>)

- (42) ...rignir **blóði**...  
 rains blood.DAT  
 ‘...it rains blood...’ (ÍT, Brennu-Njáls saga, ch. 157 (Darraðarljóð 1))

Narrative Inversion with weather verbs is also very rare in Modern Icelandic. The text in (43) contains the verb *rigna* ‘rain’ in clause-initial position in a narrative context, resembling Narrative Inversion, although there is no overt subject present in the clause which the verb could invert with.

- (43) Íþróttahátíð USVS var haldin síðasta laugardag....  
 sports-festival USVS was held last Saturday  
 Veðurguðirnir voru ekki með okur í liði. Rignði allan tímann...  
 the-weather-gods were not with us in team rained all the-time  
 ‘The USVS sports event was held last Saturday... The weather gods were not on our side. It rained the whole time...’ (Fréttabréf U.M.F. Ármanns 2013(8):1)

Moreover, weather verbs appear clause-initially in Modern Icelandic in *yes/no*-questions (44) and newspaper headlines (45). Again, given the absence of an overt subject, there is no inversion involved.

- (44) Rignir á Mars og er eitthvað vatn þar?  
 rains on Mars and is some water there  
 ‘Does it rain on Mars and is there any water there?’  
 (<http://www.visindavefur.is/svar.php?id=65115>)

- (45) Hvessir og snjóar norðantil á landinu.  
 get-windy and snows northern-part on the-land  
 ‘It gets windy and snows in the northern part of the country.’  
 (<http://www.ruv.is/frett/hvessir-og-snjoar-nordantil-a-landinu>)

In embedded clauses in Old Icelandic a single verb regularly occurs directly after the complementizer, as in the case of *birta* ‘brighten’ in (46).

- (46) Þeir fara, þar til at birti.  
 they go until that brightens  
 ‘They keep going until dawn.’ (ÍT, Örvar-Odds saga, ch. 5)

In Modern Icelandic such position of weather verbs is possible in embedded clauses, as in (47a), but the element *það* can also be inserted, as shown in (47b).

- (47) a. ...þá horfði hann áteiknimyndir [sic] með Afa þangað til að birti.  
 then watched he on-cartoons with grand-dad until that brightened  
 ‘...then he watched cartoons with Grandad until dawn.’  
 (<http://www.svalaogmar.blogspot.be/>)
- b. ...þangað til að **það** birti.  
 until it brightened  
 ‘...until dawn.’ (<http://www.grindavik.is/v/120>)

Instead of placing a weather verb in initial position in a declarative clause, usually some other word or phrase is placed in front of it, either by topicalization, as in (48), or by Stylistic Fronting, as in (49). These examples are from Old Icelandic, but the same holds of Modern Icelandic, although there the filler *það* is of course also a possibility in initial position.

- (48) **Þá** lýsti, er þeir fóru frá haugnum.  
 Then brightened when they went from the-mound...  
 ‘It dawned when they left the mound.’ (ÍT, Örvar-Odds saga, ch. 5)
- (49) Bað Elía, að **eigi** rigndi á jörðina.....  
 asked Eliah that not rained on the-earth  
 ‘Elijah asked that it shouldn’t rain on the earth...’ (ÍT, Ísl. hómilíubók. Fornar stólræður)

In summary, the examples we have discussed above show that weather verbs occur very rarely clause-initially in Old and Modern Icelandic. When they do occur in initial position, the placement seems to be conditioned by specific syntactic and pragmatic factors.

## 5 Arguments with weather verbs and their subject properties

### 5.1 Introduction

In the preceding sections it was shown that the weather verbs in Icelandic can take an overt argument. The results from sections 2 and 3 are summarized in Table 4. If a verb does not occur in the data we collected, it is placed within brackets in the table.

Table 4. Weather verbs in Old and Modern Icelandic taking an NP (nominative, accusative, or dative)

		OLD ICELANDIC					
		NOM	ACC	DAT			
precipitation	<i>drífa</i> 'snow'	x	x	x	phase change	<i>frysta</i> 'freeze'	x
	<i>fenna</i> 'snow'		x			<i>hlána</i> 'thaw'	x
	<i>rigna</i> 'rain'	x		x		<i>(hlýna)</i> 'get warm'	
	<i>snjóa</i> 'snow'					<i>kólna</i> 'get cold'	x
						<i>þiðna</i> 'thaw, melt'	x
wind	<i>blása</i> 'blow'	x	x		brightness	<i>birta</i> 'brighten'	x
	<i>hvessa</i> 'get windy'		x			<i>dimma</i> 'get dark'	x
	<i>lygna</i> 'abate (of wind)'		x			<i>lýsa</i> 'brighten'	x
	<i>lægja</i> 'abate (of wind)'		x			<i>myrkva</i> 'get dark'	x
						<i>rökkva</i> 'get dark'	
					<i>(skyggja)</i> 'get dark'		
		MODERN ICELANDIC					
		NOM	ACC	DAT			
precipitation	<i>drífa</i> 'snow'	x	x		phase change	<i>frysta</i> 'freeze'	
	<i>fenna</i> 'snow'		x			<i>hlána</i> 'thaw'	x
	<i>rigna</i> 'rain'	x		x		<i>hlýna</i> 'get warm'	x
	<i>snjóa</i> 'snow'			x		<i>kólna</i> 'get cold'	x
						<i>þiðna</i> 'thaw, melt'	x
wind	<i>blása</i> 'blow'	x	x		brightness	<i>birta</i> 'brighten'	x x
	<i>hvessa</i> 'get windy'	x	x			<i>dimma</i> 'get dark'	x x
	<i>lygna</i> 'abate (of wind)'	x	x			<i>lýsa</i> 'brighten'	x
	<i>lægja</i> 'abate (of wind)'	x	x			<i>myrkva</i> 'get dark'	
						<i>rökkva</i> 'get dark'	x
					<i>skyggja</i> 'get dark'	x	

In this section we consider in more detail NPs with weather verbs, their case marking and subject properties (cf., e.g., Jónsson 1996:112 ff., Thráinsson 2005, 2007).-Many subject tests are such that it is difficult to apply them to arguments of weather verbs, due to the semantic peculiarities of these verbs. Nevertheless, we think that a few such tests can be applied in

order to demonstrate the subject properties of the relevant arguments. Before we discuss the NPs that occur with weather verbs, we first briefly consider the status of possible covert arguments with these verbs.

## 5.2 Covert (quasi-) arguments

In the absence of any overt argument with a particular verb it is understandably difficult to apply subject tests. Yet, we propose that in particular two such tests may show that single verbs are not devoid of arguments, and, moreover, that the unexpressed phrase occurring with them is a subject. These tests are:

- (i) Control clauses
- (ii) Conjunction Reduction

Given that subjects must be omitted in control clauses, it may be assumed that verbs occurring in such clauses do in fact have a subject. As is well known, Chomsky (1981:323–325) used control clauses such as (50) to show that the element (“expletive”) *it* in English must be a subject (i.e., a quasi-argument since it is non-referential).

(50) It sometimes rains after \_\_\_ **snowing**.

Turning to Modern Icelandic, the example in (51) shows that *riгна* ‘rain’ can occur in a control infinitive. By the same reasoning as presented in connection with (50), this means that there is a missing subject in this clause, i.e., a quasi-argument.

(51) Þennan dag hafði hvesst án þess að \_\_\_ hafa **riгnt**.  
 this day had got-windy without to PRO.0 have.INF rained  
 ‘On this day it had got windy without having rained.’

For comparison, the example in (52) contains the verb *syngja* ‘sing’ which takes a nominative subject which is omitted in a control infinitive:

(52) Hún hafði dansað án þess að \_\_\_ hafa **sungið**.  
 she had danced without to PRO.NOM have.INF sung  
 ‘She had danced without also having sung.’

Conjunction Reduction in second conjuncts also indicates that there is an unexpressed quasi-argument with weather verbs, as in example (53). Admittedly, however, it is difficult to establish with certainty whether two clauses or two verbs are being conjoined here, and hence the matter is uncertain.

(53) Á þessum árstíma **riгnir** oft og \_\_\_ **snjóar** jafnvel meira.  
 on this season rains often and 0 snows even more  
 ‘During this time of year it often rains and it snows even more.’

### 5.3 Overt arguments with weather verbs in Modern Icelandic

As stated above, a few tests can be applied to the arguments of weather verbs in Modern Icelandic in order to demonstrate their subject properties. The subject tests which are of particular interest in the context of weather verbs with overt NPs include the following:

- (i) Position of the argument in main and embedded clauses
- (ii) Position of the argument in raising infinitives
- (iii) The Definiteness Effect (DE) in raising infinitives
- (iv) Constraints on extraction of an argument out of an embedded clause

Examples of these subject tests are given below. First, the position of the argument in between a finite auxiliary like *hafa* ‘have’ and a main verb is generally considered a valid subject test in Icelandic (54a). The same holds of clauses containing aspectual auxiliaries like *fara* ‘begin’ (54b).

