

General Embedded V2: Icelandic A, B, C, etc.¹

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Abstract

On the basis of data from Icelandic, this paper hypothesizes that pure GV2 languages do not exist. Even a very liberal variety of Icelandic displays LV2 properties upon closer examination. By looking for GV2 properties in the more restrictive varieties of Icelandic, the more extended availability of V2 is identified as mostly involving fronting of what appears to be stage- or contrastive topics. It is proposed that such fronting, including a “spurious” Stylistic Fronting, targets an inner TopicP which is licensed by AGR in Fin. If this is correct, verb movement may be reintroduced to the list of AGR-related differences in Scandinavian (Holmberg 2009), although in the shape of a more extended V2 rather than in terms of V-to-I movement.

1 Introduction

The prevailing assumption underlying works on Icelandic syntax is that topicalization is allowed quite freely in Icelandic dependent clauses (Magnússon 1990, Rögnvaldsson and Thráinsson 1990, Iatridou and Kroch 1992, Johnson and Vikner 1994, Vikner 1995), based on the observation that non-subject fronting is possible in environments where other V2 languages, such as Swedish, display restrictions; e.g. under emotive factives and non-assertive predicates, cf. (1), from Rögnvaldsson and Thráinsson (1990: 23), vs. (2).

- (1) a. Jón efast um að á morgun fari María snemma á fætur. (Ic.)
John doubts that tomorrow gets Mary early up
b. Jón harmar að þessa bók skuli ég hafa lesið.
John regrets that this book shall I have read

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- (2) a. *John tvivlar på att i morgon går Maria upp tidigt. (Sw.)
 John doubts that tomorrow goes Mary up early
 b. *John ångrar att den här boken läste han.
 John regrets that this here book read he

This led Vikner (1995) to discern two classes of (non-residual) V2 languages labelled *general embedded V2 languages* (henceforth *GV2*) and *limited embedded V2 languages* (henceforth *LV2*). Icelandic and Yiddish are said to belong to the former class, Danish, Dutch, Faroese, Frisian, German, Norwegian, and Swedish to the latter.⁴ GV2 languages are claimed to lack the main/embedded asymmetry seen in LV2 languages with regard to possibility of having the verb second word order.

The description of Icelandic as a GV2 language has however been debated already from early on, see Jónsson (1996), and more recently Gärtner (2003) and Wiklund et al. (2009). We will provide evidence that also the purported GV2 variant of Icelandic, referred to as *Icelandic A* in Jónsson (1996) and Wiklund et al. (2009), displays LV2 properties upon closer examination. Pending further investigation of Yiddish, the picture emerging is one where there are no strict GV2 languages, at least not in the sense first intended by this term. Languages can be “more” or “less” V2 though, as we know already from differences between *residual* V2 languages, such as Modern English and Modern French, where V2 is restricted to interrogatives and *Neg*-preposing environments, and *general* V2 languages, such as the rest of the modern Germanic languages, in addition to Old English and Old French, where topicalization in general involves the V2 word order (the distinction originating with Rizzi 1996).⁵ Here, we hypothesize that all V2 languages display LV2 features, that is to say that they all display main/embedded asymmetries when scrutinized.

⁴For works confirming that Faroese displays embedded V2 restrictions, see Wiklund et al. (2009) and Angantýsson (2009).

⁵Kashmiri is also a general V2 language, see Bhatt (1999).

Nevertheless, even the more restrictive (LV2) variants of Icelandic appear to qualify as “more” V2 than Swedish, counting environments where V2 is possible, see (3), just like Swedish is more verb second than English by the same calculus, see (4).⁶

- (3) a. Hann sá eftir því að í gær hafði hann ekki tekið sér
he regretted it that yesterday had he not taken SELF
 tíma til að horfa á myndina. (Ic.)
time for to watch on movie.DEF
- b. *Han ångrade att igår hade han inte tagit sig tid att
he regretted that yesterdat had he not taken REFL time to
 se filmen. (Sw.)
watch movie.DEF
- (4) a. Igår kom han hem. (Sw.)
yesterday came he home
- b. *Yesterday came he home. (En.)

We would like to take an additional step towards a more precise description of this “more” V2 property of Icelandic vis-à-vis the other non-residual V2 languages and towards an identification of the relevant factors of variation. In the end, the V2 word order, whether subject-initial or not, is obligatory in most types of clauses in Icelandic and in those clauses where the finite verb may be left in situ, V2 is always an option.⁷ In this sense, Icelandic qualifies as a general embedded V2 language. However, fronting of non-subjects seems restricted across varieties both with regard to the context in which it appears and with regard to the fronted constituent.

⁶In fact, there seems to be variation in Swedish with regard to the acceptability of an example like (3b), cf. Julien (2007). Most speakers, though, find the sentence marked or ungrammatical.

⁷See Angantýsson (2001, 2007) and Wiklund et al. (2007) on the contexts where V_{fin} -in-situ is possible.

2 Icelandic B

The first paper mentioning restrictions on fronting in Icelandic that we have been able to trace is Ottósson (1989: 95). In his discussion of differences between Stylistic Fronting and topicalization in embedded clauses, he states that “[...] Stylistic Fronting applies freely in embedded clauses, whereas topicalization is heavily restricted”, providing the examples in (5).

