

The Syntax of the Imperative in Old Scandinavian

1. Introduction

As is well known, the syntactic distribution of imperative verbs is heavily constrained in many languages. In the Modern Scandinavian languages as in many others, imperative verbs must always stand in the initial position, but cannot follow the subject. In modern Icelandic, the second person pronoun *þú* is usually cliticized onto the verb. This is shown in (1) on the handout:

- | | | |
|--------|--|---|
| (1) a. | Far þú/Farðu heim!
go-you home | *Þú far heim!
you go home |
| b. | Ver þú/Vertu rólegur!
be-you calm | *Þú ver rólegur!
you be calm |
| c. | Seg þú/Segðu henni ekki frá þessu!
tell-you her not from this
`Don't tell her about this!' | *Þú seg henni ekki frá þessu!
you tell her not from this |

The imperative is also impossible in subordinate clauses in the Modern Scandinavian languages, as shown by the Icelandic examples in (2) on the handout:

- | | |
|--------|--|
| (2) a. | *Gerðu svo vel að hafðu/þú haf þig hægan!
do-you so well that have you/you have you quiet
`Please be quiet!' |
| b. | *Ég bið þig að vertu/þú ver kyrr!
I ask you that be you/you be staying |

As a matter of fact, it has often been claimed that imperatives are universally excluded from subordinate clauses. This is for instance the position taken in Platzack's and Rosengren's (1997) recent paper on imperatives; they claim that the alleged subordinate imperatives that have been mentioned in the linguistic literature "are either quotations or belong to some other (e.g. optative) type of verbal paradigm".

The facts described in (1) and (2) hold without exception for the modern Scandinavian languages. In Old Scandinavian, however, there are several sentences where a verb in the imperative stands in the second position in its clause; and Old Scandinavian also exhibits a number of subordinate clauses which nevertheless have a verb in the imperative. The main purpose of this talk is to draw attention to these sentences, and to speculate on the changes in the syntactic position of imperative verbs that have occurred from Old to Modern Icelandic.

I will only use examples where the imperative is in the second person singular. The reason is that other forms of the imperative, that is, first and second person plural, are morphologically indistinguishable from the first and second person indicative and subjunctive forms, respectively. The indicative forms would therefore have to be sorted out on semantic or syntactic grounds. As the semantic differences between imperatives and other means of giving commands are often very vague, I do not want to refer to semantics here; and since I am arguing for a change in the syntactic position of imperative verbs, it would be very controversial to rely on syntactic arguments in this respect. This leaves us with the morphology, which is indecisive.