- (54) a. Um morguninn *hafði vindinn lægt.*  
           in the-morning had the-wind.ACC abated  
           ‘In the morning the wind had abated.’
- b. Í gær *fór vindinn að lægja.*  
       in yesterday began the-wind.ACC to abate.INF  
       ‘Yesterday the wind began to abate.’

On the other hand, objects cannot occur in this position, as exemplified with *hafa* in (55b-c).

- (55) a. Um morguninn *hafði Guðmundur lesið bókina.*  
           in the-morning had Guðmundur.NOM read the-book.ACC  
           ‘In the morning Guðmundur had read the book.’
- b. \*Um morguninn *hafði bókina lesið Guðmundur.*  
           in the-morning had the-book.ACC read Guðmundur.NOM
- c. \*Um morguninn *hafði Guðmundur bókina lesið.*  
           in the-morning had Guðmundur.NOM the-book.ACC read

Second, the position of the argument in infinitive clauses embedded under raising verbs like *telja* ‘consider’ is also a subject property. In this case an argument of a weather verb is “raised” to the object position of the verb in the matrix clause, as in the example in (56a). In corresponding passive clauses the argument occurs in a subject position, as in (56b). Both instances support the analysis of the NP with verbs like *lægja* as a subject.

- (56) a. Hann taldi *vindinn ekki hafa lægt.*  
           he considered the-wind.ACC not have.INF abated  
           ‘He didn’t think the wind had abated.’
- b. *Vindinn* var ekki talið *hafa lægt.*  
           the-wind.ACC was not considered have.INF abated  
           ‘The wind was not thought to have abated.’

It is less felicitous, in our judgment, to place the argument to the right of the main verb, as indicated in (57).

- (57) ??Hann taldi ekki hafa lægt vindinn.  
 he considered not have abated the-wind.ACC

For comparison, consider the examples in (58), involving the verb *leiðast* ‘be bored’ which takes a dative subject and an optional nominative object. These examples show that only subjects and not objects are “raised” to the object position of the verb in the matrix clause, and that subjects cannot be placed to the right of the main verbs in such structures (58b).

- (58) a. Hann taldi **Guðmundi** ekki hafa leiðst (myndin).  
 he considered Guðmundur.DAT not have bored the-film.NOM  
 ‘He thought that Guðmundur had not been bored (by the movie).’  
 b. \*Hann taldi (myndin) ekki hafa leiðst **Guðmundi**.  
 he considered the-film.NOM not have bored Guðmundur.DAT  
 c. \*Hann taldi (myndin) ekki hafa **Guðmundi** leiðst.  
 he considered the-film.NOM not have Guðmundur.DAT bored

Third, the Definiteness Effect (DE) only applies to subjects – and not objects – and is therefore a subject property. As mentioned in section 2.3.3 above, the verb *rigna* ‘rain’ can take an NP in dative case. In (59) the verb and its dative NP (*sprengjum/sprengjunum* ‘bombs’/‘the bombs’) occur in an infinitive clause embedded under *láta* ‘let’. Whereas both definite and indefinite NPs can precede the infinitive (59a), only indefinite NPs can follow the verb; definite forms are strongly dispreferred in this position, if not excluded altogether (59b).

- (59) a. Þeir létu **sprengj-um/sprengjunum** rigna í Sýr-landi.  
 they let bombs.DAT/the-bombs.DAT rain.INF in Syria  
 ‘They let bombs/the bombs rain in Syria.’  
 b. Þeir létu rigna **sprengjum/??sprengj-unum** í Sýr-landi.  
 they let rain.INF bombs.DAT/the-bombs.DAT in Syria  
 ‘They let bombs/??the bombs rain in Syria.’

The infelicity of the definite form *sprengj-unum* ‘the bombs (dat.)’ to the right of the verb in (59b) is due to the DE, which suggests that the NP is a subject. The DE also applies to nominative subjects, as with the verb *falla* ‘fall’ in (60); the NP shows up as accusative due to the fact that it is embedded under *láta* in the matrix clause.

- (60) a. Hann lét **skikkju/skikkjuna** falla um herðar sér.  
 he let cloak.DAT/the-cloak.DAT fall around shoulders self  
 ‘He threw a cloak/the cloak around his shoulders.’  
 b. Hann lét falla **skikkju/??skikkjuna** um herðar sér.  
 he let fall cloak-DAT/the-cloak.DAT around shoulders self  
 ‘He threw a cloak/??the cloak around his shoulders.’

The fourth and final subject property to be mentioned in this connection involves an argument which does not block the extraction of an adverb out of an embedded clause, as in (61) and (62a). On the other hand, such extraction is not possible with topicalized objects, as seen in (62b) (cf. Jónsson 1996:112, 115).

(61) Hvenær sagði María [að **vindinn** hefði lægt \_\_ ]?  
 when said Mary that the-wind.ACC had abated  
 ‘When did Mary say that the wind had abated?’

(62) a. Hvenær sagði María [að **Jóni** hefði leiðst \_\_ ]?  
 when said Mary that John.DAT had bored  
 ‘When did Mary say that John was bored?’

b. \*Hvenær sagði María [að **þessi bók** hefði Jóni líkað \_\_ ]?  
 when said Mary that this.NOM book.NOM had John.DAT liked

As shown earlier, the arguments of weather verbs pass the above subject tests. Yet, there are cases where they do not behave like subjects according to the usual definition, especially regarding the DE (Jónsson 1996:111). We will now briefly discuss such violations of the DE.

Normally, a definite NP is not possible as an associate of the filler *það*, neither when it precedes the main verb (63a) nor when it follows it (63b).

(63) a. \*Það hafði **maðurinn** komið.  
 it had the-man.NOM come  
 b. \*Það hafði komið **maðurinn**.  
 it had come the-man.NOM

Corresponding clauses with weather verbs show a different behavior regarding DE violations. A definite NP is blocked as an associate when preceding a main verb, as in (64a), but allowed when following a main verb, as in (64b).<sup>4</sup>

(64) a. \*Það hafði **vindinn** lægt.  
 it had the-wind.ACC abated  
 b. Það hafði lægt **vindinn**.  
 it had abated the-wind.ACC  
 ‘The wind had abated.’

<sup>4</sup> The pattern in (64) is reminiscent of the one in (i), mentioned by Thráinsson (2005:274–275) as an exception to the DE.

- (i) a. \*Það er **mjólkin** búin  
 it is the-milk.NOM gone  
 b. Það er búin **mjólkin**  
 it is gone the-milk.NOM  
 ‘We are out of milk.’

Furthermore, in main clauses with a topicalized phrase the DE does not apply when the NP precedes the main verb (65a), but only when the NP follows the verb (65b) (cf. Jónsson 1996:190).

- (65) a. Um morguninn hafði **maðurinn** komið.  
 in the-morning had the-man.NOM come  
 ‘In the morning the man had come.’  
 b. \*Um morguninn hafði komið **maðurinn**.  
 in the-morning had come the-man.NOM

In contrast to (65), a definite NP can follow a weather verb in clauses with a topicalized phrase, both when the NP is in nominative (66b) and in oblique case (67b).

- (66) a. Um morguninn hafði **loftið** hlýnað.  
 in the-morning had the-air.NOM gotten-warm  
 ‘In the morning the air had got warm.’  
 b. Um morguninn hafði hlýnað **loftið**.  
 in the-morning had gotten-warm the-air.NOM  
 ‘In the morning the air had got warm.’
- (67) a. Um morguninn hafði **vindinn** lægt.  
 in the-morning had the-wind.ACC abated  
 ‘In the morning the wind had abated.’  
 b. Um morguninn hafði lægt **vindinn**.  
 in the-morning had abated the-wind.ACC  
 ‘In the morning the wind had abated.’

