V1, V2 and information structure in the history of Icelandic

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Icelandic verb-first and verb-second

- A **V2 language** (Rögnvaldsson & Thráinsson 1990; Thráinsson 2007) with a wide variety of **V1 constructions**
  $\implies$ including **V1 declaratives** (e.g. Hallberg 1965; Booth 2018; Sigurðsson 2018)

  (1) **Gnæfði** gaflinn   hátt yfir fjöruna
       tower.PST gable.DEF.NOM high over beach.DEF.ACC
       'The gable towered high over the beach' (Leysing, 1907)

- Diachronic change: **decrease in V1, increase in V2** (Sigurðsson 1990; Butt et al. 2014; Booth et al. 2017)

- A full account of this change and its driving factors is still lacking

Grammatical relations in Icelandic

- The encoding of grammatical relations in Icelandic is known to be highly **complex** (Zaenen et al. 1985; Nordlinger 1998; Barðdal & Eythórsson 2003; Zaenen et al. 2017) $\implies$ interaction of morphology, word order and lexical semantics (Schätzle 2018)

- Diachronic claims: **position becomes an increasingly important strategy**
    - Rise of '**configurationality**' (Faarlund 1990; Booth 2020)
    - Rise of '**positional licensing**' (Kiparsky 1997)

This talk

- We bring these two changes together in an account for **word order change**
  $\implies$ focus on the **interaction between clause structure and information structure**

- Claims supported by quantitative and qualitative **corpus evidence** from the Icelandic Parsed Historical Corpus (IcePaHC, Wallenberg et al. 2011)
  - Focus on matrix declaratives
  - Verb position and subject topics

- Formal analysis within **Lexical Functional Grammar** (LFG, Bresnan & Kaplan 1982; Bresnan et al. 2016; Dalrymple et al. 2019)
  - Allows us to neatly capture the changing associations over time

Theoretical assumptions

- **LFG's parallel architecture**: different types of linguistic information represented at independent interacting dimensions
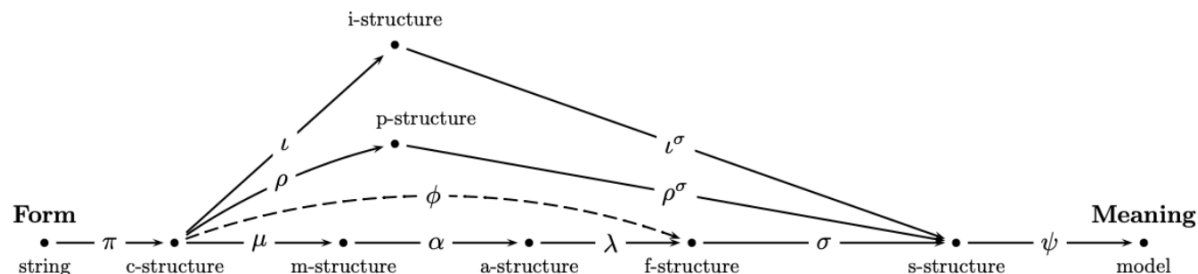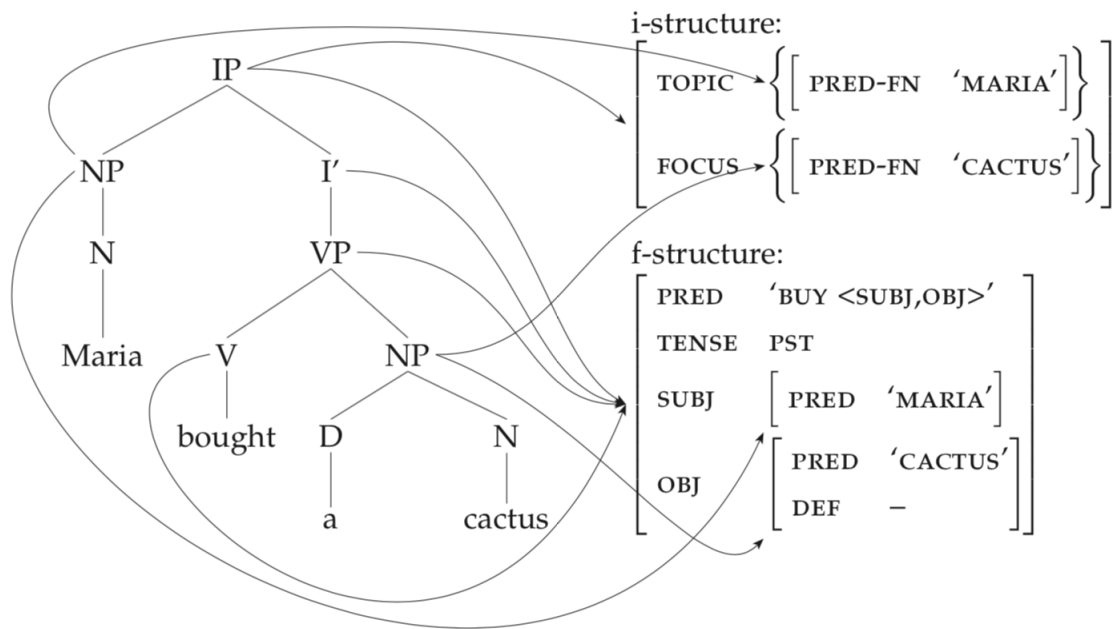

