

Reflexives in Older Icelandic

0. Introduction

In a recent handbook of Old Icelandic/Old Norse syntax, *The Syntax of Old Norse* by Jan Terje Faarlund (2004), the chapter on reflexive binding amounts to only five pages out of 300 and is thus by far the shortest chapter in the book. Nygaard's classic book *Norrøn Syntax* (1905) has also only five pages on reflexivization out of almost 400. One might conclude from this that there is nothing interesting to be said about this subject, and that may be true, of course; but it might also indicate that more needs to be said. Anyway, I will try to give an overview of reflexives and reflexivization in Old(er) Icelandic.

I will show that both dative and accusative objects can be antecedents of reflexives, and accusative antecedents are more frequent than one could infer from the handbooks. I will also argue against the claim that there is a difference between the binding conditions for the reflexive pronoun *sig* and the reflexive possessive *sinn*. I will also point out that the complex reflexive *sjálfan sig* which is not mentioned in standard handbooks occurs in Old Icelandic and appears to obey the same binding conditions as it does in Modern Icelandic.

It is usually assumed that Long Distance Reflexivization (LDR) is very rare in Old Icelandic, and it has even been doubted that it existed at all. I will show that LDR is not as rare or exceptional as previous descriptions indicate, and that it is frequent in texts from the 16th century onwards. Furthermore, I will show that up to the late 19th century at least, it doesn't seem to be limited to subjunctive clauses, as it is in Modern Icelandic – for most speakers at least.

Let us first review the basic facts of Modern Icelandic reflexivization (cf., for instance, Höskuldur Thráinsson 2005:520-523; 2007:461-474). (1a-c) show simple sentences with antecedents of reflexive in subject position (1a), object position (1b) and as an object of a preposition (1c). (1d-e) show reflexivization possibilities in infinitival clauses, both clauses with PRO in subject position (1d) and accusative with infinitive clauses (1e). Finally, (1f-g) show Long Distance Reflexivization, where a reflexive in a finite subordinate clause is bound by a superordinate subject; the subordinate clause is in the subjunctive in (1f) and in the indicative in (1g).

- (1) a. Jón_i rakaði sig_i/sjálfan sig_i/*hann_i
John shaved REFL/self REFL/him
'John shaved himself'
- b. Sveinn_j rétti Jóni_i fötin sín_{i/j}/hans_{i/*j}
Sveinn handed John clothes REFL/his
'Sveinn handed John his clothes'
- c. Sveinn_i talaði við Guðmund_j um áform sín_{i/*j}/hans_{*i/j}
Sveinn talked to Guðmundur about plans REFL/his
'Sveinn talked to Guðmundur about his plans'
- d. Sveinn_i skipaði Jóni_j að PRO_j raka sig_{i/j}/sjálfan sig_{*i/j}/*hann_{i/j}
Sveinn ordered John to shave REFL/self REFL/him
'Sveinn ordered John to shave himself/him'

- e. Sveinn_i segir Jón_j raka sig_{i/j}/sjálfan sig_{*i/j}/*hann_{i/j} daglega
Sveinn says John shave REFL/self REFL/him daily
‘Sveinn says that John shaves him/himself daily’
- f. Jón_i segir Svein_j að Guðmundur_k raki sig_{i/*j/k}/hann_{i/j/*k} daglega
John tells Sveinn that Guðmundur shaves REFL/him/daily
‘John tells Sveinn that Guðmundur shaves (him) daily’
- g. Jón_i veit að Guðmundur_j verður að raka sig_{*i/j}/hann_{i/*j} daglega
John knows that Guðmundur must shave REFL/him daily
‘John knows that Guðmundur must shave (him) daily’

1. Reflexivization in simple sentences in Old Icelandic

1.1 Reflexives bound by subjects in simple sentences

In an overwhelming majority of cases, the reflexive pronoun *sig* (*sik*) stands as an object of a verb or a preposition, and is bound by the subject of its clause. A few examples are shown in (2):