From the facts discussed in this section the following may be concluded: First, both nominative and oblique NPs with weather verbs show subject properties (cf. (i–iv) above). Secondly, the phrases sometimes violate the DE, which is unexpected in the case of a subject. In this respect weather verbs seem to behave like unaccusatives, where it is often assumed (starting with Perlmutter 1978) that the subject originates in object position. Some discussion of weather verbs on the basis of the Unaccusative Hypothesis can be found in the syntactic literature on other languages, e.g., French and English (Ruwet 1991, Paykin 2010 and Bleotu 2012). An examination of Icelandic weather verbs on the basis of this hypothesis reveals that a part of them can easily be subsumed under it, including the verbs *hlýna* ‘get warm’ and *kólna* ‘get cold’, which take a nominative subject, as well as *hvessa* ‘get windy’ and *lægja* ‘abate’, which originally take an oblique (accusative) subject. Verbs of this type have been termed anticausatives (Ottosson 2013, Sandal 2011, Barðdal 2015a, Cennamo, Eythórsson and Barðdal 2015); moreover, the latter two pattern with verbs like *reka* ‘drift’ which occur with a “stray” or “fate accusative” subject (Sigurðsson 2006, Thráinsson 2007:296, Schäfer 2008). These verbs are formed on the basis of ergative pairs, as discussed in section 6.3 below.

#### 5.4 Overt arguments with weather verbs in Old Icelandic

Having shown that that NP arguments with weather verbs are subjects in Modern Icelandic, we now propose that this also hold of Old Icelandic. Although it is admittedly much more difficult to find independent tests supporting a subject analysis for the earlier stage of the language, the following two tests can be mentioned:

- (i) The syntactic position of the argument
- (ii) Raising infinitives

As to first point, the Old Icelandic examples in (68b) and (69b) show that the NP follows the finite verb in clauses with an inversion, just as in Modern Icelandic.

- (68) a. ...köstuðu þá akkerum, til þess er **veður** lægði.  
 threw then anchors until weather.NOM abated  
 ‘... they cast anchor until the weather got calm.’ (ÍT, Egils saga)
- b. Þá lægði **storminn**...  
 then abated the-storm.ACC  
 ‘Then the storm abated...’ (ÍT, Helga kviða Hundingsbana II)

Moreover, in clauses involving the aspectual auxiliary *taka* ‘begin (lit. take)’, as in (69), the NP can occur between the auxiliary and the infinitive form of the main verb, which is a clear subject property. Although such examples are very few, their value cannot be dismissed.

- (69) a. **Veður** tók að þykkna...  
 weather.NOM begin to thicken.INF  
 ‘It began to get cloudy...’ (ÍT, Fóstbræðra saga, ch. 9)
- b. Þá tók **veðrið** að þykkna...  
 then began the-weather.NOM to thicken.INF  
 ‘Then it began to get cloudy...’ (ÍT, Fóstbræðra saga, ch. 3)

As to raising infinitives, we have seen in 5.3 that definite (but not indefinite) subjects are dispreferred postverbally in such structures in Modern Icelandic. The occurrence of the indefinite NP *blóði* ‘blood (DAT)’ following the verb *rigna* ‘rain’ in (70) is in accordance with this constraint. However, the example is inconclusive given that there is no matching attestation of an NP preceding *rigna*, which would be a decisive proof of subject raising.

- (70) Honum þótti rigna **blóði** í ljórana.  
 him.DAT thought rain.INF blood.DAT on the-windows  
 ‘It seemed to him that blood was raining on the windows.’ (ÍT, Sturlunga saga)

From this it can be seen that the evidence for the subject nature of NPs with weather verbs in Old Icelandic is very fragmental. Nevertheless, there is nothing in particular which directly speaks against a subject analysis of these NPs, and with regard to Modern Icelandic such an analysis is indeed plausible.

## 6 The origins of weather verbs

### 6.1 Introduction

As shown in the preceding sections, weather verbs are not devoid of arguments, but can in fact occur with both NP arguments and quasi-arguments. In this section we tackle the question why weather verbs can occur either with or without an NP argument, and why the case of the NP differs according to verb.

### 6.2 The expression of weather events

All utterances describing the weather can be regarded as expressing a particular weather event (cf. Eriksen, Kittilä and Kolehmainen 2010, 2012). Eriksen et al. (2010, 2012) propose a typological classification of the coding of weather events, discussing three different possibilities: First, a single verb can express the weather event (Predicate Type); secondly, the weather event can be expressed by a noun referring to the weather and a verb which is often semantically vague or has a general meaning (Argument Type); and third, both a noun and a verb can jointly express the weather event (Argument-Predicate Type). Eriksen et al. (2010, 2012) emphasize that the same language can make use of more than one type to describe weather events. We believe we have found examples from Icelandic of the first two types, shown in (71). The third type, however, is nonexistent in Icelandic, although examples involving precipitation in a metaphorical sense can be found, as mentioned in section 2.3.3 above; cf. Old Icelandic *rigna regni þegna Hávars* ‘to rain (the) rain (DAT) of Hávar’s thanes’, meaning that there is a battle’ (15b); this expression is shown in brackets in (71).

(71) Predicate Type: *rignir* ‘rains’

Argument Type: *regn fellur* ‘rain falls’/*gerir regn* ‘makes rain’

Argument-Predicate Type: (*rignir regni* ‘rains rain (DAT)’)

Since the aim of Eriksen et al. (2010, 2012) is mainly to give a typological overview of the coding of weather events, they do not specifically treat changes in weather verbs and their historical development. To be sure, they give examples from a few languages (Finnish, Swahili and Polish) where precipitation verbs are derived from verbs with a general meaning, such as ‘fall’ and ‘come’ (2010:31-37). On the basis of our study of weather verbs in Icelandic, however, we claim that not only can we show how these verbs developed, but we can also set forth a hypothesis on their emergence.

### 6.3 The three developmental paths of weather verbs

Many weather verbs are not confined to describing weather conditions but are also used in a more general context, e.g., verbs like *kólna* ‘get cold’, *hitna* ‘get warm’, *hvessa* ‘get windy (lit. sharpen)’ and *frysta* ‘freeze’. We assume that this use is more original than their use as weather verbs. In order for such verbs to describe weather conditions, they must have co-

occurred with a noun signaling a weather phenomenon (e.g., *veður* ‘weather’ or *vindur* ‘wind’) which would refer to the relevant weather event (cf. the Argument-Predicate Type in Eriksen et al. 2010, 2012). The verbs would then have further specified the meaning of the noun and its role in the weather event (e.g., *regn fellur* ‘rain falls’ or *vindur kólnar* ‘wind gets cold’). Finally, the verbs themselves could assume the coding of the weather event.

In (72) we illustrate our hypothesis on the historical origin of weather verbs. Again, there are three possibilities, which we term Path 1–3, exemplified with the verbs *rigna* ‘rain’, *kólna* ‘get cold’ and *hvessa* ‘get windy’.

(72) Path 1: [RAIN] *rignir*: *pro rignir* > 0 *rignir*

Path 2: NP.NOM *kólnar* > *pro kólnar* > 0 *kólnar*

Path 3: (NP.NOM *hvessir* NP.ACC) > NP.ACC *hvessir* > *pro hvessir* > 0 *hvessir*

Path 1 involves a verb which never had an overt argument (as far back in time as our sources go), but originally occurred with an unexpressed argument (*pro*) referring to an abstract concept (e.g., RAIN). In due course this *pro* was reanalyzed as a quasi-argument (indicated by 0). Since the verbs *rigna* and *snjóa* mostly occur without an NP, it is reasonable to assume that they came into being according to Path 1, i.e., that they occurred without an overt argument from the start and preserve this characteristic in the modern language. A diachronic investigation and a comparison with related languages supports this idea.

Icelandic *rigna* has cognates in closely related languages (Goth. *rignjan*, OE *rignan*, *rīnan*, OHG *reganōn* etc.), but it has proved difficult to connect it to roots outside Germanic (Magnússon 1989:761). Moreover, it is clear that in the earliest Germanic sources, Old Icelandic, Gothic and Old English, the use of the verb ‘rain’ both without an overt argument and with a dative NP are attested; as mentioned earlier, the dative can be traced back to an instrumental case. Interestingly, when a dative NP accompanies the verb ‘rain’, the expression is mostly non-literal or metaphorical, but in case of actual rain, only the single verb is used.

An important characteristic of verbs following Path 1 is that they are all formed from weather nouns, *rigna* ‘rain’ from *regn* ‘rain’, *snjóa* ‘snow’ from *snjór* ‘snow’, and other verbs not discussed here, e.g., *styrma* ‘get stormy’ from *stormur* ‘storm’ (cf. Magnússon 1989:761, 918, 982). This may suggest that although the verbs were from the earliest times without an overt NP, they referred to abstract concepts matching the nouns they were formed from (RAIN, SNOW, STORM etc.).