- (5) a. *Konur verða hræddar ef/þegar á Íslandi berjast menn. (Ic.)
 women get scared if/when on Iceland fight persons
 b. Konur verða hræddar ef/þegar settar eru mýs í baðkerið.
 women get scared if/when put are mice in bathtub-the

From the paper, we cannot know whether or not the variant exemplified counts as heavily restricted when contexts other than *if*-clauses are taken into consideration but examples like (5a) already tell us that non-subject fronting is not allowed freely. That fronting is restricted also in other types of clauses (both *wh*- and non-*wh*-) was brought to attention in Magnússon (1990). Later, Jónsson (1996) argued that there must be two variants of Icelandic, one that accepts topicalization in complements of so-called non-bridge verbs, labelled *Icelandic A*, and one where topicalization in these complements is considerably degraded, referred to as *Icelandic B*. In *Icelandic B* thus, the examples in (1) above, repeated in (6) below [with our addition of % in front of the sentences], are judged as bad or marked, whereas the same sentences are judged as fine in *Icelandic A*. In this connection, it is worth noting that variation with regard to non-subject fronting has also been reported for Yiddish, see Lowenstamm (1977), Travis (1984), Besten and Moed-van Walraven (1985), Diesing (1990).

- (6) a. %Jón efast um að á morgun fari María snemma á fætur. (Ic.)
 John doubts that tomorrow gets Mary early up
 b. %Jón harmar að þessa bók skuli ég hafa lesið.
 John regrets that this book shall I have read

In order to avoid confusions yielded by the term *bridge-verb*, we will henceforth speak of non-assertive verbs (6a) and emotive factives (6b), which seem to constitute the class of verbs under which declarative V2 is limited in LV2 languages (Wiklund et al. 2009, Wiklund 2009).⁸

Taking the observations by Jónsson (1996) as a point of departure, Gärtner (2003) in turn proposes that we need to revisit the contexts that are supposed to establish the GV2 nature of *Icelandic A*, in particular because *Icelandic B* appears unexpected in *Agr*-based analyses of this GV2 property, such as the analysis proposed by Holmberg and Platzack (1995). According to Gärtner, some of the contexts are actually compatible with the assumption that also *Icelandic A* displays restrictions of the kind seen in LV2 languages. Highly relevant in this respect are clauses selected by emotive factives and non-assertive predicates (including negated assertive predicates), which as mentioned display restrictions on V2 in LV2 languages. In a detailed investigation of embedded V2 declaratives across Scandinavian, Wiklund et al. (2009) present data that not only confirm the existence of *Icelandic B* but also show that restrictions on non-subject fronting is quite common, in so far as the informants (linguists with Icelandic as their mother tongue) are representative. Only one out of five informants allows non-subject fronting across-the-board of the emotive factive and non-assertive contexts examined (Wiklund et al. 2009: 1923).⁹ By way of illustration, non-subject fronting in the emotive factive context (7a) and the non-assertive context (7b) below are judged as impossible by 4 out of 5 informants. (7c) is judged as impossible by one speaker, marked but possible by two speakers, and fine by two speakers.

⁸The notion of *bridge-verb* concerns the extent to which a verb permits extraction from its complement clause (see Erteschik-Shir 1973 for an early discussion) and does not seem to go hand in hand with the extent to which V2 is possible (cf. Vikner 1995, Julien 2007). But see Featherston (2004) for a different conclusion for German.

⁹We disregard here the one informant (no. 5 in Wiklund et al. 2009) that shows restrictions on finite complementation with the relevant class of predicates.

- (7) a. %Hún sá eftir því að þessar bækur hefði hún lesið. (Ic.)
she regretted it that these books had she read
- b. %Ég er ekki sammála ykkur um að þessa bók las hún of
I am not agree you on that this book read she too
hægt.
slowly
- c. %Hún var leið yfir því að þessar bækur hefði hún ekki lesið
she was sad over it that these books had she not read
enn.
yet

Needless to say, the assumption that Icelandic is a general embedded V2 language in the sense that there is no main/embedded asymmetry with regard to non-subject fronting is wrong, except potentially for *Icelandic A*, which however appears uncommon in its purest form. Therefore, we would like to re-address the question “How Icelandic can you be, if you speak Icelandic B?” (Gärtner 2003: 120) by investigating the evidence given for the GV2 status of *Icelandic A* and by looking for additional LV2 properties of what seems to be such a variety. We will provide indications that *Icelandic B* is very Icelandic indeed because *Icelandic A* as we thought of it may not even exist.

- **Observation:**

Main/embedded asymmetries appear more common than expected from a GV2 language.

- **Hypothesis:**

Icelandic A also displays main/embedded asymmetries.

3 LV2 properties of Icelandic A

According to the seminal work by Rögnvaldsson and Thráinsson (1990: 24), there is “no general asymmetry between main clauses and subordinate

clauses as far as topicalization possibilities are concerned”. As noted by the two authors though, the claim hinges on the their assumption that Stylistic Fronting is a type of topicalization in Icelandic (cf. also Rögnvaldsson 1986 and Hrafnbjargarson 2004). This is an important point because the examples of non-subject fronting in adverbial clauses provided by Rögnvaldsson and Thráinsson (1990) all seem to involve Stylistic Fronting, as Jónsson (1996) points out. Compare (8a) below (from Rögnvaldsson and Thráinsson 1990: 25), which involves Stylistic Fronting of a participle in a temporal adjunct clause, with (8b) and (8c).