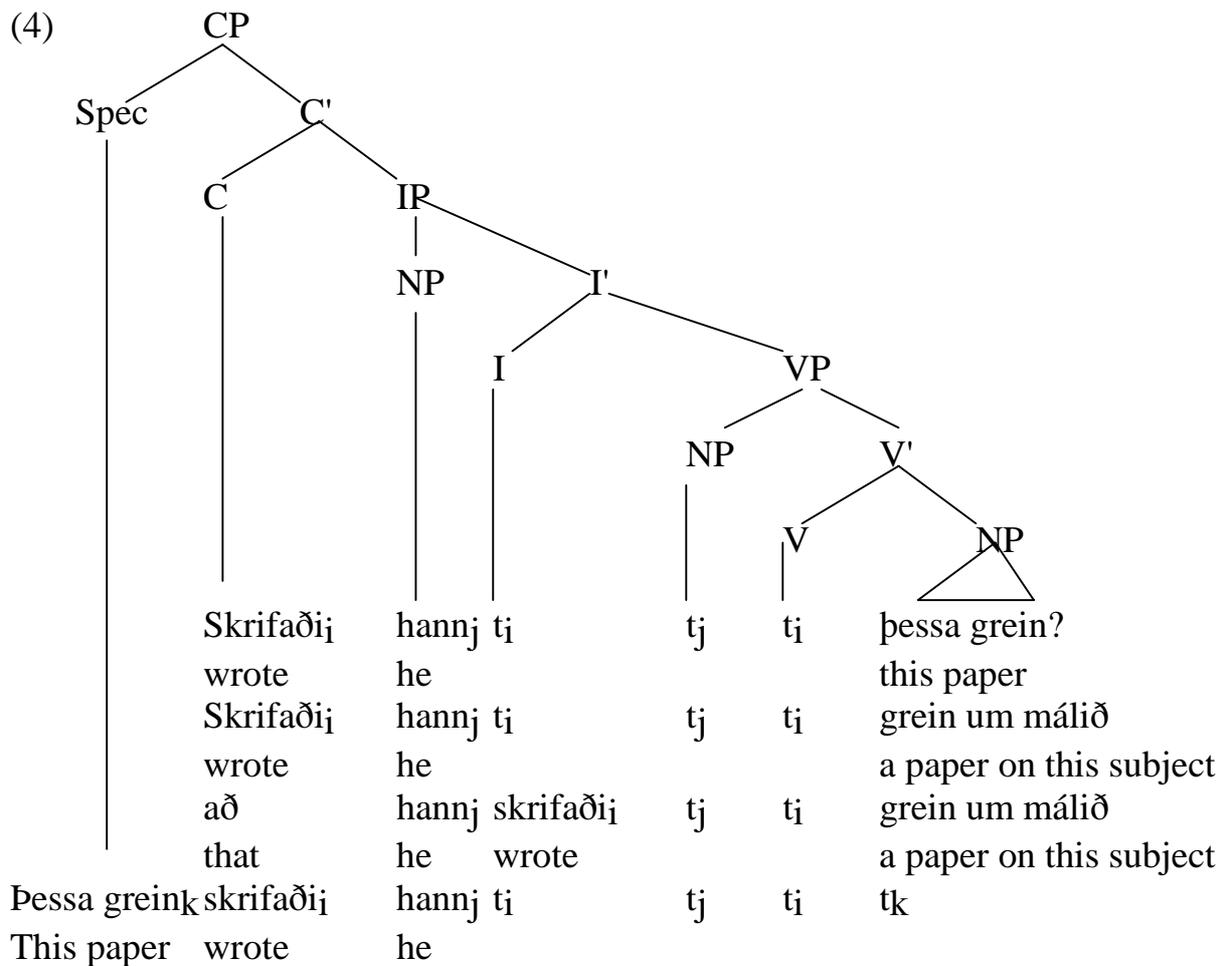
Therefore, I think it is safest to leave out the plural forms. The singular forms are by far the most common, anyway; and they are always morphologically distinct from other forms, except in one conjugation class of weak verbs. This class is admittedly the largest class of weak verbs in Modern Icelandic, but its members were much fewer in Old Icelandic, and besides, none of the most frequent verbs belong to that class. Therefore, the identification of the second person singular imperative usually does not present any problems.

2. The position of imperative verbs in Modern Icelandic

Let us first take a look at the structural position of imperative verbs in Modern Icelandic. Discussions of this are almost nonexistent in the literature, but *a priori* it seems rather likely that imperative sentences have a structure similar to other types of sentences that begin with the verb, that is, *yes/no*-questions and narrative inversion:

- (3) a. Skrifaðir þú þessa grein?
wrote you this paper
'Did you write this paper?'
- b. Skrifaði hann því grein um málið.
wrote he thus a paper on the subject
'Therefore, he wrote a paper on the subject.'

It is a fairly standard assumption that in these sentence types the finite verb is in C, and an operator of the relevant type is hosted in Spec-CP (cf., for instance, Halldór Ármann Sigurðsson 1989:150). Therefore, no lexical phrase can be moved to Spec-CP, and hence these sentence types will be verb-initial on the surface. This analysis also explains why these sentence types do not occur in subordinate clauses, where C is occupied by the complementizer so that the verb cannot move there. This is shown in (4) on the handout:



3. Imperative sentences in Old Icelandic

In Old Icelandic, imperative sentences behave in the majority of cases just like they would in Modern Icelandic. In my corpus, which comprises the Family Sagas, Sturlunga saga, Heimskringla, The Book of Settlement, and Grágás, I have, however, found approximately 100 examples of imperative sentences which would be impossible in Modern Icelandic. In most of them, the subject precedes the verb. A few such examples are shown in (5):