Figure: LFG's projection architecture after Asudeh (2006, 369).

- Subjects are **represented at f-structure** and need not be associated with a fixed structural position (Dalrymple 2001)
- Information-structural properties, e.g. topicality, are also captured at a separate dimension, **i-structure**, and need not be associated with a single position
  $\implies$ **C-structure** represents purely information concerning category and constituency

Theoretical assumptions

i-structure:

$$\begin{bmatrix} \text{TOPIC} \rightarrow \left\{ \begin{bmatrix} \text{PRED-FN} & \text{'MARIA'} \end{bmatrix} \right\} \\ \text{FOCUS} \rightarrow \left\{ \begin{bmatrix} \text{PRED-FN} & \text{'CACTUS'} \end{bmatrix} \right\} \end{bmatrix}$$

f-structure:

$$\begin{bmatrix} \text{PRED} & \text{'BUY <SUBJ,OBJ>'} \\ \text{TENSE} & \text{PST} \\ \text{SUBJ} & \begin{bmatrix} \text{PRED} & \text{'MARIA'} \end{bmatrix} \\ \text{OBJ} & \begin{bmatrix} \text{PRED} & \text{'CACTUS'} \\ \text{DEF} & - \end{bmatrix} \end{bmatrix}$$

(2)   Q: What did Maria buy?
        A: Maria bought a cactus.
            TOPIC   FOCUS

Some terminology

- What do we mean by '**topics**'?

- **Feature-based approach** to information-structure (Butt & King 1996, 1997; based on ideas from Vallduví 1992; Choi 1999)

	[+New]	[−New]
[+Prominent]	FOCUS	TOPIC
[−Prominent]	COMPLETIVE INFORMATION	BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 'Topic' here = **continuing topic** (Frascarelli & Hinterhölzl 2007; cf. center continuation in centering theory, Grosz et al. 1995)
- Overlap with aboutness topics (Krifka 2007)

Some terminology

- IcePaHC is not annotated for information structure
  $\Longrightarrow$ **approximation for topics**
  - Subject topic: any referential subject noun phrase which is pronominal or has overt definite marking

- **Issues**:
  - Not all pronominal and definite noun phrase subjects will be topics
  - Definiteness marking not yet obligatory for semantically definite noun phrases in Old Icelandic $\longrightarrow$ not all semantically definite NPs captured

- On balance, having quantitative data which represents an approximation of certain information-structural properties at this point **outweighs the alternatives**
- **Additional qualitative checks** to monitor quantitative data

Old Icelandic V2 and V1

- Old Icelandic (1150-1350) is standardly recognised as a **V2 variety** (Eythórsson 1995; Rögnvaldsson 1995; Faarlund 2004)

   (3) Hann **átti** hesta góða
        he.NOM own.PST horses.ACC good.ACC.PL
        'He had good horses' (1310, Grettir.1767)

   (4) Hana **átti** Gamli Þórhallsson
        she.ACC own.PST Gamli.NOM Þórhallsson.NOM
        'To her was married Gamli Þórhallsson' (1310, Grettir.15)