- (8) a. Þegar komið var til Reykjavíkur [...] (Ic.)
 when arrived was to Reykjavík
- b. *Þegar komið var barnið til Reykjavíkur [...] (Ic.)
 when arrived was child.DEF to Reykjavík
- c. *Komið var barnið til Reykjavíkur þegar [...] (Ic.)
 come was child.DEF to Reykjavík when

Abstracting away for the moment from the debate on the status of Stylistic Fronting as being a subcase of topicalization or not, there are several ways of knowing that (8a) does not involve a “normal” topicalization. Applying some of the diagnostics by Maling (1980, 1990), the fronting is not possible in the presence of an overt subject, cf. (8b), participles cannot be topicalized, which is exemplified by a root clause in (8c), and Stylistic Fronting contrasts with topicalization in being clause-bounded. In addition, topicalization is generally bad in temporal adjunct clauses like the one above, a fact also noted by (Magnússon 1990: 114), from whom the example in (9) below is borrowed.

- (9) ?Utanríkisráðherra hélt blaðamannafund þegar til sín hafði hann
 foreign.minister held journalist.meeting when to SELF had he
 boðað alla sendiherra landsins. (Ic.)
 invited all ambassadors country.DEF

Although Magnússon assigns a question mark to the sentence in (9), we infer from the running text that such examples are judged as marked and quite unnatural.¹⁰ Consulting the tables given in Magnússon (1990: 116-117), who is taken to be representative of *Icelandic A* (cf. Jónsson 1996), fronting is easiest in *that*-clauses, possible in e.g. concession clauses, purpose clauses, and reason clauses, but bad in e.g. embedded *wh*-clauses (with the exception of clauses introduced by *hvort* ‘whether’), temporal clauses, and conditional clauses.

3.1 *Wh*-clauses, temporal, and conditional clauses

The alleged GV2 property of Icelandic thus neither applies to *wh*-clauses, nor to temporal clauses, nor to conditional clauses. Note that these clauses also do not allow V2 in Swedish:

- (10) a. *Hann spurði hvar í gær hefði hann hitt hana. (Ic.)
 he asked where yesterday had he met her
 b. *Hann kemur bara heim ef á morgun hefur hann tíma til þess.
 he comes only home if tomorrow has he time to it
 c. *Hann sá hana þegar í gær fór hún út.
 he saw her when yesterday went she out
- (11) a. *Han frågade var igår hade han sett henne. (Sw.)
 he asked where yesterday had he seen her
 b. *Han kommer bara hem om i morgon får han tid.
 he comes only home if tomorrow gets he time
 c. *Han såg henne när igår gick hon ut.
 he saw her when yesterday went she out

A few examples have been given in the literature to show that topicalization is sometimes possible in embedded *wh*-clauses in Icelandic, see (12), taken from Iatridou and Kroch (1992) [with our addition of % in front

¹⁰The judgements described in running text in connection with Magnússon’s examples do not always appear consistent with his grammaticality assignments in the examples. Sometimes, a question mark may imply a fairly natural occurrence of embedded topicalization, whereas in other cases it refers to a relatively bad example of embedded fronting.

of the sentence]. For a couple of other examples, see Magnússon (1990). Many speakers of Icelandic find the sentences ungrammatical though. Recently, Thráinsson (2007: 44) seems to agree that non-subject topicalization is “usually quite bad or even impossible” in embedded *wh*-clauses and relative clauses.

- (12) %Ég spurði hvar henni hefðu flestir aðdáendur gefið blóm. (Ic.)
I asked where to-her had most admirers given flowers

3.2 Concession, purpose, and reason clauses

Turning to concession clauses, purpose clauses, and reason clauses, it is rather unsurprising that non-subject fronting is possible in these in view of the fact that such a fronting is available also in Swedish in the same environments if the fronted element is a spatial or temporal adjunct:

- (13) a. Han klarade provet fastän på skolan hade de inte sett
he passed test.DEF although at school had they not seen
 honom alls. (Sw.)
him at.all
- b. Han gömde sig så att hela dagen skulle hans mor
he hid SELF so that whole day.DEF would his mother
 tro att han var på skolan.
believe that he was at school
- c. Han gömde sig därför att hela dagen hade han trott
he hid REFL because that whole day.DEF had he believed
 att de jagade honom.
that they chased him

So far thus, the GV2 status of Icelandic is questionable. Even if we disregard *wh*-clauses and conditional clauses, which arguably involve operators, the presence of restrictions in temporal clauses is unexpected. Moreover, to the extent that Icelandic is a GV2 language, so can Swedish be said to be a GV2 language. Because up to now, there does not seem to be a big dif-

ference between these two languages with regard to environments where V2 is unrestricted.