(5) a. Ræddi Ólafur um að húskarl skyldi inn ganga "en **eg** mun reka að þér

- nautin **en þú bitt** [but you bind] eftir." (*Laxdæla saga*, p. 1570)
- b. Hann kvað svo vera skyldu "mun **eg** vera heima," segir hann, "**en þú far** [but you go] til tíða ef þú vilt." (*Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar*, p. 1055)
- c. "En fyrir því að þú eggjar svo ákaflega þá skal **eg** til ráða **en þú fylg** [but you follow] mér drengilega og gakk næst mér ef þú ert eigi með öllu blauður." (*Gísla saga Súrssonar*, p. 895)
- d. "**Eg** mun hér vera að eigi komist maðurinn út ef hann er hér inni **en þú gakk** [but you go] til stofu." (*Gunnars þáttur Þiðrandabana*, p. 2140)
- e. "Þenna grip vil **eg** hafa til míns bús **en þú haf** [but you have] annað fé í móti." (*Þorsteins saga Síðu-Hallssonar*, p. 2063)
- f. Ekki þykir mér þetta svo illa sem eg læt og mun **eg** um klappa eftir. "**En þú lát** [but you act] sem þú vitir eigi." (*Íslendinga saga*, p. 247)
- g. Nú mun **eg** þetta allt handsala þér **en þú mæl** [but you speak] eftir þræla mína ... (*Eyrbyggja saga*, p. 575)
- h. "Hversu sem það er þá vil **eg** þetta verðkaupið **en þú ráð** [but you decide] hverja sæmd þú leggur henni." (*Svarfdæla saga*, p. 1813)
- i. "Nei," kvað hann Gellir, "heldur vil **eg** segja upp sættina **en þú sit** [but you sit] fyrir svörunum." (*Bandamanna saga*, p. 42)
- j. "En þó mun **eg** að styðja," sagði Þorgeir, "**en þú ver** [but you be] fyrir málinu." (*Ljósvetninga saga*, p. 1656)

Note that in all these examples, the imperative clause is initiated by the conjunction *en* 'but'. This is in accordance with Falk & Torp's claim in their *Dansk-norskens Syntax*:

- (6) Ved imperativ sættes i oldnorsk pronomenet foran kun naar det særlig fremhæves, og kun ved *en*: *en þú, Egill, háttu svá ferðum þínum*. (Falk & Torp 1900:289).

[In Old Norwegian, the pronoun only precedes the imperative verb when it bears special emphasis, and only after *en*.]

My research corroborates this claim. I have found around 30 examples in my corpus where the subject precedes an imperative verb after *en*, whereas examples where the verb immediately follows *en*, as it would have to do in Modern Icelandic, are very few. On the other hand, I have not found any cases where the subject follows an imperative verb in the beginning of a discourse, in nonconjoined sentences, or in sentences initiated by *og* 'and'. We will come to that later.

In Old Danish and Old Swedish, on the other hand, this word order also seems to be found in nonconjoined clauses. Thus, immediately after Falk and Torp's statement about Old Norse quoted above, we find the following claim:

- (7) I ældre dansk sættes subjektet oftere først: *thu kynd hannum [...]* (Falk &

Torp 1900:289).

[In Old Danish the subject is more often found in initial position ...]

For Old Swedish, we find the following description in Wessén's *Svensk språkhistoria*:

- (8) Särskilt utsättes subjektet, då det skall framhävas, och därför är tryckstarkt.
Ex.: Tw gör aff thenna, huat tu gither! Wessén (1965:121).
[The subject is especially fronted when it is emphasized ...]

But it is not only the subject that can precede an imperative verb in Old Icelandic. I have also found a number of sentences where adverbial phrases stand in front of the imperative verb, like in (9):

- (9) a. **Nú far þú** [now go you] heim og kom á bæ þann er heitir á Fáskrúðarbakka í miðju héraðinu. (*Vopnfirðinga saga*, p. 2002)
b. "**Þá bið þú** [then propose you] Guðríðar Högnadóttur til handa mér," segir Grímur, "ef þú vilt að eg sé hjá þér." (*Harðar saga og Hólmverja*, p. 1256)
c. Og **þá far þú** [then go you] aftur um Bolungarvöll og kom á Víðivöllu til fundar við sonu Hallsteins og bið þá hingað koma ef þeir vilja hefna föður síns. (*Droplaugarsona saga*, p. 357)
d. En **síðan far** [after that go] til sem þriflegast og ort drápu um konunginn. (*Óttars þáttur svarta*, p. 2205)
e. "**Síðan kom þú** [after that come] mínu máli sem framast máttu en að lyktum þá neitaðu konungdóminum einum." (*Haralds saga Sigurðarsonar*, p. 640)
f. **Síðan ríð þú** [after that ride you] í braut og ríð Laxárdalsheiði og svo til Holtavörðuheiðar því að þín mun eigi leitað til Hrutafjarðar ... (*Brennu-Njáls saga*, p. 134)
g. "En **þó gakk þú** [however go you] að finna konung áður en þú farir." (*Brennu-Njáls saga*, p. 129)
h. "Nú skaltu fara í friði fyrir mér hvert er þú vilt vetrarlangt en **að sumri far þú** [in the summer go you] út til Íslands því að þar mun þér auðið verða þín bein að bera." (*Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar*, p. 1017)

Such sentences are impossible in Modern Icelandic. In this respect, Icelandic differs from German, which freely allows objects and adverbials in front of an imperative verb, even though German only reluctantly allows the second person pronoun to precede imperative verbs (cf. Platzack & Rosengren 1997).