   (5) Þar **átti** hann heima
        there own.PST he.NOM home.ACC
        'He lived there' (1250, Sturlunga.389.30)

   $\implies$ V2 is **robustly attested** in matrix declaratives (IcePaHC: 82%, Booth 2018)

- Only exception to V2 in declaratives is **V1**; notable absence of V3 and V-later exhibited in early West Germanic (e.g. Kiparsky 1995; Axel 2007; Walkden 2015)

Old Icelandic V2 and V1

- (At least) **3 types** of V1 declarative (Booth 2018; Sigurðsson 2018)

    1. **Impersonal V1**

        (6) **Tekur**   nú   að hausta
             begin.PRS now to become-autumn.INF
             'It now starts to become autumn' (1310, Grettir.48)

    2. **Presentational V1**

        (7) **Eru**   nú hér með oss   margir   tígnir   menn   og góðir   drengir
             be.PRS now here with we.ACC many.NOM noble.NOM men.NOM and good.NOM fellows.NOM
             'There are now here with us many noble men and good fellows' (1275, Morkin.401)

    3. **'Narrative inversion' V1** (Platzack 1985)

        (8) **Sat**   hún   hjá fótum   hans
             sit.PST she.NOM by feet.DAT he.GEN
             'She sat by his feet' (1150, Homiliubok.1875)

Narrative inversion V1

(8) **Sat**   hún   hjá fótum   hans
     sit.PST she.NOM by feet.DAT he.GEN
     'She sat by his feet' (1150, Homiliubok.1875)

- Characteristic of lively storytelling, reported sequences of events (Kossuth 1980; Platzack 1985; Hopper 1987; Sigurðsson 2018)

- Relevant for us: **subject topic in the immediately postfinite position**

The finite verb and subject topics

- Two positions available to subject topics in Old Icelandic:

    1. **Prefield (V2)**

        (9)   Hann   **átti**   hesta   góða
        he.NOM own.PST horses.ACC good.ACC.PL
        'He had good horses' (1310, Grettir.1767)

    2. **Immediately postfinite position ('narrative inversion' V1)**

        (10)   **Sat**   hún   hjá fótum   hans
        sit.PST she.NOM by feet.DAT he.GEN
        'She sat by his feet' (1150, Homiliubok.1875)

- We investigate the positional distribution of subject topics further...

The finite verb and subject topics

- Relative ordering of the finite verb and subject topic is **flexible** in Old Icelandic
- Though a **preference for the V2** option

SUBJTOPIC-V (V2)		V-SUBJTOPIC (V1)	
n	%	*n*	%
1794	66%	905	34%

Table: Relative order of finite verb and subject topic in Old Icelandic (1150-1350).
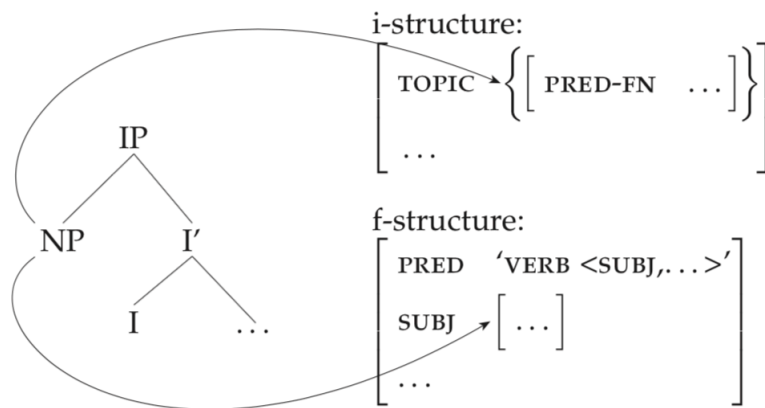
Analysis