3.3 *That*-clauses

That-clauses finally, where topicalization is reported to be easiest, divide in two classes with regard to the availability of root phenomena such as embedded topicalization (Hooper and Thompson 1973, Andersson 1975, Green 1976, den Besten 1977/1983, Wechsler 1991, Holmberg and Platzack 1995, Haegeman 2006, Heycock 2006, Truckenbrodt 2006, Julien 2006, 2007, Wiklund et al. 2009). As mentioned above, one of these classes, viz. clauses selected by emotive factives and non-assertive predicates, has played an important role in determining the GV2 property of Icelandic. Cross-linguistically, root phenomena are not possible in these clauses, but as we know, Icelandic has been considered to be an exception to this, cf. the often cited examples in (1) above. As pointed out by Wiklund et al. (2009) however, the emotive factive *harma* ‘regret’ in (1b), repeated in (14), differs (just like English *regret*) from the corresponding Swedish version, i.e. *ångra*, with regard to update potential: The content of an embedded clause under *harma* does not have to be part of the common ground; it can be new information to the addressee. In this sense, *harma* resembles both semi-factive and assertive predicates, which makes the possibility of non-subject topicalization less surprising.

- (14) Jón harmar að þessa bók skuli ég hafa lesið. (Ic.)
John regrets that this book shall I have read

Another important observation that is yet to be fully understood but which may be relevant to examples like (14) is that non-subject fronting in Icelandic improves considerably in the presence of certain modals in the embedded clause, see Hrafnbjargarson (2008). A more accurate predicate to use when screening for GV2 is *sá eftir* ‘regret’, which as noted by Wiklund

et al. (2009) behaves like Swedish *ångra* with regard to (lack of) update potential and in requiring coreference between the matrix and embedded subject. As mentioned above, only one out of five informants accepted non-subject fronting under this predicate:¹¹

- (15) %Hún sá eftir því að þessar bækur hefði hún lesið. (Ic.)
she regretted it that these books had she read

Concluding our brief discussion of emotive factives, it is interesting to note that Swedish appears to show a split between emotive factives like *ångra* ‘regret’, on the one hand, and emotive factives like *irritera sig över* ‘be irritated over’, *vara glad över* ‘be happy about’, *vara stolt över* ‘be proud of’, etc. on the other. Under the latter, fronting of scene-setting adverbials (Lambrecht 1994) or stage topics (Erteschik-Shir 1999, 2007) is in fact quite possible, something that to our knowledge has not been discussed previously in the literature.

- (16) a. *Han ångrade att igår hade han inte tagit sig tid att
he regretted that yesterday had he not taken SELF time to
se filmen. (Sw.)
see film.DEF
- b. ?Han irriterade sig över att igår hade han inte tagit
he irritated SELF over that yesterday had he not taken
sig tid att se filmen.
SELF time to see film.DEF
- (17) a. *Han ångrade att den här gången hade han kommit ihåg
he regretted that this here time had he come to.mind
att ringa. (Sw.)
to call

¹¹ A minor complication with *sjá eftir* ‘regret’ is that some speakers of Icelandic do not allow finite complements embedded under this predicate. This was controlled for in the study of Wiklund et al. (2009).

- b. ?Han var glad över att den här gången hade han kommit
he was glad over that this here time had he come
 ihåg att ringa.
to.mind to call

This difference, again, goes hand in hand with a difference in the update potential of the embedded proposition. With *ángra* ‘regret’, the embedded clause already has to be part of the common ground for most speakers and thus cannot be introduced as new information to the addressee, except in a very indirect way via the presupposition. With the other predicates on the other hand, the embedded proposition can more easily be introduced as new information to the addressee. Adding emotive factives to the picture, Icelandic is starting to look like Swedish and depending on the point of view from which we consider this picture, Swedish displays more GV2 properties than we thought, or Icelandic is an LV2 language, except that we have identified a speaker of Icelandic that allows non-subject fronting in complements of emotive factives of the kind that seem to lack update potential. Either this speaker is a speaker of *Icelandic A* or *sjá eftir* ‘regret’ behaves like *harma* ‘regret’ with respect to update potential for this speaker.

The most frequently cited example of fronting under a non-assertive predicate, used to validate the GV2 property of Icelandic, is arguably (1a), repeated in (18a), involving the predicate *efast um* ‘doubt’. It is a well known fact that adjuncts front more easily than arguments. If we try to front an argument under *efast um*, as in (18b), the more restrictive speakers reject the example as marked or impossible (cf. Wiklund et al. 2009). In Swedish, both examples are impossible or heavily marked, cf. (19).

- (18) a. Jón efast um að á morgun fari María snemma á fætur. (Ic.)
John doubts that tomorrow gets Mary early up
 b. %Jón efast um að þennan mann hafi María hitt.
Jon doubts on that this man has María met.

- (19) a. *John tvivlar på att i morgon vill Maria gå upp tidigt. (Sw.)
 John doubts on that tomorrow will Maria go up early
 b. *John tvivlar på att den här mannen har Maria träffat.
 John doubts on that this here man has Maria met

There may be some variation with respect to the possibility of topicalizing stage topics under *tvivla* ‘doubt’ in Swedish. According to Christer Platzack (p.c.), the examples in (19) are not completely ungrammatical, but heavily marked. For him, topicalization improves with *betvivla*, also meaning *doubt*. As we would expect, in his variant, *betvivla* differs from *tvivla* in being able to embed new information to the addressee.

