

Everything out! Evacuating the Icelandic ν P

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This talk shows that a number of puzzling facts about Icelandic syntax fall into place if we assume that in the general case, all ν P-internal material—the verb, its arguments, everything—evacuates the ν P, as in (1)

- (1) [TP þeir hafa [AspP tekið [WP þær [PP af mér] W⁰ [ν P \langle V \rangle \langle DP \rangle \langle PP \rangle]]]], (where WP is an unidentified ν P-external projection). In the first place, this explains why ‘They’ve taken them from me.’

ellipsis are not possible: there is nothing left in the ν P to topicalize or elide. Second, the evacuation of all material out of the ν P explains several word order patterns, such as V-PP-DP orderings and residual OV structures. Third, the exceptions prove the rule. Stylistic Fronting is one context where the verb (and only the verb) can remain in the ν P, and move with it. Pseudogapping constructions show that ν P ellipsis is possible after all, but only in one, constrained context. The latter fact shows that we cannot simply stipulate that Icelandic does not have ν P ellipsis—it does, so we have to derive the fact that it is generally unavailable.

1. ν P topicalization and ν P ellipsis If everything evacuates the ν P, then both ν P-fronting and ν P-ellipsis would be expected to be affected, and indeed, neither process is possible, as shown in (2) and (4). Assuming, however, that all the arguments evacuate the ν P, we then need to assume that the verb

- (2) * [ν P tekið þær af mér] hafa þeir ekki t ν P. subsequently moves even higher, so that it can precede those arguments. That it does is supported by (3) and (5). In (3) we see that a remnant ν P cannot undergo ν P-fronting, stranding its arguments, and in (5) we see that a remnant ν P cannot undergo ν P-ellipsis, stranding its arguments. This is so because the verb itself always leaves the ν P to a higher projection, even when it is nonfinite (cf. Kayne 1993). Thus, nothing is left inside the ν P—not the verbs, its arguments, or any adjuncts—by the time that ν P-ellipsis or ν P-topicalization would take place. The analysis explains why even verb-stranding ν P-ellipsis is not available in Icelandic, as shown in (6). The reason that (6) is out is
- (3) * [ν P tekið t_i t_{PP}] hafa þeir [WP þær_i af mér t ν P] taken have they them from me
- (4) *Hún hefur tekið bækur af mér, og þeir hafa \langle ν P \rangle líka. she has taken books from me and they have \langle ν P \rangle too INTENDED: ‘She’s taken books from me, and they have too.’
- (5) *...og þeir hafa þær af mér \langle ν P \rangle líka. and they have them from me \langle ν P \rangle too
- (6) *Hún tók bókina, og hann tók \langle ν P \rangle líka. she took the.book and he took \langle ν P \rangle too INTENDED: ‘She took the book, and he did too.’

that not only has the verb left the ν P, but all the ν P-internal arguments (in this case ‘the book’) have as well. So there is nothing left in the ν P to elide.

2. Supporting the evacuation Various word order facts can be explained as a by-product of the ν P evacuation processes. **First**, as noted by Wood (2015:269), complements of causative *láta* ‘let’ often allow otherwise impossible OV word orders; see examples in (7)–(8). These constructions have special

- (7) Þeir létu sig þessi mál varða. they let REFL these issues.ACC concern context of the present proposal, however, we can understand what is going on: *láta* ‘let’ is selecting an unusually small structure (e.g. WP in (1)), one which is small enough to prevent the verb from moving to the left of its arguments, after the latter have evacuated the ν P. **Second**, the present account allows for a straightforward explanation for a little-discussed fact about Icelandic word order: why argumental PPs can optionally freely precede DP objects, as illustrated in (9). This is because when the PP *af mér* ‘from me’ and the DP *bókina* ‘the book’ move out of the ν P, they can do so in either order; they are of different categories, so they do not interfere with each other’s movement. When two DPs move, however, they must preserve their underlying order (Collins & Thráinsson 1996), and this is arguably due to Relativized Minimality style locality constraints (Wood & H. Sigurðsson 2014). Assuming that the order in (9) cannot be derived by rightward movement of *bókina* ‘the book’, (9) independently supports the claim that PPs move from their base-generated position. Combined, these three constructions can be explained by
- (8) Ég læt mér þetta vel líka. I let myself this well like ‘I let myself like this.’
- (9) Þeir hafa tekið af mér bókina. they have taken from me the.book DPs move, however, they must preserve their underlying order ‘They have taken the book from me.’ (Collins & Thráinsson 1996), and this is arguably due to Relativized Minimality style locality constraints (Wood & H. Sigurðsson 2014). Assuming that the order in (9) cannot be derived by rightward movement of *bókina* ‘the book’, (9) independently supports the claim that PPs move from their base-generated position. Combined, these three constructions can be explained by

assuming that both DPs and PPs move to the left of the verb at some point in the derivation, by hypothesis *out of the vP*.