In spite of the sentences in (5) and (9) above, it would of course be possible to maintain the idea that imperative verbs always stand in C. The phrase that stands to the left of the verb could very well stand in Spec-CP, just as in an

ordinary declarative clause with a verb in the indicative, as mentioned above. However, this would get us into trouble with the imperative operator, which is also assumed to be placed in Spec-CP.

But we have not yet told the whole story. Surprisingly, imperative verbs in Old Icelandic could also occur in subordinate clauses, as pointed out for instance by Falk & Torp (1900) and Iversen (1973:147):

(10) En eiendommelighed er, at imperativ (ligesom i oldsaksisk, og i oldhøitysk ved "tuon") ogsaa kan forekomme i en med *at* indledet bisætning: *þat ræð ek þér, at þú bið Helga duga þér* (Falk & Torp 1900:192).

[It is peculiar that the imperative (like in Old Saxon, and in Old High German as regards *tuon*) also can occur in a subordinate clause that begins with *at* (*að*) ...]

The same goes for Old Swedish, as Wessén (1965) points out:

(11) Någon gång kan imperativ förekomma i bisats, i att-satser efter verb, som betyder 'bedja, bjuda, befalla'. Ex.: Tha sagdhe then ene: "Skip, jak byudhir thik widh Gudz ordh ... at thu kom hit oc föör oss ofwir watnit!" (ST). Jak bidhir thik, at thu, mildasta iomfru, bidh for mik oc hielp mik at faa j hymerike roo (ST) (Wessén 1965:144).

[Sometimes the imperative occurs in subordinate clauses, in *att*-clauses after verbs that mean 'ask, offer, order'.]

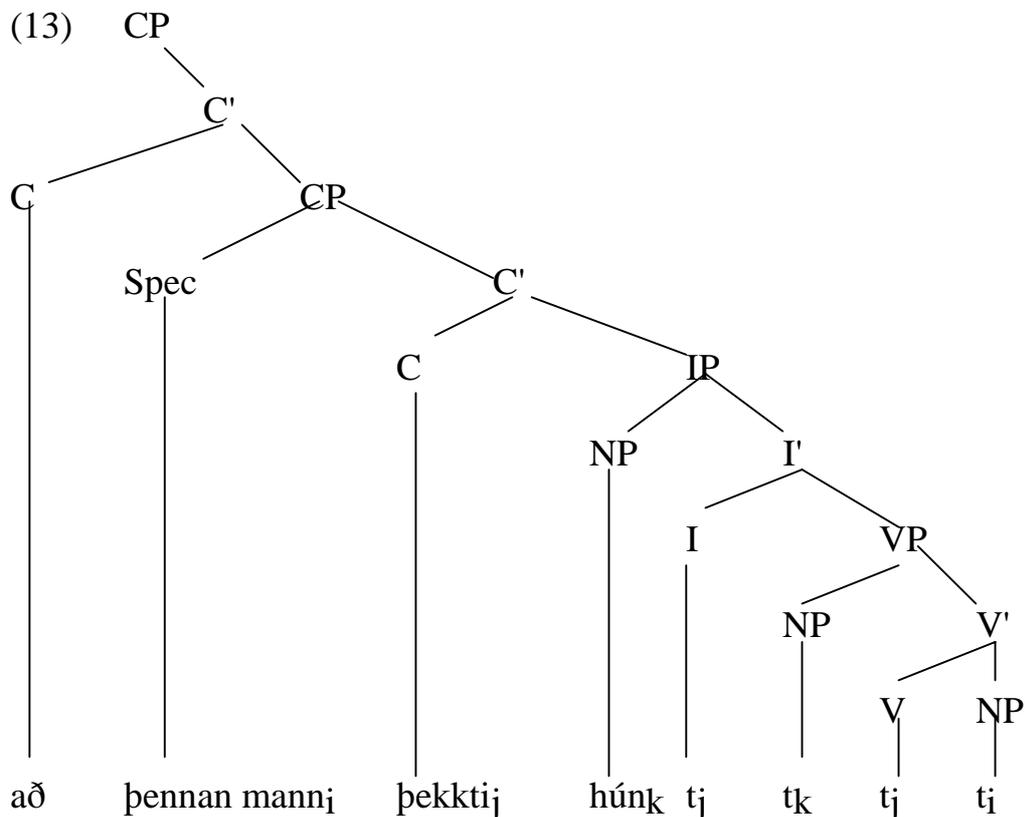
A few examples from Old Icelandic are shown in (12):