3.4 How Icelandic are they who speak Icelandic A?

What remains of *Icelandic A* given the above facts? A speaker accepting (15) and (18b) above must qualify as a speaker of *Icelandic A*. The verb second word order is not allowed in the relevant environments in most varieties of Swedish, nor fronting of demonstrative DPs in the restrictive varieties of Icelandic that we have examined. Given that there is at least some variation present also in Swedish, Icelandic is perhaps not as exotic as it may seem on the surface. (15) and (18b) involve a contrastive topic, (18a) a stage topic. It is tempting to relate these features to the inner Topic position dominating FinP in the left periphery of Rizzi (1997), the latter of which may be described as introducing the *here and now* of the discourse, cf. Platzack (1998). Below, we will encounter some further indications that these features play a role in determining variation. Importantly however, *Icelandic A* does not seem to be a GV2 language in the sense that main/embedded asymmetries are not present. If the demonstrative is removed, even the most liberal speaker rejects fronting in the crucial contexts despite being given a context that facilitates a contrastive (topic) reading. This is illustrated in (20b) in the context of (20a).

- (20) a. Fyrir helgi hafði kennarinn beðið stúdentana um
before weekend had teacher.DEF asked students.DEF about
að lesa bókina og leysa verkefnið í lok kafla
to read book.DEF and solve assignment.DEF in end chapter
sex. (Ic.)
six
- b. *Á mánudag furðaði kennarinn sig á að bókina
on Monday surprised teacher.DEF SELF on that book.DEF
höfðu stúdentarnir ekki lesið en verkefnið höfðu þeir
had students.DEF not read but assignment.DEF had they
allir leyst.
all solved

The same fronting is unproblematic in a root clause, as shown in (21).

- (21) Bókina höfðu stúdentarnir ekki lesið en verkefnið höfðu
book-the had students-the not read but assignment-the had
þeir allir leyst. (Ic.)
they all solved

These data enable us to conclude that even the most allowing variety that we have identified in our investigation displays LV2 properties upon closer scrutiny, i.e. a main / embedded asymmetry with regard to non-subject fronting. Although it needs to be investigated in more detail, a further indication of this asymmetry concerns concessive V2 clauses, which as shown in Wechsler (1991) seem to be independent from the force of the matrix clause in an LV2 language as Swedish. As a consequence, these clauses escape the scope of matrix negation, yielding a *not p, because q* interpretation but not a *not (p, because q)* reading, see Gärtner (2003) for discussion. This is exemplified below.

- (22) Jag var inte orolig för att han inte hade kommit hem. (Sw.)
I was not worried because he not had come home
 $\neg (p, \text{because } q)$

- (23) Jag var inte orolig för att han hade inte kommit hem. (Sw.)
I was not worried because he had not come home
 $\neg p, \text{ because } q$

The reading of (22), involving a non-V2 word order, is one where the matrix subject was not worried by the fact that the embedded subject had not returned (but the matrix subject might have been worried for another reason). In (23) however, involving the V2 word order, the only reading available is one where the reason the matrix subject was not worried was because the embedded subject had not returned. If *Icelandic A* would be a GV2 language in the sense intended, we would expect a non-subject fronting in a similar context to be compatible with the first reading *not* ($p, \text{ because } q$), i.e. we would not expect such a fronting to impose to any restrictions with regard to the scope of matrix negation. This expectation does not seem to be met:

- (24) Hann sá hana ekki af því að yfir rauðu peysunni var hún í
he saw her not because over red jumper.DEF was she in
 svartri regnkápu (Ic.)
black rain.coat
 (i) $\neg p, \text{ because } q$
 (ii) $\# \neg (p, \text{ because } q)$

The only reading available according to our most allowing informant is the one where the reason that the matrix subject did not see the embedded subject was that she had a black rain coat over her red jumper.¹² A better example illustrating the point would be the following:

¹²Scopal possibilities have been observed to be affected by choice of mood, see Sigurðsson (1990). Subjunctive mood is impossible in the adjunct clause of (24) and mood is not subject to variation in this context, nor in the context exemplified in Gärtner (2003: example 2), borrowed from Iatridou and Kroch (1992). Variation in mood is therefore not likely to have anything to do with the Icelandic A/B split, cf. Gärtner (2003).

- (25) Hann fer ekki í sund af því að heitu pottunum finnst honum
he goes not in swimming because warm pots.THE finds he
 svo gott að sitja í. (Ic.)
so good to sit in

Although it remains to be tested, we expect that also here the only reading available is the one where the subject doesn't go swimming because he likes to sit in the warm pots instead. The second reading, i.e. the one where the subject goes swimming for some other reason than sitting in the warm pots, should not be available. A natural next step is to revisit *Icelandic B* and look for GV2 properties, which would give us a clue to the “more” V2 property of Icelandic.

4 GV2 properties of Icelandic B

Although as mentioned above, fronting of a demonstrative DP argument in the complement of the emotive factive *sjá eftir* ‘regret’ is rejected by many speakers, (26), fronting of a stage topic is possible for the Icelandic author of the present paper (who speaks the more restrictive variety), cf. (27).

- (26) *Hún sá eftir því að þessar bækur hefði hún lesið. (Ic. B)
she regretted it that these books had she read
- (27) a. Hann sá eftir því að í gær hafði hann ekki tekið sér
he regretted it that yesterday had he not taken SELF
 tíma til að horfa á myndina. (Ic. B)
time for to watch on film.DEF
- b. Hann sá eftir því að þetta skipti hafði hann gleymt að
he regretted it that this time had he forgotten to
 hringja.
call

This fact confirms the observation that fronting of adjuncts often yields a better result than fronting of objects, see e.g. Jónsson (1996). From the contrast between (27a) and (28) below, furthermore, we can conclude that

also *Icelandic B* displays GV2 properties and even though restrictive in comparison with *Icelandic A*, the variety is “more” V2 than the standard varieties of Swedish.