Path 2 involves a development from an intransitive verb taking a nominative NP subject to a weather verb without an overt argument. Verbs formed along Path 2 can be divided up into two classes. The first class comprises verbs derived from an adjective-by means of a *na*-suffix, e.g., *kólna* ‘get cold’ and *hlýna* ‘get warm’. These verbs are in fact anticausatives, alternating with transitive verbs such as *kæla* ‘make cold’ and *hlýja* ‘make warm’ (cf. Ottosson 2013, Cennamo et al. 2015). Furthermore, verbs of the type *kólna* and *hlýna* are never – neither in Old nor Modern Icelandic – found with another case than nominative.

The latter class comprises verbs which are not derived from adjectives, e.g., *blása* ‘blow’ and *drífa* ‘snow’. As weather verbs they occur with a nominative in Old Icelandic (73), but in Modern Icelandic they also occur with accusative (74), which is clearly a later development (see also 3.1.2 above).

- (73) a. ..sem á blási **fagur** **sunnanvindur**.  
 as on blows fair.NOM southern-wind.NOM  
 ‘...as a gentle southern wind is blowing.’ (ONP, Thom<sup>2</sup> 433<sup>8</sup>)
- b. Þá drífr **snær** ór öllum áttum.  
 then snows snow.NOM from all sides  
 ‘Then it snows from all sides.’ (ÍT, Snorra Edda, ch. 51)
- (74) a. **Vindinn** blés og bátnum velti um koll.  
 the-wind.ACC blew and the-boat.DAT turned on top  
 ‘It was windy and the boat capsized.’  
 (<https://www.hugi.is/ljod/greinar/81337/oldukoss/>)
- b. Afar mikinn **snjó** dreif niður...  
 very much snow.ACC snowed down  
 ‘It snowed very much...’ ([http://timarit.is/view\\_page\\_init.jsp?pageId=2216304](http://timarit.is/view_page_init.jsp?pageId=2216304))

Finally, according to Path 3, a transitive verb and an intransitive one first form an ergative pair (cf. Maling and Zaenen 1990, Thráinsson 2007:303), in which the subject case of the intransitive verb – i.e., the anticausative alternant (Sandal 2011, Barðdal 2015a, Cennamo et al. 2015) – corresponds to the object case of the transitive verb. The intransitive verb then changes into a weather verb without an overt argument (see further section 6.4).

Weather verbs which have emerged according to Path 3 do not only include weather descriptions but also exist in a general meaning. In many cases they are derived from adjectives. Thus, the verb *hvessa* ‘get windy (lit. sharpen)’ is derived from the adjective *hvass* ‘sharp’ and *lægja* ‘abate (lit. lower)’ from *lágur* ‘low’ (Magnússon 1989:393, 592). In (75a) we can see an intransitive use of *hvessa* as a weather verb, while comparable transitive use can be seen in (75b).

- (75) a. ...hvessti **veðrit**...  
 got-windy the-weather.ACC  
 ‘...it got windy...’ (ONP, BøglEirsp 450<sup>14</sup>)
- b. ...er Þórr hvessti **augun** á orminn.  
 when Þórr sharpened the-eyes.ACC.PL on the-worm  
 ‘... when Þór gave the worm a sharp look.’ (ÍT, Snorra Edda)

Thus, the weather verbs of the type discussed here, which take oblique subjects, result from the anticausative alternant of ergative pairs of the kind mentioned above (Sandal 2011, Barðdal 2015a, Cennamo et al. 2015).

#### 6.4 From overt to covert arguments

Given our hypothesis that some weather verbs (namely those following Paths 2 and 3) originally occurred with a visible argument, one may ask how and why these verbs “lost” their NPs. To answer this question two matters must be considered: first, *pro*-drop in Old Icelandic and secondly, the nature of the coding of weather events.

Old Icelandic was a *pro*-drop language where any argument, be it subject or object, could be left unexpressed given that its referent was retrievable from the context (Hjartardóttir 1993, Sigurðsson 1993, Kinn, Rusten and Walkden 2016). In (76) there is an example of the verb *lygna* ‘abate’ without an overt NP. It can be surmised that the verb occurs with an “empty” phrase referring to the noun *veður* ‘weather’ in the previous clause, which would be its antecedent. This could be regarded as a case of *pro*-drop (i.e., omission of the noun *veður* ‘weather’ in Conjunction Reduction) and not necessarily an example of a single weather verb.

- (76) *veður var á ok snæfall mikit ok \_\_lygnir um aptaninn.*  
 weather was on and snowfall much and abates on the-evening  
 ‘There was bad weather and lots of snow, but it got calm in the evening.’  
 (ONP, GíslFrg 42<sup>9</sup>)

As stated in section 2, there are also examples in Old Icelandic where a weather verb appears without an NP and any antecedent which an unexpressed argument could refer to. In (77) two examples of this kind involving the verbs *lýsa* and *birta*, both meaning ‘brighten’, are shown.

- (77) *Þá lýsti, er þeir fóru frá haugnum. Þeir fara, þar til at birti.*  
 then brightened when they went from the-mound they go until brightened  
 ‘It dawned when they left the mound. They carried on until it got light.’  
 (ÍT, Örvar-Odds saga, ch. 5.)

It can be assumed that *pro*-drop, i.e., an unexpressed referential pronoun, is an intermediate stage in the development from a verb with a general meaning, taking an overt NP, to a proper weather verb without an overt argument, as illustrated in (78). We assume that this holds of both nominative and oblique subject verbs.

- (78) NP V > *pro* V > 0 V

On the basis of the classification of Eriksen et al. (2010, 2012), discussed above, it can be suggested that (78) shows a change in the coding of weather events, i.e., from Argument-Predicate Type to Predicate Type. It is unclear whether such a change can happen except on the basis of *pro*-drop (i.e., the intermediate stage in (78)). Given the availability of *pro*-drop, the expression of the weather event can be reanalyzed in such a way that it is expressed with a single verb (taking a quasi-argument, i.e., the final stage in (78)) and not an NP and a verb.

The hypothetical development sketched in (78) predicts that in Modern Icelandic new weather verbs should not be able to emerge from ordinary verbs taking a subject NP, simply because extensive *pro*-drop is not an integral part of Modern Icelandic grammar. Considering for example a recent combination of a verb with a weather noun, *vind hreyfir* ‘wind (ACC) moves, i.e., it is windy’ (the oldest example with a dative is from 1909), it is clear that it is not possible to use the verb alone (*\*hreyfir*) to express the weather event. Since Modern Icelandic is not a *pro*-drop language in the strict sense, *vind hreyfir* is not supposed to be able to develop in such a way that the function of this collocation is replaced by a single verb.

However, although new weather verbs cannot be formed according to (78) above, it is still possible in Modern Icelandic to derive single weather verbs directly from a weather noun,

e.g., the verbs *slydda* ‘be sleeting’ and *gusta* ‘blow’ from the nouns *slydda* ‘sleet’ and *gustur* ‘gust of wind’, respectively. Presumably these verbs originate on the pattern of verbs like *rigna* ‘rain’, formed in accordance with Path 1.

## 6.5 Stability and change in the history of Icelandic weather verbs

Weather verbs have shown considerable stability from Old to Modern Icelandic. First, the lexical items themselves have for the most part remained identical throughout history. Secondly, the verbs could either occur with or without an overt NP in Old Icelandic and the same is true of the modern language. We have claimed (in section 6.4) that covert elements with weather verbs in Old Icelandic were of two types: a covert argument (*pro*) and a covert quasi-argument (i.e., a non-referential argument which emerged from a reanalysis of *pro*). In Modern Icelandic, on the other hand, there is only one type of a covert argument, i.e., a quasi-argument. In fact, the retention of the covert quasi-argument (i.e., the non-referential *pro*) in the modern language bears witness to the continuity in the development of Icelandic from the earliest times (cf. Sigurðsson 1993:278).

In section 3.3 the emergence of the quasi-argument *hann* with weather verbs was linked to the use of NPs with these verbs. An examination of this quasi-argument reveals that the oldest examples emerged in the 17th century, around the same time as *pro*-drop started disappearing. Thus, weather-*hann* can be regarded as the manifestation of the earlier *pro*. On our hypothesis, weather-*hann* was originally referential but was soon reanalyzed as a quasi-argument and spread to other weather verbs which had never occurred with a masculine NP. This reanalysis seems to have been completed by the mid-19th century since the earliest examples of *rigna* ‘rain’ and *snjóa* ‘snow’ with *hann* are attested from that time.

Figure 1 shows the structure and the development of phrases with weather verbs which came into being along Paths 2 and 3, using *hvessa* ‘get windy’ as an example.

