

## The syntax prosody relation in Icelandic: Focus on V3

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The aim of this paper is two-fold. We will 1) provide a survey of findings with respect to the syntax-prosody interface in Icelandic, and we will 2) approach a phenomenon understudied in this respect: V3 syntax.

### Ad 1)

It is well known that there is a relationship between syntactic structure on the one hand and prosodic realization on the other. This has been documented and approached theoretically for many languages, including Icelandic. For Icelandic, prosodic effects on word order have been described e.g. for Pronominal Object Shift (Pronominal OS), an obligatory movement where unstressed pronominal objects cannot appear in situ following sentence adverbs (Thráinsson 2007:32). Indriðadóttir (2023) described prosodic heaviness, measured by stress at the phrase level in Heavy NP Shift, where short NPs which carry the nuclear stress in the sentence can appear at the end of a sentence following a stress-free PP with a pronominal complement. Ingason (2011, 2015:247–252) studied the effects of weight measured by prosodic complexity (the number of lexical stresses it contains) on relative clause extraposition. Sigurðardóttir (2019) described prosodic breaks in V3 constructions that involve a temporal central adverbial. Dehé studied the impact of syntactic and prosodic boundaries of different hierarchical levels on phonological rule application, specifically word-word-final vowel deletion (Dehé 2008) and devoicing of word-final /l/ (Dehé 2014). At the prosody-meaning interface, Dehé and Braun (2020) and Dehé and Wochner (2024) described the prosody of rhetorical vs. information-seeking questions.

### Ad 2)

Against this background, we aim to study the relationship between syntax and prosody for V3 in Icelandic. While Icelandic is a V2 language (Thráinsson 2007:17-31), it also allows for V3 structures with otherwise declarative syntax (Angantýsson, Nowenstein and Þráinsson 2021 for a recent overview and references). Observed V3 constructions include those with non-initial subject (e.g., in left dislocation, contrastive dislocation, etc., see (1), from Angantýsson, Nowenstein & Þráinsson 2021: 21), as well as subject-initial constructions with adverbs of a certain type in second position (see (2), from Angantýsson, Nowenstein & Þráinsson 2021: 23).

#### (1) Non-subject initial V3:

- a. Þessi bók, ég **keypti** hana í Noregi. (left dislocation)  
this book.NOM I bought it.ACC in Norway  
'This book, I bought it in Norway.'
- b. Þessa bók, hana **keypti** ég í Noregi. (contrastive dislocation)  
this book.ACC it.ACC bought I in Norway  
'This book, I bought it in Norway.'

#### (2) Subject-initial V3

- a. Ég bara **keypti** bókina.  
I just bought book-the  
'I just bought the book.'
- b. Hann einfaldlega **kann** ekkert.  
he simply knows nothing  
'He simply doesn't know anything.'

Among adverbs that occur between subject and verb is *líka* ('also'; Jónsdóttir 2021), see (3-4). In (4), the semantic reading is explanatory.

- (3) a. Við ætlum líka að fara til Spánar í sumar.  
We plan also to go to Spain in summer  
"We are also going to Spain this summer."  
b. Við líka ætlum að fara til Spánar í sumar.  
We also plan to go to Spain in summer  
"We also are going to Spain this summer."
- (4) A: Komið þið með okkur til Ítalíu í vor? Are you coming with us to Italy this spring?  
B: Nei, við erum upptekin og við líka ætlum að fara til Spánar í sumar.  
no, we are busy and we also plan to go to Spain in summer  
"No, we are busy and also, we are going to Spain this summer."

While not very wide-spread, this construction is accepted by speakers across different age groups (Jónsdóttir 2021).

Regarding prosody, *líka* is non-prominent in (3) and (4), but examples which allow both prosodic prominence associated with *líka* and non-explanatory semantic meaning have been attested, see (5).

- (5) A: Við ætlum að fara til Spánar í sumar.  
We plan to go to Spain in summer.  
"We are going to Spain this summer."  
B: Í alvöru? Við líka ætlum að fara til Spánar í sumar!  
in reality we also plan to go to Spain in summer  
"Really? We too are going to Spain this summer!"

Given the evidence for the role of prosody in non-canonical syntax (for Icelandic as well as other languages), we will further investigate the role of prosody in Icelandic V3 structures. Angantýsson, Nowenstein and Þráinsson (2021) use children's lyrics to demonstrate that the V2 constraint on Icelandic declarative syntax may be "overridden by the demands of metrics" (p. 38). We will pursue this thought further and investigate prosodic characteristics of acceptable V3 constructions in Modern Icelandic, both in perception and production; see our hypotheses in (6).

- (6) Hypotheses (H)  
**H1:** V3 syntax in Icelandic will be prosodically marked, i.e., prosodically deviant from canonical V2 structures.  
**H1a:** In production, speakers will use prosody to mark exceptional syntax.  
**H1b:** Listeners will use prosodic marking, i.e., V3 sentences will be more acceptable with V3 prosody than with default prosody.  
**H2:** Phonetic correlates include pitch (f0) variation and syllable duration to indicate stress positions.

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