- (28) *Han ångrade att igår hade han inte tagit sig tid att se
he regretted that yesterday had he not taken SELF time to see
 filmen. (Sw.)
film.DEF

The possibility of fronting stage topics in some of the standard LV2 environments thus seems to be one GV2 property that sets both *Icelandic A* and *Icelandic B* apart from the rest of the Scandinavian languages (abstracting away from minor variation). The possibility of fronting contrastive argument topics seems to be the GV2 property that sets *Icelandic A* apart from both *Icelandic B* and the rest of the Scandinavian languages, (29) vs. (26)/(30). Speakers vary with regard to whether or not a demonstrative is required.

- (29) Hún sá eftir því að þessar bækur hefði hún lesið. (Ic. A)
she regretted it that these books had she read

- (30) *Han ångrade att de här böckerna hade han inte läst. (Sw.)
he regretted that these here books.DEF had he not read

A requirement for demonstrative contrast has been noted for some of the embedded frontings in Yiddish, see Diesing (1990).

5 Adding some peace to various debates

As mentioned in passing above, we tentatively propose that the target phrase of the relevant material (contrastive topics and stage topics) is the inner topic projection, which immediately dominates FinP in Rizzi (1997):

- (31) Force Top* Foc **Top* Fin**

Depending on the viewpoint one wishes to take, FinP is the right edge of the C-domain or alternatively the left edge of the I-domain of the clause. We follow Rizzi (1997) in viewing finiteness as the core IP-related property expressed by the complementizer system, and thus a part of the C-system rather than the I-system of the clause. Assuming Wiklund et al. (2007) to be correct in taking (all) verb movement in Icelandic to be triggered by FinP (cf. Holmberg and Platzack 2005), it appears reasonable to connect the licensing of material in the relevant Topic phrase to verb movement to FinP.¹³ We specifically propose that the presence of a trigger of (V2) verb movement in Fin (arguably AGR) licenses the innermost Topic Phrase. On the assumption that (V2) verb movement targets a phrase higher than Fin in Swedish (and the other Mainland Scandinavian languages), cf. Wiklund et al. (2007), the analysis correctly predicts a difference between Icelandic and the rest of the Scandinavian languages with regard to licensing of verb second in the relevant LV2 contexts. These contexts can be taken to lack the domains above Fin. Hence, only Icelandic is expected to display V2 in such environments. In this sense Icelandic can be described as a GV2 language, albeit with expected LV2 properties; we hypothesize that these follow from universal structural deficiencies of LV2 clauses and in the case of scopal opacity/island effects from the presence of material in the inner Topic phrase (available in the LV2 clauses that contain Fin in Icelandic). The *Icelandic A/B* split, in turn, can be argued to follow from differences between speakers regarding where contrastive topics are licensed; the inner TopicP for *Icelandic A* vs. the outer TopicP for *Icelandic B*.

In view of the proposal that at least some of the cases referred to as Stylistic Fronting in the literature may have discourse related effects and pattern with topicalization with regard to (absence of) clause-boundedness and possibility of appearing with an overt subject, see Hrafnbjargarson

¹³Whether this movement involves head movement or XP movement is not relevant here. The important point is that FinP licenses V2 in Icelandic but not in e.g. Swedish.

(2004), it seems natural to investigate whether the frontings identified here as establishing the presence of GV2 properties of Icelandic constitute a *spurious* Stylistic Fronting of this kind. As we will see in the next section, this indeed seems to be the case. If we are correct, some peace may also be added to this debate. *True* Stylistic Fronting may be seen as movement to FinP and *spurious* Stylistic Fronting as movement to the inner TopicP. Both types are dependent on a trigger for verb movement in Fin, the latter on our assumption that this trigger licenses fronting to the inner TopicP.

6 Spurious Stylistic Fronting

Stylistic fronting, see Maling (1980, 1990), Rögnvaldsson (1986), Platzack (1988), Falk (1993), Jónsson (1991, 1996), Holmberg (2000, 2006), Sells (2002), Hrafnbjargarson (2004), and Ott (2008) among many others, known in traditional Swedish grammar as *kil*-konstruktionen (the wedge construction), is a leftwards movement of various types of elements, usually one word; typically movement of an adverb, a participle, or a verb particle, into a position that immediately precedes the finite verb. Stylistic Fronting is attested in Icelandic and to some extent in Faroese as well as in the older stages of Swedish and Danish. (32) illustrates Stylistic Fronting of the participle *kosið* ‘elected’.¹⁴

- (32) pá sem kosið hafa Framsóknarflokkinn tvisvar sinnum (Ic.)
those that elected have Progressive.party.DEF two times

Stylistic Fronting has been related to V2 and (in particular loss of V-to-I) verb movement and it has also been argued that Stylistic Fronting applies in order to rescue a V2 clause structure, e.g. Maling (1990), or to satisfy an EPP feature in the same way as expletive insertion, e.g. Holmberg (2000). As we have mentioned, the claim of Rögnvaldsson and Thráinsson (1990) that topicalization is equally good in main and subordinate clauses hinges

¹⁴The example was found on the Internet: <http://bjorgvin.eyjan.is/kjrgengi.htm>.

