

Stylistic fronting in main clauses in Icelandic and Faroese

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In the Insular Scandinavian languages, Icelandic and Faroese, the finite verb usually holds the second position (V2) in main clauses as it also does in the Germanic languages in general, with the exception of English. However, whereas Icelandic is an asymmetric V2-language in Holmberg's (2015) terms, meaning that it exhibits V2 both in matrix and embedded clauses, it turns out that Faroese lies somewhere between Icelandic and Danish with respect to verb/adverb placement in embedded clauses (see for instance Thráinsson 2001, Heycock et al. 2012, Angantýsson 2018). In this paper, the main goal is to explore the extent to which the two closely related languages allow SF-like fronting of various constituents in main clauses.

As originally pointed out by Maling (1980), Stylistic fronting (SF) in Icelandic is most typically found in embedded clauses with a “subject gap”:

- (1) Þetta er mál sem — hefur verið rætt um.
this is matter that has been discussed about
- (2) Þetta er mál sem **rætt** hefur verið — um. (SF in Icel.)
this is matter that discussed has been about

In previous work (Angantýsson 2011, 2017) it has been claimed that SF is more restricted in embedded clauses in Faroese than it is in Icelandic, suggesting that Faroese is evolving in the direction of the Mainland Scandinavian languages, where SF has all but disappeared.

The comparison of stylistically fronted elements of various kinds conducted in this study shows that both languages actually obey similar restrictions in main clauses. However, based on the results from written questionnaires and corpora, it will be shown that certain SF-constructions are much more restricted in Faroese than in Icelandic.

- (3) **Lisnar** vórðu bókur um vinalag. (SF in Far.)
read were books about friendship
'Some books about friendship were read'
- (4) **Regnað** hevði alla náttina. (SF in Far.)
rained had all night
'It had rained all night'

Around one third of my 28 Faroese informants fully accept examples like (3–4) while comparable sentences are completely natural in Icelandic, at least in formal registers. Thus, there are indications that SF is also slowly on its way out in main clauses in Faroese, unlike Icelandic.

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