- **Corpus evidence:** word order flexibility concerning finite verb and subject topic
- **Our account:**
    - **Two subject topic positions** which pivot around a **fixed position for finiteness**
    - **IP-rooted** account with flat structure within I' (cf. Sells 2001, 2005; Börjars et al. 2003 on modern Scandinavian)
    - One available prefinite position, which can be optionally occupied
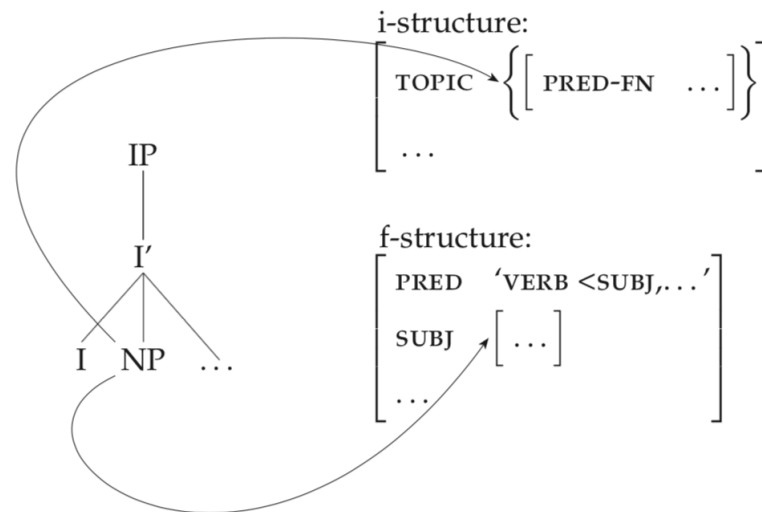   - For more details see Booth & Beck (2021)
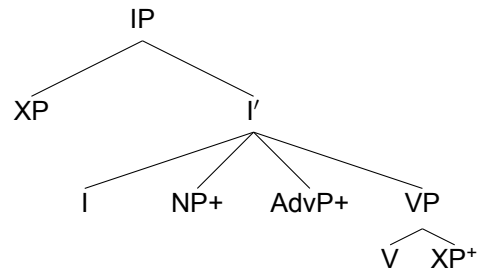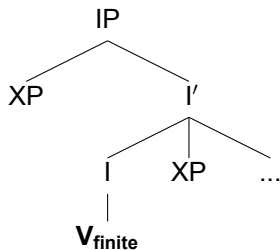
(Sells 2001, 2005)

Analysis

V2 with a clause-initial subject topic:

i-structure:

$$\begin{bmatrix} \text{TOPIC} \rightarrow \left\{ \begin{bmatrix} \text{PRED-FN} & \dots \end{bmatrix} \right\} \\ \dots \end{bmatrix}$$

f-structure:

$$\begin{bmatrix} \text{PRED} & \text{'VERB <SUBJ,...>'} \\ \text{SUBJ} \rightarrow \begin{bmatrix} \dots \end{bmatrix} \\ \dots \end{bmatrix}$$

V1 with a postfinite subject topic:

i-structure:

$$\begin{bmatrix} \text{TOPIC} \rightarrow \left\{ \begin{bmatrix} \text{PRED-FN} & \dots \end{bmatrix} \right\} \\ \dots \end{bmatrix}$$

f-structure:

$$\begin{bmatrix} \text{PRED} & \text{'VERB <SUBJ,...'} \\ \text{SUBJ} \rightarrow \begin{bmatrix} \dots \end{bmatrix} \\ \dots \end{bmatrix}$$

- Difference captured at **c-stucture** and in **c-structure to i-/f-structure mapping**

Analysis

- Our analysis contrasts with **some accounts** which handle the flexible order of finite verb and subject topic in terms of a CP-IP structure with a fixed subject position (e.g. Sigurðsson 1990; cf. Travis 1984, 1991; Zwart 1991, 1993)

    - Within **approaches where subjects are structurally defined**
      $\Longrightarrow$ Motivated by the assumption that SpecIP is a unique subject position

- LFG's more **abstract view of subjecthood and topicality** means we are not tied to a fixed position for subjects/topics

Analysis

- IP-rooted account better captures the **key intuition** borne out by the data
  $\Longrightarrow$ that the position of the finite verb is restricted

- This structural restriction is in contrast to the **postfinite domain**, where word order is syntactically free and primarily driven by information-structural concerns (Hróarsdóttir 2009; Booth & Schätzle 2019; Booth 2020)