- (12)a. "Gerðu annaðhvort," sagði húskarl, "**að þú far** [that you go] á brott eða gakk inn og ver hér í nótt." (*Hænsna-Þóris saga*, p. 1428)
- b. "Það ráð mun eg þér kenna **að þú far** [that you go] eigi lengra en nú ertu kominn og ætla eg þetta vera heilræði." (*Guðmundar saga dýra*, p. 149)
- c. "Það mun eg þér ráða **að þú finn** [that you find] Helga Ásbjarnarson og skorir á hann að hann rétti þitt mál." (*Droplaugarsona saga*, p. 356)
- d. "Nú vil eg bjóða þér lög," segir Gunnlaugur, "**að þú gjalt** [that you pay] mér fé mitt eða gakk á hólmi við mig ella á þriggja náttu fresti." (*Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu*, p. 1176)
- e. "Þess bið eg þig frændi," segir Gyða, "**að þú lát** [that you let] hér eigi ræna og eigi gera hervirki en hafið héðan slíkt sem þér þykist þurfa í birgðum í heimuld." (*Þorgils saga skarða*, p. 604)
- f. Nú ger þú svo mannlega **að þú rek** [that you drive] þá brottu svo að við þörfnumst eigi allra góðra hluta ... (*Þorvalds þáttur víðförla*, p. 2326)
- g. "Eg vil eiga kaup við þig Auður," segir hann, "**að þú seg** [that you tell] mér til Gísla en eg mun gefa þér þrjú hundruð silfurs þau sem eg hefi tekið til höfuðs honum." (*Gísla saga Súrssonar*, p. 890)

- h. "Ger þú annaðhvort **að þú sel** [that you sell] þá fram ella munum vér brenna upp bæinn." (*Ljósvetninga saga*, p. 1689)
- i. Nú ger þú svo mannlega **að þú sit** [that you sit] heldur að eignum þínum hér. (*Ólafs saga helga*, p. 399)
- j. "Verða kann það," segir Arnkell, "en það vil eg við þig mæla, Þórarinn frændi, **að þú ver** [that you stay] með mér þar til er lýkur málum þessum á nokkurn hátt." (*Eyrbyggja saga*, p. 557)

It is essential to note that in subordinate clauses with an imperative verb, the Modern Icelandic main clause word order does not occur; that is, an imperative verb in a subordinate clause always follows the subject. This should be expected according to what we have said already. If verb-initial sentence types are derived by moving the verb into C, such movement should be impossible in subordinate clauses, since the C-position is occupied by the complementizer.

Admittedly, it might be possible to refer to the analysis that customarily has been used to explain that topicalization sometimes occurs in subordinate clauses. As is well known, subordinate topicalization ought not to exist, since topicalized phrases are assumed to land to the left of C. If the complementizer stands in C, this means that the topicalized phrase should precede it, which does not happen, of course. To account for subordinate topicalization people have usually assumed the so-called CP recursion, where the CP is copied, and the finite verb sits in the lower C-position, whereas the complementizer sits in the upper C-position, as shown in (13):



that this man knew she

Technically, it would be possible to derive sentences with imperative verbs to the left of the subject in this manner. However, it is not very likely that this is the correct solution. First, subordinate topicalization is heavily constrained, and it is not obvious that the same constraints apply here. Second, it appears to be only the subject that can stand to the left of the imperative verb in a subordinate clause - not adverbial phrases like in main clauses. This implies that the verb in these sentences is situated in the same place as in other finite clauses. Third, this would not explain the relation between main and subordinate clauses, to which I will now turn.

We have seen that there are important differences between Old and Modern Icelandic imperative sentences, both with respect to main and subordinate clauses. In main clauses, verb second imperatives have disappeared, whereas imperatives have disappeared altogether from subordinate clauses. It is obviously tempting to try to relate these changes.

The most obvious relation between main and subordinate clauses in this respect, and also the most natural description of the changes that have occurred from Old to Modern Icelandic, is to claim that imperative verbs now **must** stand in C, whereas they did not necessarily have to do so in Old Icelandic. This explains that no phrase can any longer precede an imperative verb in main clauses; the C-position is to the left of the subject position, as the tree diagrams above show.