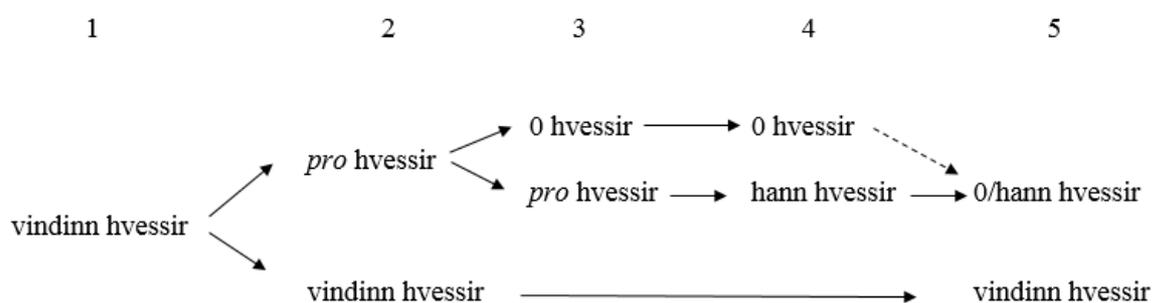


Figure 1. The development of arguments in Icelandic (Paths 2 and 3)

In Old Icelandic (stages 1–2 in Figure 1) the verb *hvessa* could, on the one hand, occur with an NP (*vindinn hvessir* ‘the wind (ACC) gets windy, i.e., it gets windy’) and, on the other hand, involve *pro*-drop (*pro hvessir*). On our analysis *pro* had the possibility of being reanalyzed as a covert quasi-argument (indicated by 0), presumably already in Old Icelandic (stage 3). When *pro*-drop lost ground in early Modern Icelandic, pronouns had to be visible in

most contexts. With verbs that could take a masculine NP the personal pronoun *hann* ‘he’ was used (stage 4). The pronoun was soon reanalyzed as a quasi-argument and spread to other weather verbs, and even further to verbs referring to parts of day (e.g., *hann kvöldar* ‘it (lit. ‘he’) becomes evening’). In Modern Icelandic there is thus a variation between overt and covert quasi-argument (weather-*hann* vs. 0), and in addition weather verbs of this type can occur with an NP (*vindinn hvessir*) (stage 5).

As stated above, Figure 1 only shows the development of verbs which have emerged along Paths 2 and 3, i.e. verbs which originally occurred with an NP and were then reanalyzed as weather verbs. Verbs which are formed along Path 1 in fact evolve in a similar way, shown in Figure 2, with the verb *rigna* ‘rain’ as an example.

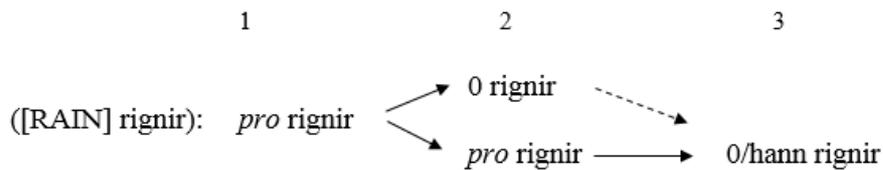


Figure 2. The development arguments in Icelandic (Path 1)

Instead of originally having an overt NP, we assume that weather verbs of this type refer to an abstract concept, e.g., RAIN. Otherwise the development of these verbs follows a similar path to that of the verbs formed according to Paths 2 and 3.

It is important to bear in mind that the reanalysis resulting in weather-*hann* is, as it were, a recurrence of the tendency, already found in Old Icelandic, to reanalyze a referential pronoun as a quasi-argument. In Old Icelandic this was a covert operation, but in Modern Icelandic the pronoun must be overt while the quasi-arguments do not have to be visible. The existence of a covert quasi-argument in Modern Icelandic is synchronically an anomaly, which is only comprehensible on the assumption that it is a residue from Old Icelandic (Sigurðsson 1993).

## 7 Conclusion

Contrary to what has been claimed, weather verbs in Icelandic do not only occur without an overt argument, but they can also take a full NP, either in nominative, accusative or dative case. As the preceding discussion indicates, such verbs can be classified according to their meaning, their syntactic and morphosyntactic properties, and their historical origin.

The different origins of weather verbs explain to a large degree the use of cases with these verbs. Weather verbs with a nominative can be traced back to general verbs with a nominative subject (e.g., *kólna* ‘get cold’), while weather verbs with accusative are formed as anticausative alternants of transitive verbs (*hvessa* ‘get windy’). Dative NPs with *rigna* ‘rain’ and *snjóa* ‘snow’ have a counterpart in Old Germanic languages, where there is evidence that the dative replaced an earlier instrumental case. It is important to keep in mind that the

occurrence of weather verbs with a full NP has continued to exist from Old to Modern Icelandic.

In Modern Icelandic subject tests can be applied to a certain extent to establish the subjecthood of the NP with weather verbs. In Old Icelandic it is clear that nominative NPs with such verbs are subjects, whereas the subject status of oblique NPs is not as conclusive.

We have argued that with a number of weather verbs there was a development from an intransitive taking either nominative or oblique subject NP to weather verbs without an overt argument. This development was triggered by the availability of *pro*-drop in Old Icelandic. By assumption, *pro* could be reanalyzed as a covert quasi-argument and, as a consequence, the coding of the weather event shifted from an Argument-Predicate Type to a Predicate Type (following the classification in Eriksen et al. 2010, 2012). Apparently, the covert pronoun (*pro*) and the covert quasi-argument coexisted for some time, until referential *pro* became severely restricted in early Modern Icelandic. This led to the emergence of weather-*hann*, which was originally a pronoun but was subsequently reanalyzed as an overt quasi-argument. The reanalysis gave rise to a competition between structures with overt and covert quasi-arguments (*í gær rigndi hann* vs. *í gær rigndi 0*). It is remarkable that weather-*hann* never gained ground in Icelandic, being limited to certain registers or dialects, but the unexpressed quasi-argument is the norm. This fact is unexpected given that Modern Icelandic is not a language with extensive *pro*-drop, but it is comprehensible in light of the general diachronic stability of Icelandic grammar.

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# On the Syntax of Adverbial Clauses in Icelandic

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## Abstract

The goal of this paper is to provide a systematic overview and analysis of the syntax of Icelandic adverbial clauses in terms of whether they do or do not allow so-called main clause phenomena. The classification of adverbial clauses follows the typology of Haegeman (2012) where adverbial clauses are divided into two classes: central adverbial clauses that resist main clause phenomena and peripheral adverbial clauses that may permit such phenomena (XP-fronting etc.). It turns out that fronting is possible in a subset of adverbial clauses exactly as predicted by Haegeman's typology and such examples are found in both in judgement data and written sources. Further, this initial work shows that there appears to be a distinction between argument fronting (less free) and adjunct fronting (more free) in Icelandic and this is a distinction that has not previously been systematically examined.

## 1 Introduction<sup>1</sup>

It has long been observed that adverbial clauses exhibit variable word order. In English for example, some adverbial clauses allow argument and adjunct topicalization whereas other resist such fronting. Here, we are concerned with similar word order variation in adverbial clauses in Icelandic primarily and data from other Scandinavian languages is presented briefly for comparative purposes. This paper is largely descriptive, however it can be taken as a first step towards a typology of adverbial clauses in Scandinavian more generally.

The framework adopted here is the typology of adverbial clauses set out in Haegeman (2012, and much previous work) where adverbial clauses are divided into two groups: those that allow main clause phenomena and those that do not. Further, Haegeman distinguishes between adverbial clauses that she terms 'peripheral' or 'central' to capture the degree of integration of adverbial clauses with respect to the clause that they modify. For Scandinavian verb second languages then, we might expect that adverbial clauses that are 'peripheral' in Haegeman's sense may allow main clause word order whereas such orders are resisted in central adverbial clauses. The second part of the paper presents an overview of Haegeman's typology as applied to adverbial clauses in English. The third part of the paper discusses data from both written and spoken Icelandic. In the fourth section, we provide comparative data from other Scandinavian languages showing that adverbial clauses can be analyzed with respect to the possibility of main clause phenomena as predicted by Haegeman's typology. This is followed by a short discussion.

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According to Haegeman's typology, central adverbial clauses (henceforth CACs) are those that disallow argument fronting in English while some permit adjunct fronting. Peripheral adverbial clauses on the other hand (henceforth PACs) allow both argument and adjunct fronting. The following table illustrates these two adverbial clause types.