- Also in line with **previous LFG accounts** which capture some second position phenomenon via an IP-rooted c-structure, e.g.
    - Kroeger (1993) on Tagalog
    - Austin & Bresnan (1996) on Warlpiri
    - Nordlinger (1998) on Wambaya
    - Sells (2001); Börjars et al. (2003) on Swedish

Diachronic change

- We investigate the **positional distribution of subject topics** in relation to the finite verb over time via **three word order patterns**:

1. **SUBJTOPIC-V**: **subject-topic-initial V2**

   (11)   Hann **átti**   hesta   góða
          he.NOM own.PST horses.ACC good.ACC.PL
          'He had good horses' (1310, Grettir.1767)

2. **V-SUBJTOPIC**: **narrative inversion V1**

   (12)   **Sat**   hún   hjá fótum   hans
          sit.PST she.NOM by feet.DAT he.GEN
          'She sat by his feet' (1150, Homiliubok.1875)

3. **XP-V-SUBJTOPIC**: **non-subject-initial V2**

   (13)   Þar **átti**   hann   heima
          there own.PST he.NOM home.ACC
   'He lived there' (1250, Sturlunga.389.30)

Diachronic change

- Firstly comparing **Old Icelandic** (1150-1350) with **modern Icelandic** (1900-2008)
- **Subject topics increasingly target the prefield** (SpecIP)

Period	SUBJTOPIC-V		V-SUBJTOPIC		XP-V-SUBJTOPIC	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
1150-1350	1794	**43%**	905	22%	1434	35%
1900-2008	2934	**71%**	91	2%	1124	27%

Table: Positional distribution of subject topics in IcePaHC (1150-1350 vs. 1900-2008).

- More detailed investigation of development of word orders across individual texts (full IcePaHC diachrony, 1150-2008)

- **Statistical testing:** generalised linear mixed-effect models
  - Fixed effects: **'year'** and **'genre'** (narrative, religious, biography, law, scientific)
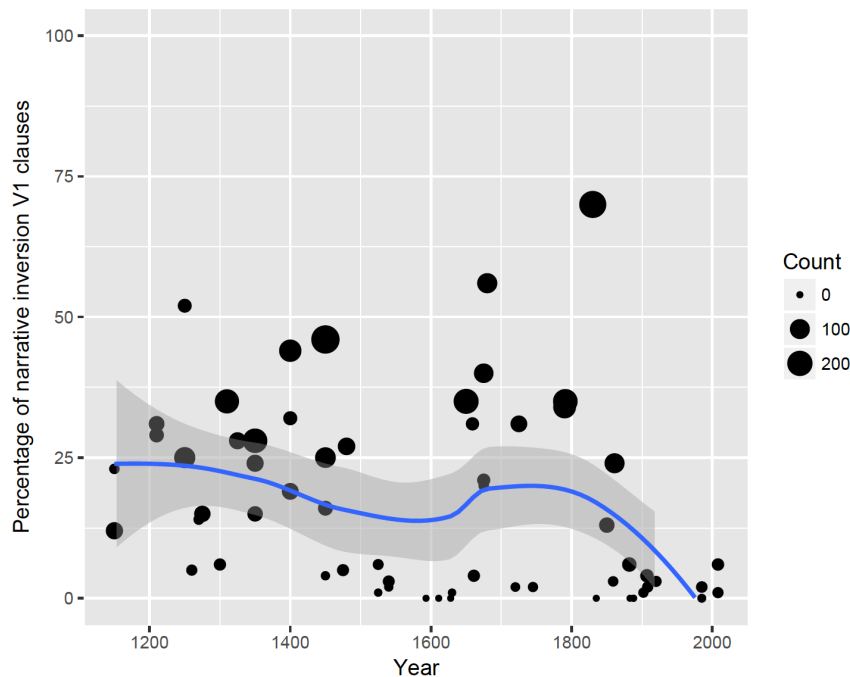 - Random effect: 'text'