This also explains that subordinate imperatives no longer exist; the C-position is occupied in subordinate clauses. If CP recursion were possible in imperative clauses, the verb's demand for the C-position could have been fulfilled. Then we would have two C-slots, as shown in (9), and the verb could stand in the lower one and the complementizer in the upper one. But if this were the case, we would not expect any relationship between the disappearance of main clauses with imperative verbs in second position, and the disappearance of subordinate imperatives. The fact that subordinate clauses with imperative verbs in initial position do not exist, neither in Old nor in Modern Icelandic, strongly suggests that CP recursion never was an option in imperative clauses.

4. What has changed?

From what I have said already, I conclude that only one change has occurred, as regards the structural position of imperative verbs; that is, that they now must stand in C, whereas they didn't have to do so in Old Icelandic. If we say that the explanation for the modern word order pattern is the existence of an abstract imperative operator in Spec-CP, then it is clear that this explanation will have to be somehow revised to accommodate the situation in Old Icelandic. We seem to

be faced with two possibilities. One is to assume that no such imperative operator existed in Old Icelandic, or at least that it was not obligatory. The other possibility is to assume that the imperative operator did in fact exist, but its function was somehow different from what it is in the modern language.

If we assume that the imperative operator was always present in Spec-CP in imperative clauses, we have to say that in Old Icelandic it did not necessarily attract the verb, as it must do in Modern Icelandic. This might be a promising account, according to recent trends in syntactic theory; we might for instance assume that the optionality we find in imperative clause word order could stem from varying strength of the relevant morphosyntactic and/or semantic features, either on the verb or on the imperative operator. The features may have been either weak or strong, and if they were strong the verb would have to move in the syntax, whereas if the features were weak the verb was allowed to stay for a while but could be moved to C at LF. This would of course be in line with many recent analyses of optionality and changes in word order.

However, the existence of imperative sentences with topicalization would be troublesome for this analysis. In those sentences, Spec-CP is occupied, and it is not clear where one would accommodate the imperative operator. It must be mentioned, however, that most of these sentences, 25 out of 36, begin with the adverb *nú* 'now', which usually seems to be semantically empty; i.e., it does not seem to have any temporal reference. This is shown in (14):

- (14)a. "**Nú bú þú** [now prepare you] til málið en eg mun við taka í sumar á þingi." (*Vatnsdæla saga*, p. 1899)
- b. "**Nú haf þú** [now have you] ráð mitt um þetta og ver hér eigi lengur en eg legg ráð til." (*Þorsteins saga hvíta*, p. 2059)
- c. "**Nú lát** [now let] hann orna sér og fær hann síðan til sels vors." (*Ljósvetninga saga*, p. 1686)
- d. "**Nú tak þú** [now take you] aftur gleði þína hæfilega." (*Ljósvetninga saga*, p. 1668)
- e. "**Nú ver** [now be] ef þú vilt og ábyrgst þig sjálfur hvað sem í kann að gerast." (*Sneglu-Halla þáttur*, p. 2218)

We might perhaps say that *nú* is not an ordinary adverb in these sentences, but rather a phonologization of the imperative operator. Halldór Ármann Sigurðsson (1989) comes close to saying exactly this in connection with narrative inversion:

- (15) Sentences of this sort normally have the same reading as corresponding sentences with a 'consequence-adverb' or a 'continuity-adverb' in [Spec, CP], most typically **því** 'thus', **þá** 'then', **nú** 'now' (these adverbs are often 'adverbial dummies' of a sort). Thus, it is tempting to assume that NI involves a null-operator in [Spec, CP]. If that is correct, the operator 'binds'

or takes scope over the whole sentence, like overt adverbial operators in [Spec, CP] (Halldór Ármann Sigurðsson 1989:298).

However, there are still a few sentences where we could hardly count the initial phrase as an imperative operator, such as most of the examples in (7) above.

In this connection, I want to speculate a bit on the status and function of operators in the theoretical framework. It seems to me that people sometimes refer rather loosely to operators, without explaining in any detail what they mean. However, it is clear that the function of operators has to do with the logical form of sentences; that is, how we interpret the sentences we come across. Operators are some kind of semantic entities that affect our interpretation of sentences; thus, a question operator forces us to interpret its clause as a question, a narrative operator forces us to interpret its clause as a continuation of the preceding discourse, etc.