on the assumption that Stylistic Fronting is a type of topicalization. In an attempt to unify SF and embedded V2, Hrafnbjargarson (2004) claims that the landing site of Stylistic Fronting is within the CP-domain.¹⁵

Since Maling (1980, 1990), we also know that Stylistic Fronting is restricted to clauses involving *subject gaps*, e.g. embedded subject questions, subject relative clauses, and impersonal passives. These are clauses in which “normal” non-subject fronting is typically marked or ungrammatical. As can be seen from (33c), however, Stylistic Fronting is like topicalization in not being restricted to embedded clauses.¹⁶

- (33) a. Fyrst var spurt hvort kosið hefði verið [...] (Ic.)
 first was asked whether elected had been
 b. Þeir sem þessa erfiðu ákvörðun verða að taka
 those that this difficult decision have to take
 c. Kosið verður til þings í næstu viku.
 elected becomes to parliament in next week

Stylistic Fronting is restrained by the so-called *Accessibility Hierarchy*, (34), first mentioned in Maling (1980). If there are two or more candidates for Stylistic Fronting in the clause, only the leftmost one on the hierarchy may be fronted.

- (34) The Accessibility Hierarchy (adapted from Maling 1980, 1990)

$$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{Negation } \textit{ekki} \\ \text{Sentence adverb} \end{array} \right\} > \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{Past participle} \\ \text{Verb particle} \end{array} \right\} > \text{Predicative adjective}$$

Unlike Stylistic Fronting of the elements listed on Maling’s original hierarchy, Stylistic Fronting of PPs (regardless of their status as argument or adjunct) does not obey to the Accessibility Hierarchy. Whereas Stylistic

¹⁵The target is proposed to be FocusP in Hrafnbjargarson (2004) but it is not obvious to us that the fronted item is not a stage topic or a contrastive topic instead.

¹⁶(33a) is taken from the Internet, <http://samgonguraduneyti.is/media/Skyrsla/Sameiningarskyrsla.pdf>, (33b) from Holmberg (2000).

Fronting of a participle in the presence of a sentence adverb (or negation) is impossible, see (35b), PPs may front freely, cf. (35c).

- (35) a. Hann spurði hvort *aldrei* hefði verið búið í þessu húsi. (Ic.)
he asked whether never had been lived in this house
 b. *Hann spurði hvort *búið* hefði aldrei verið í þessu húsi.
he asked whether lived had never been in this house
 c. Hann spurði hvort *í þessu húsi* hefði aldrei verið búið.
he asked whether in this house had never been lived

Even if we try to make sense of the Accessibility Hierarchy in terms of locality (the Minimal Link Condition, closest attract/shortest move, equidistance, etc.), any analysis of Stylistic Fronting will run into troubles explaining why Stylistic Fronting of a PP is fine in the presence of a sentence adverb/negation (which would be closer than the PP to the landing site of Stylistic Fronting) but not the Stylistic Fronting of a participle (which is equally close to the landing site as, at least, the PP argument in (35), both originating from within the verb phrase). The difference is even clearer in impersonal passives embedded under non-assertive predicates, see (36a). As (36c) and (36d) illustrate, the fronting is not clause bounded. The only reading available for (36c) and (36d) is the one where the PP originates from within the embedded clause.

- (36) a. Hann efast um að *í þessu húsi* hafi nokkurn tíma verið
he doubts on that in this house has any time been
búið. (Ic.)
lived
 b. Hann efast um að *í þessu húsi* hafi *Silvía drottning* nokkurn
he doubts on that in this house has Silvia queen any
tíma búið.
time lived
 c. *Í þessu húsi* efast hann um að hafi nokkurn tíma verið
in this house doubts he on that has any time been
búið.
lived

- d. Í þessu húsi efast hann um að Silvía drottning hafi nokkurn
in this house doubts he on that Silvia queen has any
 tíma búið.
time lived

Although, as Wiklund et al. (2009) point out, non-assertive predicates are not compatible with embedded non-subject fronting in all varieties of Icelandic, even the restrictive speakers allow fronting of a stage topic (spatial or temporal adverbials) in these complements. Since there is a subject gap in impersonal passives, any fronting in these is by tradition analyzed as Stylistic Fronting. Importantly however, fronting of a stage topic in the presence of a subject in the active counterparts is also possible, cf. (36b). Since these complements do not have a subject gap, what appears to be the same fronting is by tradition analyzed as topicalization. The only difference between Stylistic Fronting and topicalization of PPs then seems to involve the subject gap restriction.

If we disregard the possibility of a subject gap for the moment being, which makes the fronting a potential candidate for an analysis in terms of Stylistic Fronting, the absence of clause-boundedness favors an analysis of the relevant fronting in terms of topicalization rather than Stylistic Fronting. As (37) illustrates, fronting of a participle is clause-bounded.

- (37) *Búið efast hann um að hafi nokkurn tíma verið í þessu húsi. (Ic.)
lived doubts he on that has any time been in this house

Moreover, fronting of a participle is restricted to clauses with a subject gap, (38a) vs. (38b) below, whereas, as illustrated above, fronting of PPs can appear with or without an overt subject, (36a-b).