Diachronic change
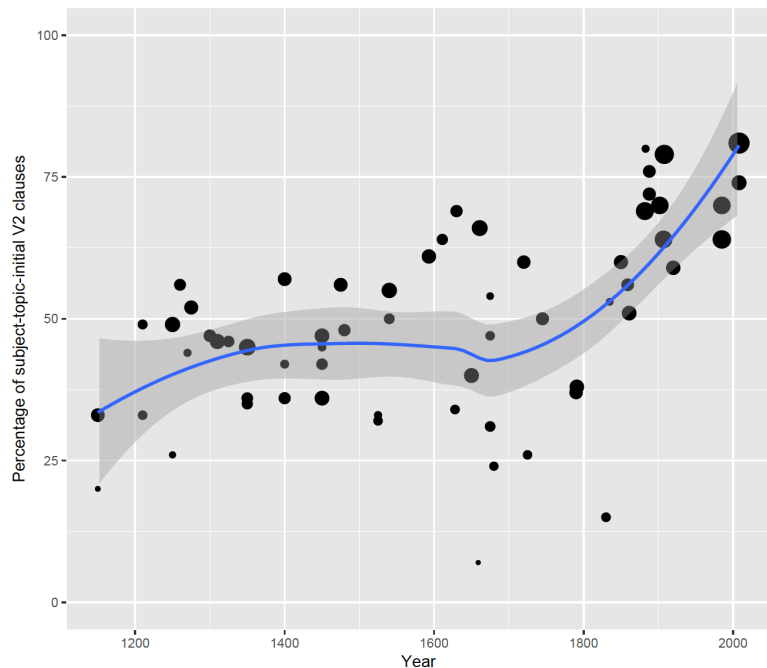
SUBJTOPIC-V

- Increase over time is statistically significant ($p < 0.001$)
- Variation around 1600-1700 $\longrightarrow$ genre effect
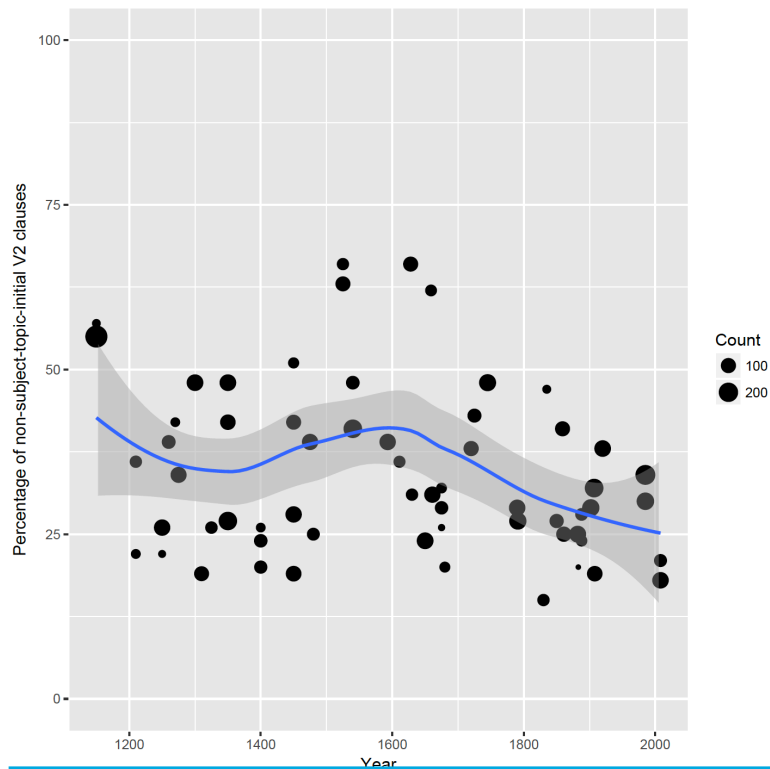- Biographical texts (1600-1700) have a significant negative effect ($p < 0.05$)

Diachronic change

V-SUBJTOPIC

- Decrease over time is statistically significant ($p < 0.001$)
- Again, variation around 1600-1700 $\longrightarrow$ genre effect
- Religious texts (around 1600) have a significant negative effect ($p < 0.001$)

Diachronic change

XP-V-SUBJTOPIC

- Decrease over time is not statistically significant ($p = 0.09$)
- Genre has a significant impact on the distribution of XP-V-SUBJTOPIC
- Significant positive effect of biographies ($p < 0.05$) and religious texts ($p < 0.01$)
  $\longrightarrow$ increase around 1600