But questions and sentences with narrative inversion differ from imperative sentences in one important feature. Imperative sentences carry a morphological mark, the imperative, that the other types do not have. There is no question mood or a narrative mood in the Icelandic conjugational system, even though such moods are known to exist in certain languages. Therefore, one might claim that we do not need any imperative operator in order to interpret imperative sentences as commands, because the form of the verb will ensure such an interpretation. In this connection, we can point out that commands can of course be given by many other means, as shown in (16)-(17):

- (16)a. Vertu rólegur!
be-you calm
- b. Þú skalt vera rólegur!
you shall be calm
- c. Þú átt að vera rólegur!
you ought to be calm
- (17)a. Gerðu þetta ekki!
do-you this not
- b. Þú mátt ekki gera þetta!
you may not do this
- c. Ekki gera þetta!
not do (inf.) this

We may also note that commands that are given by other means than by using

the imperative can be found in subordinate clauses, both in Old and Modern Icelandic, like (18)-(19) show:

- (18)a. "Eg mun gifta þér dóttur mína með þeim skilmála **að þú skalt fara** [that you shall go] áður út til Íslands og drep áður Þorgrím þrúða og fær mér höfuð hans." (*Víglundar saga*, p. 1968)
- b. "Það skal upphaf sættar okkarrar Ásbjörn **að þú skalt ganga** [that you shall enter] undir landslög þau að sá maður er drepur þjónustumann konungs þá skal hann taka undir þá þjónustu ef konungur vill." (*Ólafs saga helga*, p. 398)
- (19)a. Ég segi að þú mátt ekki gera þetta!
I say that you may not do this
- b. Ég segi að þú skalt samt gera þetta!
I say that you shall anyhow do this

This shows that from the semantic point of view, nothing speaks against the possibility of interpreting subordinate clauses as commands. Hence, the absence of the imperative in subordinate clauses in Modern Icelandic must have a syntactic explanation, but cannot be explained by referring to some semantic principles.

In view of this, I think the most feasible possibility is to assume that the imperative operator was optional in imperative sentences in Old Icelandic. Therefore, imperative was possible in subordinate clauses, because nothing attracted the verb to the C-position; and therefore, Old Icelandic could have main clauses with adverbial phrases to the left of the verb, because there was no imperative operator occupying Spec-CP.

I can also point out that in Modern Icelandic, the imperative is impossible in main clauses starting with the conjunction *enda*, even though the verb always precedes the subject in *enda*-clauses. In Old Icelandic, on the other hand, we find examples where a verb in the imperative follows *enda*:

- (20)a. "En það er til bóta að þú munt slíkan á baugi eiga brátt **enda tak þú** nú öxi þína er hér hefir verið." (*Brennu-Njáls saga*, p. 169)
- b. "**Enda far** nú vel og heil, dóttir mín." (*Eiríks saga rauða*, p. 524)
- c. Fór Bergur þá lútari, bikkjan, er eg sló hann svo að hann féll við, **enda kom þú** nú til hólmostefnunnar ef þú hefir heldur manns hug en merar. (*Vatnsdæla saga*, p. 1884)

This might suggest that Halldór Ármann Sigurðsson's (1994) explanation of the word order in *enda*-clauses is on the right track. According to his explanation, *enda* stands in Spec-CP. If it is so, an imperative operator cannot stand there,

and if we further assume that an imperative operator is a prerequisite for having an imperative verb in Modern Icelandic, then we can explain that imperatives and *enda* do not go together. If an imperative operator was not an absolute necessity in imperative sentences in Old Icelandic, however, then it is not surprising that *enda* can accompany imperative verbs there.

But what does it mean to claim that the imperative operator was optional? Does it mean that it was randomly distributed, as one could expect if the position of imperative verbs was purely governed by syntactic factors. When we look at the different types of main clauses in Old Icelandic, it appears that the distribution is not at all random. As mentioned above, all the Old Icelandic examples I have found where the subject precedes an imperative verb begin with the conjunction *en*. No such examples can be found in nonconjoined sentences, nor after *og*.

In this connection it is important to bear in mind that in Old Icelandic narrative inversion is very frequent both in nonconjoined sentences and after *og*. After *en*, on the other hand, narrative inversion is very rare in Old Icelandic, and excluded in Modern Icelandic. This is evident from the comprehensive countings of Halldór Ármann Sigurðsson (1994):

(21) Order	<i>Nonconjoined</i> (1st and 2nd pers. pron.)	<i>After og</i> (all NPs)	<i>After en</i> (all NPs)
VS	96	699	2
SV	109	84	426

Sigurðsson assumed that this difference would have semantic or pragmatic explanations, related to the fact that after *en* we usually get something unexpected or surprising. Thus, it is interesting to see that we get the same pattern in imperative sentences in Old Icelandic. In those sentences, the verb must stand in initial position in nonconjoined sentences and after *og*, whereas it can follow the subject in sentences beginning with *en*. Actually, the examples where the subject follows the verb in *en*-sentences are very few. This difference can be illustrated like in (22):