- (2) a. Hann_i lagði undir sig_i Suðreyjar og gerðist höfðingi yfir. (*Eyrbyggja saga*, p. 536)
he laid under REFL Hebrides and became chieftain over
‘He conquered the Hebrides and became a chieftain over the islands’
- b. Þangbrandur_i sagði Ólafi konungi frá meingerðum Íslendinga við sig_i (*Brennu-Njáls saga*, p. 251)
Thangbrand told Olaf king from offences Icelanders with REFL
‘Thangbrand told king Olaf about the offences that Icelanders had done to him’
- c. Þeir_i tóku sér_i allir alvæpni. (*Egils saga*, p. 424)
they took REFL all complete arms
‘They all got fully armed’
- d. Egill_i brá þá knífi sínum_i og stakk í lófa sér_i. (*Egils saga*, p. 419)
Egil brandished then knife REFL and stuck it in palm REFL
‘Then Egil brandished his knife and stuck it in his palm’
- e. En Þórdísi bauð hann_i til sín_i. (*Íslendinga saga*, p. 348)
but Thordis invited he to REFL
‘But he invited Thordis home’

The distribution of the reflexive possessive *sinn* ‘his’ is the same, except that it is usually not an object of a verb or a preposition by itself, but rather a part of the object - an attribute of the head noun, as shown in (3):

- (3) a. Grettir_i fann seinast sinn_i hest. (*Grettis saga*, p. 972)
Grettir found latest REFL horse
‘Grettir was the last one to find his horse’
- b. Oddur_i var og vinsæll af sínum_i félögum. (*Bandamanna saga*, p. 26)
Odd was also popular by REFL companions
‘Odd was popular among his companions’
- c. Hann_i hóf ferð sína_i um veturinn yfir heiði norður að hitta Þuríði. (*Eyrbyggja saga*, p. 587)
he began journey REFL in the winter over heath north to meet Thurid
‘He began his journey in the winter over the heath towards north to meet Thurid’

- d. Þá saknaði Ingimundur_i prestur bókakistu sinnar_i (*Prestssaga Guðmundar Arasonar*, p. 112)
then lost Ingimund priest bookbox REFL
'Then Ingimund the priest lost his bookbox'
- e. Þá kom Einar_i í garðinn með sitt_i lið. (*Haralds saga Sigurðarsonar*, p. 639)
then came Einar in the yard with REFL troops
'Then Einar entered the yard with his men'

1.2 Reflexive bound by objects in simple sentences

Reflexive pronouns in Old Icelandic can also be bound by oblique phrases, especially direct and indirect objects, just as in Modern Icelandic (and Modern Norwegian, cf. Lødrup 2007). This is especially common with the verb *þakka* 'thank'. I have found more than 40 examples with that verb alone in the Old Icelandic corpus; a few of them are shown in (4a-c). But dative objects of other verbs can also occasionally bind reflexives, as seen in (4d-f):

- (4) a. Egill þakkaði konungi_i orð sín_i (*Egils saga*, p. 440)
Egil thanked the king words REFL
'Egil thanked the king for his words'
- b. Gunnar þakkaði Njáli_i tillögur sínar_i. (*Brennu-Njáls saga*, p. 205)
Gunnar thanked Njal advice REFL
'Gunnar thanked Njal for his advice'
- c. Konungur þakkaði honum_i skemmtan sína_i. (*Ólafs saga helga*, p. 517)
the king thanked him entertainment REFL
'The king thanked him for his entertainment'
- d. Þetta kveld hið sama hafði smalamaður Hróðnýjar fundið Höskuld dauðan og fór heim og sagði Hróðnýju_i víg sonar síns_i. (*Brennu-Njáls saga*, p. 243)
this evening the same had Hrodny's shepherd found Hoskuld dead and went home and told Hrodny killing son's REFL
'This very night, Hrodny's shepherd had found Hoskuld dead and went home and told Hrodny about the killing of her son'
- e. Þá fór Kári inn til Hlaða á fund jarls og færði honum_i skatta sína_i. (*Brennu-Njáls saga*, p. 231)
then went Kari in to Hladir on meeting earl's and brought him taxes REFL
'Then Kari went to Hladir to meet the earl and brought him his taxes'
- f. Nú tek eg þenna kost, hvað vill hann þá bjóða [Haraldi konungi Sigurðarsyni]_i fyrir sitt_i starf? (*Haralds saga Sigurðarsonar*, p. 682)
now take I this option what will he then offer Harald king Sigurdarson for REFL work
'Now if I take this option, what will he then offer king Harald Sigurdarson for his work?'