Diachronic change

- Subject topics **increasingly favour the prefield** throughout the history of Icelandic
- A change in the association between clause structure and information structure/grammatical relations
  $\implies$ Changing association between c- and i-structure/f-structure

- The prefield (SpecIP) is **emerging as a unique subject topic position**
  - SpecIP is becoming more restricted to subject topics
  - Postfinite domain is losing its association with subject topics

- In line with a wider shift toward 'positional licensing' of grammatical relations (Kiparsky 1997; Booth et al. 2017)

Diachronic change

- Increasing **generalisation over time** of the subject-initial V2 structure
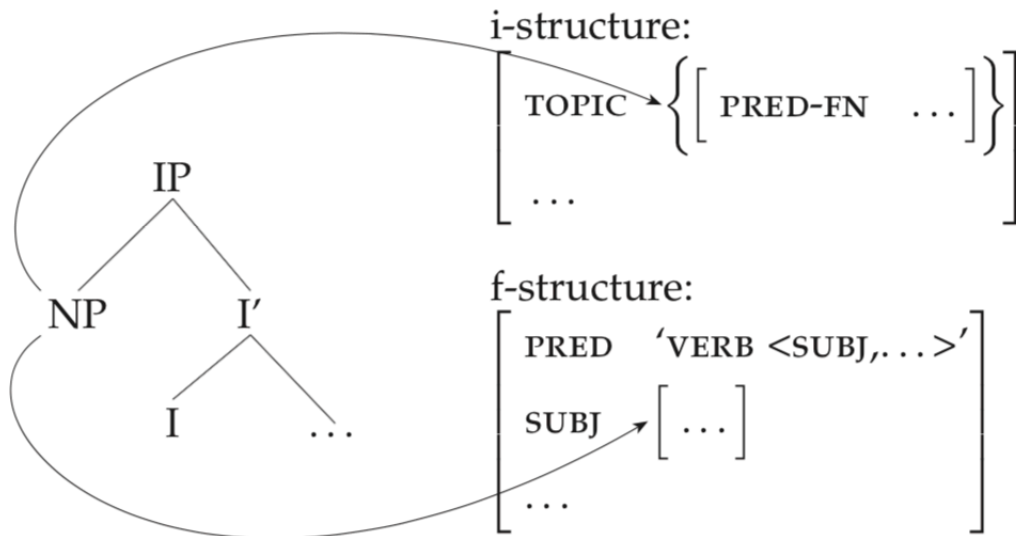
Consequences of change

- This changing association between clause structure and information structure/ grammatical relations at least partly accounts for developments concerning V1 and V2

    - **Decrease in V1** and **increase in V2**, as previously observed (Sigurðsson 1990; Butt et al. 2014; Booth et al. 2017)

- **Narrative inversion V1** (V-SUBJTOPIC) is **becoming less frequent as subject topics increasingly favour the prefield** (SUBJTOPIC-V)
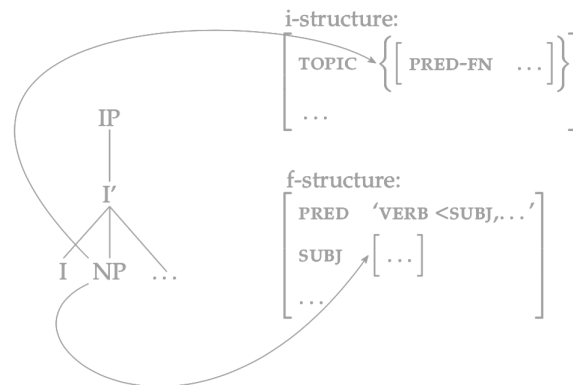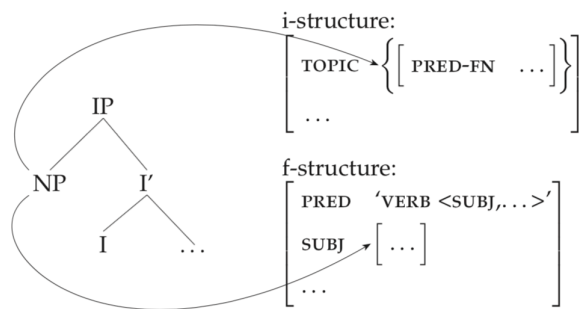
Consequences of change

- But what about **other types of V1** which do not involve subject topics?

