

Verb placement in main and embedded clauses

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1. Introduction

The Scandinavian languages are all Verb Second (V2) languages, typically displaying finite verbs in the second position in main clauses, (1). In embedded clauses, on the other hand, it is standardly assumed that whereas Insular Scandinavian (ISc) displays so-called independent V-to-I movement across negation and adverbs, Mainland Scandinavian (MSc) does not allow such verb movement, (2a-b) (cf. among many others Holmberg and Platzack 1995, Vikner 1995):

- (1) a. Han **leste** ikke avisen idag. (Norwegian)

he read not paper.the today

‘He didn’t read the newspaper today.’

- b. Idag **leste** han ikke avisen.

today read he not paper.the

‘Today he didn’t read the newspaper.’

- (2) a. Ég veit um eina bók... sem Jón **hefur** ekki lesið. (Icelandic)

I know of one book that Jón has not read

‘I know of one book that Jón hasn’t read.’

- b. Jeg vet om ei bok... som Jon ikke **har** lest. (Norwegian)

I know of a book that Jón not has read

‘I know of a book that Jon hasn’t read.’

However, as is also well-known, this is not the full picture. Already Holmberg and Platzack (1995) and Vikner (1995) (again among many others) demonstrated that certain *that*-clauses allow embedded V2: (i) verb movement across negation/adverbs even in MSc in subject-initial contexts, (3a), and (ii) subject-verb inversion in non-subject initial contexts, (3b). This has recently been explored in more detail by e.g. Julien (2007) and Wiklund et al. (2009).

- (3) a. Hun sa at han **leste** ikke avisen idag.
she said that he read not paper.the today
 ‘She said that he didn’t read the newspaper today.’
- b. Hun sa at idag **leste** han ikke avisen.
she said that today read he not paper.the
 ‘She said that today he didn’t read the newspaper.’

Moreover, it has also been shown that certain MSc dialects (as well as Faroese) allow some verb movement in so-called non-V2 contexts, such as those in (2) (cf. Iversen 1918, Platzack and Holmberg 1989, Alexiadou and Fanselow 2001). At a first glance, this looks like the independent V-to-I movement found in Icelandic. However, this movement is distinct from the Icelandic type in various ways, most notably in that it cannot cross negation, only (certain) adverbs. This type of short non-V2 verb movement has been attested in Regional Northern Norwegian (ReNN), Northern Ostrobothnian (NOB), and Faroese (cf. Platzack and Holmberg 1989, Bentzen 2007a,b, Wiklund et al. 2007, Bentzen et al. 2009):

- (4) Æ vet koffer ho Hedda **kjøpe** ofte sko. (ReNN)
I know why she Hedda buys often shoes
 ‘I know why Hedda so often buys shoes.’

It has also been shown that the V2 requirement in main clauses is not absolute in all contexts. For example, many varieties of Norwegian allow optional non-V2 patterns in certain *wh*-questions (Vangsnes 2005, Westergaard and Vangsnes 2005, Westergaard 2009), (5):

- (5) a. Kor **bor** du? (Northern Norwegian)
where live you
- b. Kor du **bor**?
where you live
 ‘Where do you live?’

Another context where V2 appears optional is clauses introduced by the adverbial *kanskje* ‘maybe’:

- (6) a. Kanskje han **likte** boka. (Norwegian)
maybe he liked book.the
- b. Kanskje **likte** han boka. (Norwegian)
maybe liked he book.the
 ‘Maybe he liked the book.’

Finally, there is variation with respect to the position of the verb and the negation in infinitive and imperative clauses (see among others Thráinsson 1993, Vangsnes 2002 and Hulthén 1947, Jensen 2003, respectively):

- (7) a. Ikke **gå!** (Norwegian)
not go
- b. **Gå** ikke!
go not
 ‘Don’t go!’
- (8) a. Han prøvde å ikke synge falskt. (Nor.)
he tried to not sing out.of.tune
- b. Han prøvde ikke å synge falskt. (Nor.)
he tried not to sing out.of.tune
- c. Hann reyndi að syngja ekki falskt. (Ice.)
he tried not sing not out.of.tune
 ‘He tried not to sing out of tune.’

In the ScanDiaSyn project, all of these phenomena have been investigated in more detail through the questionnaires. For some of these phenomena we find variation across the national borders (across languages), and for other phenomena we find dialectal variation (sometimes cutting across national borders). For many of the phenomena, the variation reported in previous literature is confirmed in the NorDiaCorp judgment database. However, for some of the variation, the patterns do not come out very clear, or show a somewhat different distribution than what has previously been noted.

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Web sites:

- Nordic Atlas of Language Structures (NALS) Journal: <http://www.tekstlab.uio.no/nals>
- Nordic Dialect Corpus: <http://www.tekstlab.uio.no/nota/scandiasyn/index.html>
- Nordic Syntax Database: <http://www.tekstlab.uio.no/nota/scandiasyn/index.html>