3. The exceptions: Nonevacuation in Stylistic Fronting and Pseudogapping I suggest that in Stylistic Fronting, the verb alone remains inside the vP, and in pseudogapping, the verb and a DP object remain (but a PP object still evacuates). **Stylistic Fronting** is a well-studied process that moves a nonfinite verb, adjective, adverb, or PP to (what seems to be) SpecTP whenever there is no overt phonological material in SpecTP (Maling 1990; Holmberg 2005). Here we will be concerned only with verbs, which have a somewhat special status: in Ott's (2016) study, nonfinite verbs are the only frontable category that is not *demonstrably* phrasal. Ott proposes that appearances are deceiving; in fact, when it looks like verbs are moving, it is a vP whose object has moved out of it. Ott argues that this movement is actually what makes SF of the vP possible (by circumventing what would otherwise be a violation of comp-to-spec antilocality, if a vP were to move directly to SpecTP). Appealing though it is, this explanation is at best incomplete: it

- (10) Þeir sem [TP hafa [_{vP} tekið bókina af mér]].
 they who have taken the.book from me
- (11)*Þeir sem [TP [_{vP} tekið t_i af mér] hafa [_{vP} bókina_i t_{vP}]]
 they who taken from me have the.book
- (12) Þeir sem [TP [_{vP} tekið t_i t_{PP}] hafa [_{vP} bókina_i af mér t_{vP}]]
 they who taken have the.book from me

incorrectly predicts that two-complement verbs should be able to move one complement out of the vP, and carry the other one under phrasal movement, as in (11). There are a number of possible explanations for this fact, but we will not be concerned

with them: the fact is that Ott's account requires that *everything but the verb* leave the vP, as in (12). Why can the verb stay in the vP just in this case? Stylistic Fronting is a special construction, with special

- (13) [TP T [_{AspP} Asp [_{WP} DP PP W [_{vP} <V> <DP> <PP>]]]

- (14) [TP T [_{AspP} vP Asp [_{WP} DP PP W [_{vP} v <DP> <PP>]]]

properties. I propose that typically, when everything has moved out of the vP, the verb head moves to a higher position; say, Asp (as in 13). In Stylistic Fronting contexts, however, the whole vP moves to AspP, as in (14) (cf.

Matushansky 2006 on the equivalence of head-movement and phrasal movement for checking purposes). From there, it will move to its final position in SpecTP. Notice that this needn't be countercyclic. Whether SpecTP will eventually have an overt subject or not can be determined entirely by examining the vP: if there is no overt subject bound for SpecTP, then SF (i.e., (14)) will be possible. **Pseudogapping** in Icelandic is only possible with PP remnants (see 15), and only in comparative constructions (see 16) (Gengel 2007). The unacceptability of (16) follows from the present account as the basic case: the vP cannot be elided, because the verb and its object, in addition to the PP, have already moved out by the time ellipsis applies.

(15) Hún hefur tekið fleiri bækur af mér en hann hefur <vP> af þér.
 she has taken more books from me than he has <vP> from you
 'She's taken more books from than he has from you.'

(16) *Hún hefur tekið bækur af mér, og hann hefur <vP> af þér.
 she has taken books from me, and he has <vP> from you
 INTENDED: 'She has taken books from me, and he has from you.'

is that vP ellipsis in comparative constructions is available at an earlier stage than in the usual case, and moreover, this stage is crucially after the PP has left the vP, but before the DP or the verb itself have. For present purposes, we can stipulate that when the comparative operator subextracts to the vP edge, it activates a feature/head that simultaneously triggers PP movement (crucially *not* DP movement) and vP deletion. Obviously we would like a deeper explanation than that, but that should not distract us from **the larger point**: pseudogapping suggests that Icelandic vP ellipsis is possible in principle, and Stylistic Fronting suggests that remnant vP movement is possible in principle. So we need to derive the *absence* of these processes as part of the normal course of affairs in Icelandic. The present suggestion is that the normal course of affairs involves the complete evacuation of the vP, and that what these constructions are showing us are the exceptional circumstances where such evacuation is not complete. This explains the absence of vP ellipsis and vP fronting, gives us a way to understand a variety of other constructions, and offers a new set of questions for the study of Stylistic Fronting and pseudogapping.