  - **Impersonal V1**

    (14) **Tekur**   nú   að hausta
          begin.PRS now to become-autumn.INF
          'It now starts to become autumn' (1310, Grettir.48)

  - **Presentational V1**

    (15) **Eru**   nú hér með oss   margir   tígnir   menn   og góðir   drengir
          be.PRS now here with we.ACC many.NOM noble.NOM men.NOM and good.NOM fellows.NOM
          'There are now here with us many noble men and good fellows' (1275, Morkin.401)

Consequences of change

- Impersonal/presentational V1 **also decrease over time** (Hróarsdóttir 1998; Rögnvaldsson 2002; Eythórsson & Sigurðardóttir 2016; Booth 2018, 2019)
  $\implies$ lose out to **V2 structures with a prefield expletive**, *það*

  - **Impersonal V2**

    (16) Það **var** að vora
        EXPL be.PST to become-spring.INF
        'It was becoming spring' (2008, Mamma.1066)

  - **Presentational V2**

    (17) Það **var** töluverður   snjór   yfir öllu
        EXPL be.PST considerable.NOM snow.nom over everything
        'There was a considerable amount of snow over everything' (2008, Ofsi.772)

  $\implies$ coincides with changes concerning prefield and subject topics (Booth 2018)

Consequences of change

- Impersonal and presentational constructions are inherently topicless
  $\Longrightarrow$ Expletive signals that **clause lacks a topic** (Zaenen 1983; Sigurðsson 2007)

- Rise of the prefield expletive (and in turn the decrease in V1 in another set of contexts) can also be viewed as **a consequence of the change** we have proposed:

    - Prefield is increasingly strongly characterised as a subject topic position
      $\Longrightarrow$ Expletive is increasingly motivated as a structural filler for this position to signal that the clause lacks a topic

In sum

- **Two diachronic developments** going on concerning V1 and V2:

    1. Narrative inversion V1 is being lost to V2 with an initial subject topic

    2. Impersonal/presentational V1 is being lost to V2 with an initial expletive

- V1 declaratives in Icelandic are **being eroded on at least two fronts**, which can be traced back to the overall changing association between clause structure and information structure/grammatical relations
    $\Longrightarrow$ Emergence of a **unique subject topic position**

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Another consequence...?

- Stylistic Fronting (SF): **decrease over time** (Hróarsdóttir 1998; Rögnvaldsson 1996)

- SF in modern Icelandic is constrained by the '**Subject Gap Condition**' (Maling 1990): Generally assumed to not have information-structural effects (Maling 1990; Holmberg 2000)

(18) Þegar **komnir** verða *hvolpar*...
when come.PST.PTCP become.PRS puppies.NOM
'When puppies will have arrived...'

(19) *Þegar **komnir** verða *hvolparnir*...
when come.PST.PTCP become.PRS puppies.NOM.DEF
'When the puppies will have arrived...'

(20) Þegar **komið** var þangað...
when come.PASS.PTCP be.PST thither
'When it was arrived there...'

(21) *Þegar **komin** var *rútan* þangað...
when come.PASS.PTCP be.PST bus.NOM.DEF thither
'When the bus had arrived there...'

Another consequence...?

- But in earlier stages you often get SF-V-SUBJTOPIC:

(22) **Svikið**   hefir   *þú*   oss   Egill.
betray.PST.PTCP have.PRS you.NOM we.ACC Egill
'You have betrayed us, Egill.' (1350, Bandamenn.103)

(23) **Upp** mun   nú   gefin   *sökin*   við þig,   Halli,   segir   hann.
PTCL will.PRS now give.PASS.PTCP charge.NOM.DEF with you.ACC Halli.NOM say.PRS he.NOM
'The charge against you will now be remitted, Halli, he says.' (1275, Morkin.1158)

- With the prefield increasingly associated with subject topics, **we would expect SF-V-SUBJTOPIC to be on its way out**
  $\Longrightarrow$ Subject Gap Condition (Maling 1990)

Icelandic V1, V2   Booth & Beck