Table 1: *Adverbial clause types (based on Haegeman 2012: 163, Table 4.3)*

<b>CACs</b>		<b>PACs</b>	
<i>before/after/until</i>	(event time)	--	
<i>when</i>	(event time)	<i>when</i>	(contrast)
<i>since</i>	(event time)	<i>since</i>	(premise/cause)
<i>while</i>	(event time)	<i>while</i>	(concessive)
<i>if</i>	(event condition)	<i>if</i>	(conditional assertion)
<i>although</i>	--	<i>although</i>	(concessive)
<i>whereas</i>	--	<i>whereas</i>	(concessive)
<i>so that</i>	purpose	result	
<i>because</i>	event cause/reason	rationale	

## 2 Adverbial clauses in English

The following examples show contrasts that hold for English where adverbial clauses that are CACs resist argument topicalization as in examples (1) to (5).

- (1) CAC a. I read her second book **before** I finished the first one.  
 b. \*I read her second book **before** the first one I finished.
- (2) CAC a. **When** she began to write her regular column again, I thought she would be OK.  
 b. \***When** her regular column she began to write again, I thought she would be OK. (Haegeman 2012: 155, ex. 17a,b)
- (3) CAC a. **Since** I ate that fish, I have felt sick.  
 b. \***Since** that fish I ate, I have felt sick.
- (4) CAC a. He looked at the headlines **while** he made the coffee.  
 b. \*He looked at the headlines **while** the coffee he made.
- (5) CAC a. I've been trying to finish this article **since** I wrote the previous one last year.  
 b. \*I've been trying to finish this article **since** the previous one I wrote last year.

In the following examples, which are all PACs by Haegeman's typology, argument fronting is possible.<sup>2</sup> Such adverbial clauses have readings such as contrast (6a,b) or premise (6c) rather than temporal readings.

- (6) PAC a. The students ordered new copies **when** the old ones they could easily have used.  
 PAC b. **While** these problems Bill can't solve, I think Susan can.  
 PAC c. **Since** these problems I can't solve on my own, I will need to ask them for help.

Conditional clauses that are event conditionals resist argument fronting as in (7a,b) whereas argument fronting is possible in so-called conditional assertions as in (7c).

- (7) CAC a. **If** you fail this exam, then you can't finish the course.  
 CAC b. \***If** this exam you fail, then you can't finish the course.  
 PAC c. **If** this particular exam Harold fails, why would he go on?

Concessive clauses freely allow argument fronting as shown in (7).

- (8) PAC I did not finish her second book **although/whereas** the first one I really enjoyed.

One of the clearest contrasts can be seen between purpose and result clauses. This is shown in the following examples where a contrast can be seen between purpose (CACs) and result clauses (PACs) as in (9a-c).

- (9) CAC a. I read her second book carefully **so that** I could understand the first one.  
 CAC b. ??I read her second book carefully **so that** the first one I could understand.  
 PAC c. I lost contact with my college friends **so that** most of them I never saw again.

In addition, purpose and result clauses in English can also be distinguished by so-called comma intonation as in (10).

- (10) PAC a. He hurried, so he wasn't late. *result*  
 CAC b. He hurried so he wasn't late. *purpose*

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<sup>2</sup> Not all speakers of English find topicalization acceptable in adverbial clauses. There are varieties of English where topicalization in general is more acceptable than it is in what can be termed General American English. Such varieties include Australian English, the Celtic Englishes, and Yiddish influenced New York English for instance.

### 3 Adverbial clauses in Icelandic

In general, adverbial clauses in Icelandic are known to be resistant to argument and adjunct fronting, but there are exceptions to this as noted in Rögnvaldsson and Thráinsson (1990:25), Magnússon (1990), and Angantýsson (2011), among others. However, examples of non-subject fronting in adverbial clauses provided by Rögnvaldsson and Thráinsson (1990), for instance, all seem to involve Stylistic Fronting, as Jónsson (1996:37) points out. Some examples of non-subject initial order in adverbial clauses taken from Rögnvaldsson and Thráinsson (1990:25) that involve stylistic fronting are given in (11).

- (11) a. **Þegar** komið var til Reykjavíkur ...  
 when arrived was to Reykjavík ...  
 ‘When one arrived to Reykjavík ...’
- b. **Ef** gengið er eftir Laugaveginum ...  
 if walked is along the Laugavegur ...  
 ‘If one walks along the Laugavegur ...’
- c. Ég fer, **nema** komið verði til móts við óskir mínar  
 I leave, unless fulfilled will be my wishes  
 ‘I will leave unless my wishes will be fulfilled’

However, given that stylistic fronting targets Fin on the border of the TP/CP domain as argued in Sigurðsson (2010), it should not be surprising that it appears to be quite free in adverbial clauses in Icelandic as the contrasts we are concerned with here in a subset of adverbial clauses, namely PACs, involve movement of non-subjects into the C-domain and do not involve a subject gap or low indefinite subject as stylistic fronting does.

Further observations have been made with respect to the resistance of fronting in adverbial clauses in Icelandic. For instance, Franco (2010:146) concludes that XP-initial order is not possible in adverbial clauses. Hrafnbjargarson and Wiklund (2009:28, examples (10b,c)) give the following examples to show that adjunct fronting is not possible in conditional and temporal clauses. Both examples are arguably CACs and therefore this is not unexpected.

- (12) CAC a. \*Hann kemur bara heim **ef** á morgun hefur hann tíma til þess.  
 he comes only home if tomorrow has he time to it
- CAC b. \*Hann sá hana **þegar** í gær fór hún út.  
 he saw her when yesterday went she out

However, there are extensive examples given in Magnússon (1990) that show fronting of arguments in adverbial clauses of various types. Not all speakers of Icelandic agree with Magnússon’s judgements, but we will take the data presented in his work as a starting point. Below is a range of examples all taken from Magnússon (1990) and each is classified by the authors as to whether the adverbial clause is a CAC or PAC and labeled as such.

- (13) CAC a. ?Skúli ætlar að útskrifast í júní **ef ritgerðina** getur hann klárað fyrir  
*event cond.* Skúli plans to graduate in June if thesis-the can he finish before  
 mánaðamótin.  
 end-of-month-the  
 ‘Skúli expects to graduate in June if he can finish the thesis before the  
 end of the month.’ (p.102, 5-70a)
- premise* PAC b. **fyrst hurðina** getum við ekki opnað verðum við að brjóta gluggann  
 since door-the can we not open must we to break window-the  
 ‘Since we can't open the door, we will have to break the window.’  
 (p.104,5-75,a)
- temporal* CAC c. ?Ég get ekkert skrifað **meðan hendina** verð ég að hafa í fatla.  
 I can nothing write while hand-the must I to have in sling  
 ‘I can't write while the hand is still in a sling.’ (p.107,5-86,a)
- temporal* CAC d. Það er langt **síðan þessar buxur** hef ég getað notað  
 It is long since these trousers have I could used  
 ‘I haven't been able to use these trousers for a long time’  
 (p. 113,5-106,a)
- temporal* CAC e. Það leið ekki langur tími frá slysinu **uns fingurna**  
 it passed not long time from accident-the until fingers-the  
 gat ég farið að nota á ný.  
 could I start to use again  
 ‘It was not long since the accident until I was able to use (my) fingers.’  
 (p.113,5-108,a)
- temporal* CAC f. ?Skúli ætlar að taka sér langt frí **þegar ritgerðinni**  
 Skúli plans to take himself long pause when thesis-the  
 verður hann búinn að skila.  
 will he finished to submit  
 ‘Skúli is going to take a long break when he is finished with the thesis.’  
 (p. 114, 5-110,a)
- concessive* PAC g. Stína sagði að bókin í heild væri frekar leiðinleg  
 Stína said that book-the in whole was rather boring  
**jafnvel þótt/þótt einstaka kafla** gæti hún alveg hugsað sér  
 although some chapters could she well think herself  
 að lesa aftur.  
 to read again  
 ‘Stína said that the book as a whole was rather boring although she  
 could imagine herself reading some selected chapters again.’  
 (p.114, 5-112,14a)

In the following table, we contrast Magnússon's judgements with those of Angantýsson. First, Magnússon appears to accept more examples of CACs with argument fronting than with adjunct fronting, for instance for temporal clauses introduced by *síðan* 'since' and *uns* 'until', which is unexpected under our analysis and these examples are noted as highly questionable

here. In addition, he accepts argument fronting in PACs introduced by *fyrst* 'since' and *þótt* 'although' and this is entirely to be expected under the framework adopted here. When the judgements of Magnússon are compared with those of Angantýsson, we find a clear contrast. For Angantýsson, argument fronting is highly dispreferred for all the clauses discussed in the table (PACs and CACs) with the exception of concessive clauses (13g), and adjunct fronting is more acceptable, but not for all clauses where we might expect it to be so. Further judgement data collection must be done of course, but we can make a tentative initial conclusion here that there appears to be a contrast between the acceptability of adjunct and argument fronting, with adjunct fronting preferred. This is not surprising, as corpus examples of argument fronting in general in Icelandic embedded clauses are very difficult to find (Rögnvaldsson 2007).