(22)	<i>Declarative clauses</i>	<i>Imperative clauses</i>
Nonconjoined	Optional (V1/V2)	Fixed (V1)
After <i>og</i>	Optional (V1/V2)	Fixed (V1)
After <i>en</i>	Fixed (V2)	Optional (V1/V2)

If the word order in imperative sentences were an independent syntactic phenomenon, conditioned by the presence of an imperative operator in Spec-CP but unrelated to other word order factors, we would expect that the examples of subject-initial imperative sentences would be evenly distributed among these

three types of main clauses. Evidently, that is not the case; the *en*-sentences have a special position here, just as they have in the declarative sentences. Therefore, the most natural interpretation of these facts is that the word order in imperative sentences did, to some extent at least, obey the same principles as the word order in declarative clauses; that is, it was conditioned in part by some semantic or pragmatic factors.

Thus, the change in the syntactic position of imperative verbs from Old to Modern Icelandic must be interpreted as a case of grammaticalization; that is, the position of imperative verbs is no longer dependent on syntactic or pragmatic factors in any way, but instead governed by purely syntactic factors. But I am not claiming that I know exactly how to interpret the change in any detail, as I have said above. I just want to point out that this can easily be connected to ideas that have been put forward regarding other syntactic changes in Icelandic.

It has often been claimed that the syntactic nature of Icelandic has changed in the course of the last seven centuries or so; that Old Icelandic has been "discourse-oriented", "non-configurational", or something like that, whereas Modern Icelandic is "sentence-oriented", "configurational", etc. Such assumptions or speculations can for instance be found in a paper by Höskuldur Thráinsson and Þóra Björk Hjartardóttir (1986), in Hjartardóttir's MA-thesis (1993), in a paper by Halldór Ármann Sigurðsson (1993) in *Lingua*, in Jan Terje Faarlund's (1990) book *Syntactic Change*, etc.

I have recently shown, in a paper in *NOWELE* (Rögnvaldsson 1995), that the claim that Old Icelandic was non-configurational cannot be maintained. However, there are in my view clear indications that purely syntactic factors play a bigger role in the syntax of Modern Icelandic than they did in Old Icelandic syntax, at the expense of semantic or pragmatic factors.

5. Conclusion

Regardless of the explanation we have for the syntactic position of imperative verbs in Icelandic, one thing is clear: It has changed from Old to Modern Icelandic. I have not been able to find the exact date of the change; however, I have found several examples of subject-initial imperative sentences, both main and subordinate, in the first Icelandic translation of the New Testament, from 1540. A few of them are shown in (23) and (24):

- (23)a. Lát þá dauðu grafa sína hinu dauðu, **en þú gakk** [but you go] og boða Guðs ríki.
b. **En þú fylg** [but you follow] þessum pistli eftir sinni skikkan og stunda Jesúm Krist og hans evangelia ...
c. **En þú vert** [but you be] herkinn sem góður kappi Jesú Kristi.

- d. **En þú tala** [but you speak] svo sem það hæfir heilsusamlegum lærdómi.
- (24)a. Því sjá nú til **að þú haga** [that you behave] þér svo í þessum nýja testamenta bókum að þú kunnir þær að lesa á þennan hátt.
- b. Sjá nú til **að þú seg** [that you tell] það öngum, heldur far þú og sýn þig prestahöfðingjanum og fórna fyrir þinni hreinsun sem Móses bauð til vitnisbyrðar yfir þá.
- c. Þá bið eg þig faðir **að þú send** [that you send] hann í míns föðurs hús því að eg hefi fimm bræður að hann gefi þeim vitneskju af svo að eigi komi þeir í þennan kvalastað.
- d. Sjá til **að þú gjör** [that you do] það ei.

As can be seen, these examples are from both main and subordinate clauses; and they are the latest uncontroversial examples I have found of both constructions. It must be emphasized, however, that my corpus from the 17th and 18th centuries is far from being large enough for any clear conclusions to be drawn from it. I only want to point out that so far, nothing I have found indicates that there was any difference in time between the disappearance of these two imperative constructions. This fact gives support to the claim that there is only one change involved, not two, one in main clauses and the other in subordinate clauses.

At some time, after the middle of the 16th century, imperative verbs ceased to be able to stand in other position than the initial one, and accordingly, imperatives disappeared completely from subordinate clauses. It is not quite clear how to explain this change, but it appears to be natural to look at it in connection with various other changes which have tended to strengthen the effects of formal syntactic features on the syntactic structure of Icelandic, at the expense of semantic and functional factors.

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