- (38) a. Hann efast um að búið hafi verið í þessu húsi á síðustu
He doubts on that lived has been in this house on last
 öld. (Ic.)
century

- b. *Hann efast um að búið hafi Silvía drottning í þessu húsi
He doubts on that lived has Silvia queen in this house
 á síðustu öld.
on last century

In all respects, fronting of temporal and spatial adjuncts/arguments appear to qualify as topic fronting rather than Stylistic Fronting. We therefore propose that fronting of these targets the Inner Topic Phrase, even in the absence of an overt subject, and that this *spurious* Stylistic Fronting is just another reflection of the “more” V2 property of Icelandic, made available in virtue of the presence of a trigger for (V2) verb displacement in Fin; arguably AGR.¹⁷ In a way, our proposal seems to rescue a connection between rich agreement and verb movement, with a proviso that the verb movement targets the C-system rather than the I-system of the clause, in contrast to the verb movement found in e.g. Northern Norwegian, which undoubtedly targets the I-system of the clause (Bentzen 2005, Wiklund et al. 2007). As far as we can see, our analysis is consistent with the proposal of Holmberg (2009) that certain differences between the Scandinavian languages are related to agreement. Before we conclude, it would be interesting to have a closer look at *Icelandic C*, a variety reported on in Wiklund et al. (2009) as one that rejects fronting of demonstrative argument DPs in most if not all embedded environments, including in asserted clauses.

¹⁷Our analysis bears some resemblance to the analysis presented in Holmberg and Platzack (1995), in the sense that AGR is able to license a recursive C, in their analysis a second “finiteness operator”. It is also in line with the proposal in Hrafnbjargarson (2004) that Stylistic Fronting and embedded V2 should be related to V-to-I movement (corresponding to V-to-Fin movement here). On the face of it, the analysis seems to be a notational variant of postulating an edge feature in Fin (alternating with an EPP feature), cf. Platzack (2009) for such an analysis of T in Icelandic. The licensing of the inner Topic phrase (or edge feature) by AGR remains to be understood.

7 Icelandic C

Icelandic C here refers to the variety of one informant (consulted in the work by Wiklund et al. 2009), who seemed to reject fronting even in the complement of assertive predicates and even in the presence of a demonstrative in the fronted argument constituent. Given our results here, we may hypothesize that the informant is actually a speaker of *Icelandic B* and that given the right context, fronting of stage topics and potentially also contrastive topics should be fine at least in assertive environments. This is indeed the case. The a-examples below provide the context and the informant was asked to judge the b-examples. Both fronting of a stage topic and fronting of a demonstrative DP is judged as fine in the complement of an assertive predicate:

- (39) a. Á foreldrafundinum kom fram að flest börn byrja að
on parent.meeting.DEF came forth that most children begin to
læra margföldunartöfluna í 3. eða 4. bekk. (Ic.)
learn multiplication.table.DEF in 3rd or 4th grade
 b. Kennarinn sagði samt að í þessum skóla byrjuðu
teacher.DEF said nevertheless that in this school started
börnin á margföldunartöflunni þegar í 1. bekk.
children.DEF on multiplication.table.DEF already in 1st grade
- (40) a. Seðlabankastjóri tilkynnti að stýrivextir myndu hækka
central.bank.director announced that prime.rate would rise
um 15% í lok mánaðarins. (Ic.)
on 15% in end month.DEF
 b. Hann sagði jafnframt að þessa ákvörðun hefði hann tekið
he said also that this decision had he taken
eftir mikla ígrundun.
after much thinking

8 Conclusion

We have hypothesized that there are no pure GV2 languages, on the basis of data from Icelandic. Even the supposed GV2 variety, *Icelandic A*, displays LV2 properties upon closer examination. In this sense *Icelandic B* should be considered rather representative of Icelandic. Nevertheless, it is hard to dispute the fact that *Icelandic B*, despite being restricted, is more liberal than Swedish (and arguably the rest of the Scandinavian languages) with respect to non-subject fronting in environments that cross-linguistically resist root phenomena of this kind. We have connected this possibility to the presence of a trigger for V2 (or verb displacement) in Fin (supposedly AGR), which licenses an inner TopicP, immediately dominating Fin (in the left periphery of Rizzi 1997). We have thereby added one more phenomenon to the list of AGR-related differences in Scandinavian, recently updated by Holmberg (2009), viz. that of general embedded V2, in the slightly modified sense described here (including main/embedded asymmetries). We have argued that the inner TopicP is the target position of at least stage- and contrastive topics, which in the absence of an overt subject have been analyzed as Stylistic Fronting. We have shown that this type of *spurious* Stylistic Fronting is best seen as topicalization. *Icelandic A* and *Icelandic B* can be said to differ with regard to where for example contrastive argument topics move (inner vs. outer TopicP).

Our claim that the GV2 status of Icelandic is nevertheless limited should be more or less expected, if we assume that there is variation with regard to which layer of the C-domain is targeted by the movement(s) responsible for the verb second word order and if we assume that dependent clauses differ with regard to which parts of the C-layer are available, an assumption in favor of which there seems to be enough independent evidence.

The data presented here constitute yet another piece of evidence against the assumption that Icelandic is a language that displays independent V-to-

I movement. All verb movement in Icelandic targets the C-system of the clause (Wiklund et al. 2009). If the I-system of the clause were targeted, it would be a rather strange coincidence that the extended possibility of fronting non-subjects (extended V2), which seems discourse related, and near obligatory verb movement to a high position in the clause go hand in hand in the Germanic languages. In our analysis, these are two sides of the same coin.

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