Table 2: Comparison of data judgements in Magnússon (1990) with Angantýsson (2016)

		Magnússon (1990)		Angantýsson (2016)	
		Adjunct fronting	Argument fronting	Adjunct fronting	Argument fronting
<i>ef</i> 'if'	CAC	OK (5-70b,c)	? (5-70a)	OK (5-70b,c)	* (5-70a)
<i>fyrst</i> 'since' (premise)	PAC	? (5-75b)	OK (5-75a)	OK (5-75b)	* (5-75a)
<i>meðan</i> 'while'	CAC	? (5-86b)	? (5-86a)	? (5-86b)	* (5-86a)
<i>síðan</i> 'since' (temporal)	CAC	? (5-106b)	OK (5-106a)	* (5-106b)	? (5-106a)
<i>uns</i> 'until'	CAC	? (5-108b)	OK (5-108a)	* (5-108b)	? (5-108a)
<i>þegar</i> 'when'	CAC	? (5-110b)	? (5-110a)	* (5-110b)	* (5-110a)
<i>þótt</i> 'although'	PAC	OK (5-112b)	OK (5-112a)	OK (5-112b)	OK (5-112a)

Having said this, it is clear that there are examples of argument fronting in Icelandic adverbial clauses that are completely natural as shown in the example repeated below as (14) and taken from Magnússon (1990). The fronting of the argument *einstaka kafla* 'certain chapters' in the concessive clause is perfectly fine.

- (14) Stína sagði að bókin í heild væri frekar leiðinleg **jafnvel þótt/þótt**  
 Stína said that book-the in whole was rather boring although  
einstaka kafla gæti hún alveg hugsað sér að lesa aftur.  
 some chapters could she well think herself to read again  
 'Stína said that the book as a whole was rather boring although she could imagine  
 herself reading some selected chapters again.'

(p.114, 5-112,14a)

In addition, a quick Google search immediately turns up a number of examples with adjunct fronting in clauses that are all arguably PACs. In the first example, we have a concessive clause, a result clause in the second, a *because* clause in the third, and finally a contrastive *while* clause. All of these clauses can be readily classified as PACs and thus the adjunct fronting that we find here is entirely to be expected. None of the fronting in these examples is due to stylistic fronting as each has a high definite subject.

- (15) a. Hann er mjög fagur og einkennilegur, þótt eigi sje hann  
 he is very beautiful and strange although not is he  
 vatnsmikill.  
 water-much  
 ‘He is very beautiful and strange although he is not very rich if water.’  
 (*Unga Ísland* – 1905. árgangur 1905, 4. tölublað, Page 30)
- b. Þau settu upp fiskbúð við Sogaveginn og raunar víðar,  
 they set up fish store at Sogavegur and also other places, so  
 svo að enn sóttu Reykvíkingar matvæli til þeirra hjóna  
 so that still sought R.ers food to that couple  
 ‘They established a fish store by Sogavegur and also in other places so that the  
 inhabitants of Reykjavík still got food from them.’  
 (*Morgunblaðið* - 3. nóvember 1993, 250. tölublað, Page 38)
- c. Gera þetta eins og var á sjöundu öld af því að þá var  
 do this as was on the seventh century because then was  
 gullöldin glæsilega.  
 golden age-the magnificent  
 ‘do this as they did on the seventh century because the magnificent golden age was  
 then’ (*Fréttablaðið* - 16. January 2016, árgangur 2016, 13. tölublað, Page 90)
- d. Í ensku eru sterkbeygðar sagnir taldar óreglulegar, á meðan  
 in English are strong verbs assumed irregular while  
 í fornensku eru þær taldar reglulegar.  
 in Old-English are they assumed regular  
[https://is.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%93regluleg\\_s%C3%B6gn](https://is.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%93regluleg_s%C3%B6gn)

In the following sections we will examine Icelandic further and provide some comparative data from Faroese and other Scandinavian languages.

#### 4 Main clause phenomena in central vs. peripheral adverbial clauses in Icelandic and related languages

In this section, we provide an overview of the possibility of argument fronting in central versus peripheral adverbial clauses in Icelandic, with some comparison to Faroese. These two closely related languages behave differently with respect to verb/adverb placement in embedded clauses in the way that subject-initial V2 is always the default word order in all types of embedded clauses in Icelandic whereas it is the marked option in embedded clauses in Faroese, to varying

degrees depending on the type of embedded clause (see Thráinsson et al. 2004, Thráinsson 2010, Bentzen et al. 2007, 2009, Heycock et al. 2010, 2012, and Angantýsson forthcoming). On the assumption that subject-initial V2 is a main clause phenomenon in Faroese, it is interesting to see if the two languages also vary with respect to the possibility of argument fronting in adverbial clauses or if the restrictions are similar.

First, we discuss Icelandic examples in (15–22) that are directly comparable to the English data that we discussed in section 2. Let us first consider argument fronting in temporal central adverbial clauses conjoined with *áður en* ‘before’ and *þegar* ‘when’ (15–16a/b) compared to such fronting in a contrastive peripheral adverbial clause conjoined with *á meðan* ‘while’ (16c):

- (16) CAC a. *Ég las aðra bókina hennar áður en ég kláraði þá fyrstu.*  
*temporal* I read second book her before I finished the first one  
 ‘I read her second book before I finished the first one.’
- b. \**Ég las aðra bókina hennar áður en þá fyrstu kláraði ég.*  
 I read second book her before the first one finished I
- (17) CAC a. *Þegar hún byrjaði að skrifa reglulega pistla aftur hélt ég*  
*temporal* when she began to write regular column again thought I  
*að hún yrði ánægðari.*  
 that she would be more glad  
 ‘I thought she would be more glad when she started to write her regular column again.’
- b. \**Þegar reglulega pistla byrjaði hún að skrifa aftur hélt*  
 when her regular column began she to write again thought  
*ég að hún yrði ánægðari.*  
 I that she would be more glad
- PAC c. *Stúdentarnir pöntuðu ný eintök á meðan þau gömlu hefðu þeir*  
*contrast* the students ordered new copies when the old ones had they  
*auðveldlega getað notað.*  
 easily could used  
 ‘The students ordered new copies when they could easily had used the old ones.’

The central temporal adverbials in (15b) and (16b) disallow argument fronting, as they did in English, while the peripheral contrastive adverbial in (16c) allows it. The central temporal clause conjoined with *síðan* ‘since’ in (17) also prohibits argument fronting and the contrastive peripheral is questionable. Similar holds true for the sentence pair in (18):

- (18) CAC a. *Síðan ég át þennan fisk hef ég verið lasinn.*  
*temporal* since I ate that fish have I felt sick  
 ‘I have felt sick since I ate this fish.’
- b. \**Síðan þennan fisk át ég hef ég verið lasinn.*  
 Since that fish ate I have I felt sick

PAC c. ?**Úr því að** þessi vandamál get ég ekki leyst verð ég  
*contrast* since these problems can I not solve need I  
 að biðja um hjálp.  
 to ask for help  
 ‘Since I cannot solve these problems I need to ask for help.’

(19) CAC a. \*María sótti tíma **á meðan** ÞÍNA bók voru þeir að nota  
*temporal* Mary attended classes while your book were they using  
 en ekki á meðan MÍN var notuð  
 but not while mine was used

PAC b. ?**Á meðan** ÞÍNA bók eru þeir að nota í tveimur námskeiðum  
*contrast* while your book are they using in two courses  
 hafa þeir ekki einu sinni pantað MÍNA á bókasafnið  
 have they not even ordered mine at the library  
 ‘While they are using your book in two courses they haven’t  
 even ordered mine.’

In (20) we have *if*-clauses where argument fronting is not possible in the event conditional whereas it improves in the conditional assertive, although it is not perfect, at least not this particular example. The concessive adverbial clause in (21) allows argument fronting very easily and so does the purpose clause in (22b) as in the result clause in (23).

(20) CAC a. **Ef** þú fellur á þessu prófi geturðu ekki klárað námskeiðið.  
*event cond.* if you fail on this exam can you not finish course-the  
 ‘You cannot finish the course if you don’t pass the exam.’

b. \***Ef** á þessu prófi fellurðu geturðu ekki klárað námskeiðið.  
 if this exam you fail, then you can’t finish the course

PAC c. ?**Ef** á þessu tiltekna prófi fellur Haraldur, af hverju ætti hann  
*cond. assertion* if this exam fails Harald, why would he  
 þá að halda áfram?  
 then go on

(21) PAC Ég kláraði ekki aðra bókina hennar þó að fyrstu bókina hafi ég  
*concessive* I finished not her second book although the first one had I  
kunnað vel að meta.  
 enjoyed well  
 ‘I didn’t finish her second book although I really enjoyed the first one.’

(22) CAC a. Ég las aðra bókina hennar vandlega svo að ég gæti  
*purpose* I read her second book carefully so that I could  
 skilið þá fyrstu almennilega  
 understand the first one properly  
 ‘I read her second book carefully so that I could understand the first one  
 properly.’

- b. Ég las aðra bókina hennar vandlega svo að þá fyrstu gæti ég  
 I read her second book carefully so that the first one could I  
 skilið almennilega.  
 understand properly
- (23) PAC a. Ég missti samband við menntaskólavini mína svo að fæsta þeirra  
*result* I lost contact with my college friends so that fewest of them  
 sá ég aftur.  
 saw I again  
 ‘I lost contact with my college friends so that most of them I didn’t see  
 again.’

Overall there is a clear contrast between central and peripheral clauses with respect to the possibility of argument fronting.

Now, consider V<sub>fin</sub>-Adv order or subject-initial V3 which is restricted to certain types of embedded clauses in Icelandic, most typically relative clauses (see Angantýsson 2011). An interesting consequence of Haegeman’s analysis is the following: If the sentence types that prohibit Embedded Topicalization (relative clauses, indirect questions) are more likely to allow Adv-V<sub>fin</sub> (V3) order in Icelandic than are complement clauses, as Angantýsson’s (2011) results indicate, then there should be a contrast between Adv-V<sub>fin</sub> order in CACs and PACs in Icelandic. This seems to be borne out as the data in (24) show.

- (24) CAC a. Ef þú ekki nærð þessum prófum færðu ekki gráðuna  
 (Adv-V<sub>fin</sub>, V3) if you not pass these exams get.you not the.degree  
 ‘If you don’t pass these exams you won’t get the degree.’
- PAC b. ?Ef við ekki getum gagnrýnt setningafræðigreininguna, getum við  
 (Adv-V<sub>fin</sub>, V3) if we not can criticize the syntactic analysis can we  
 að minnsta kosti sagt helling um merkingarfræðigreininguna at  
 ‘If we can’t criticize the syntactic analysis we can at least say something  
 about the semantic analysis.’

Thus we see that Embedded Topicalization and Adv-V<sub>fin</sub> V3 orders in Icelandic are, in a way, in “complementary distribution”. Further research is to be carried out in order to see if central vs. peripheral adverbial clauses show systematic differences in this respect.

We have no judgement data for the contrast between CACs and PACs in Icelandic yet, but new data from Faroese shows that there is a very clear contrast between argument fronting in CACs (table 3) and PACs (table 4) (judgements from 32 informants – a written questionnaire (Angantýsson, 2016):

Table 3: *Argument fronting in a Faroese CAC (conjoined with meðan ‘while’)*

	Yes	?	No
(25) <i>Maria lurtaði eftir útvarpinum, meðan hon gjørði døgurða.</i> Maria listened to radio-the while she made food-the	100%	0	0
(26) <i>Maria lurtaði eftir útvarpinum, meðan <b>døgurða</b> gjørði hon.</i> Maria listened to radio while food-the made she	0	0	100%

Table 4: *Argument fronting in a Faroese PAC (conjoined with meðan ‘while’)*

	Yes	?	No
(27) <i>Studentarnir bíløgdu nýggju útgávuna av bókini,</i> Students-the ordered the new edition of book-the <i>meðan teir lættliga høvdu kunnað brúkt ta gomlu.</i> while they easily had could used the old one	84.5%	15.5%	0
(28) <i>Studentarnir bíløgdu nýggju útgávuna av bókini,</i> Students-the ordered the new edition of book-the <i>meðan <b>ta gomlu</b> høvdu teir lættliga kunnað brúkt.</i> while the old one had they easily could used	25%	31%	44%

Not surprisingly, all the Faroese speakers reject embedded topicalization in the CAC (24) (Hooper & Thompson 1973 show the same for English and Vikner 1995 for the Mainland Scandinavian languages), but there is much more variation regarding embedded topicalization in the peripheral one where 8 speakers out of 32 fully accept the argument fronting (28). Argument fronting in a PAC conjoined with *hóast* ‘although’ is also possible for some Faroese speakers as shown in table 5:

Table 5: *Argument fronting in a Faroese PAC (conjoined with hóast ‘although’)*

	Yes	?	No
(29) <i>Eg kláraði ongantíð ta fyrstu bókina hjá henni,</i> I finished never the first book of her <i>hóast eg havi hildið seinnu bókina verið sera góða.</i> although I had thought the second book been very good	89.5%	3.5%	7%
(30) <i>Eg kláraði ongantíð ta fyrstu bókina hjá henni,</i> I finished never the first book of her <i>hóast <b>seinnu bókina</b> havi eg hildið verið sera góða.</i> although the second book had I thought been very good	24%	17%	59%

Finally, table 6 shows that adjunct fronting (33) is somewhat easier than argument fronting (32) in central adverbial clauses in Faroese (see discussions on this distinction in Icelandic in Jónsson 1996: 42–43):

Table 6: *Argument fronting vs. adjunct fronting in Faroese CACs (conjoined with meðan ‘while’)*

	Yes	?	No
(31) Poula arbeiðir í garðinum, meðan Andras bakar køkur í køkinum. Poula works in yard-the while Andras bakes cakes in kitchen-the	100%	0	0
(32) Poula arbeiðir í garðinum, meðan <b>køkur</b> bakar Andras í køkinum. Poula works in yard-the while cakes bakes Andras in kitchen-the	0	0	100%
(33) Poula arbeiðir í garðinum, meðan <b>í køkinum</b> bakar Andras køkur. Poula works in yard-the while in kitchen-the bakes Andras cakes	13%	26%	61%

This contrast also holds for written Faroese as shown by examples collected from the *Timarit.is* corpus (Jonas 2016). In Icelandic, the situation seems to be similar to Faroese in this respect although we still lack comparable judgement data.

Further comparative data from Övdalian is shown in table 7 (Angantýsson 2015):

Table 7: *Argument fronting in Övdalian PACs (conjoined with um ‘if’) – conditional assertion*

	Yes	?	No
(34) Um an ar aldri si’tt filmin ur beller an do ávå if he has never seen movie-the how can he then have nogu mieningg uman? some opinion about he ‘If he has never seen the movie how can he have any opinion of it?’	7	0	0
(35) <u>Um filmin</u> ar an aldri si’tt ur beller an do ávå an if movie-the has he never seen how can he then have he nogu mieningg um? some opinion about ‘If he has never seen the movie how can he have any opinion of it?’	0	1	6

Six out of seven Övdalian informants fully rejected the argument fronting whereas one speaker put a question mark (‘An odd sentence that I could hardly say’).

Finally, we see an example of argument fronting in Danish (Angantýsson 2011):

Table 8: *Argument fronting in Danish PACs (conjoined with hvis ‘if’) – conditional assertion*

	Yes	?	No
(36) <u>Hvis filmen</u> har han aldrig set hvordan kan han så if movie-the has he never seen how can he then udtale sig om den? express himself about it ‘If he has never seen the movie, how can he then comment on it?’	4%	58%	38%

Interestingly, the majority of the Danish informants (14 out of 26) put a question mark to argument fronting in a conditionally asserted PAC.

## 5 Concluding remarks

What we have found here can be seen to be an initial promising approach to word order variation in adverbial clauses when they are considered in the light of the typology argued for in Haegeman 2012 and much prior work. This appears to be a highly promising approach as a means of accounting for long observed word order variation in adverbial clauses – environments that are typically said to resist fronting of both arguments and adjuncts - in Icelandic and also in other Scandinavian languages although the latter work is more preliminary. As we have shown here, fronting is possible in a subset of adverbial clauses exactly as predicted by Haegeman's typology and such examples are both in judgement data and written sources. Further, this initial work shows that there appears to be a distinction between argument fronting (less free) and adjunct fronting (more free) in Icelandic and this distinction has not before been systematically examined. In future research, what we have found here can be supplemented by further work with speakers and this approach can be fruitfully extended to other Scandinavian varieties. However, it should be borne in mind that there may be individual speaker differences due to resistance to embedded topicalization in general, and, in addition to this, there may be age differences as shown in Angantýsson (2011:120) for other types of embedded clauses in Icelandic. The work presented here, however, is a start towards solving the long-standing question of word order variation in adverbial clauses.

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