In all of Nygaard's examples of object bound reflexives, the object is in the dative. Some of these examples involve dative experiencers with the verb *þykja* 'seem', which should presumably be classified as subjects rather than objects; cf. Eiríkur Rögnvaldsson (1996) and below. Faarlund (2004:283) mentions that accusative objects can also bind reflexives, but claims that such examples "are rare and contrary to the general rule". However, I have found a number of such examples, which do not seem to be particularly rare; see (5):

- (5) a. ... og minnti þá_i á orð sín_i (*Magnúss saga góða*, p. 577)
and reminded them on words REFL
'and reminded them of their words'
- b. Þá bauð Ketill að flytja hana_i til frænda sinna_i. (*Landnámabók*, p. 295)
then offered Ketil to move her to relatives REFL
'Then Ketil offered to take her to her relatives'
- c. ... en þekkti eg Víglund_i af Helgu systur sinni_i, er eg sá hann. (*Víglundar saga*, p. 1978)
but recognized I Viglund from Helga sister REFL when I saw him
'but I recognized Viglund from his sister Helga when I saw him'
- d. ... konungur ... frétti hann_i að móðurætt sinni_i. (*Víglundar saga*, p. 1959)
king inquired him of mother's kin REFL
'the king inquired him about his mother's kin'
- e. ... hann ... spurði hann_i að ferðum sínum_i. (*Þorleifs þáttur jarlaskálds*, p. 2272)
he asked him about travels REFL
'he asked him about his travels'
- f. ... Hárekur talaði við Þorstein og spurði hann_i af sínum_i afreksverkum. (*Þorsteins þáttur uxafóts*, p. 2315)
Harek talked to Thorstein and asked him of REFL deeds
'Harek talked to Thorstein and asked him about his deeds'
- g. ... landshöfðingjar ... reistu her í móti honum og felldu hann_i á eigu sinni_i; sjálfs. (*Haralds saga Sigurðarsonar*, p. 692)
rulers of the land raised an army in against him and killed him on property REFL self's
'the chiefs raised an army against him and killed him on his own property'
- h. ... en að lyktum tóku menn Magnúss konungs hann_i með skipsögn sína_i. (*Magnúss saga berfætts*, p. 707)
but at end took men Magnus's king's him with crew REFL
'but finally, king Magnus's men took him and his crew'
- i. Við skulum fara til Keldugnúps og drepa þá_i Helga og Gunnar fyrir sín_i illvirki. (*Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfífls*, p. 1147)
we shall go to Keldugnup and kill them Helgi and Gunnar for REFL crimes
'Let us go to Keldugnup and kill Helgi and Gunnar because of their crimes'
- j. ... þeir ... færðu Gunnlaug_i á hest sinn_i eftir það. (*Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu*, p. 1191)
they brought Gunnlaug on horse REFL after that
'After that, they lifted Gunnlaug on his horse'

1.3 Different properties of *sig* vs. *sinn*

In all of these examples, the reflexive in question is the reflexive possessive *sinn*. It has usually been assumed that the distribution of the reflexive pronoun *sig* and the reflexive possessive *sinn* are the same, and in Modern Icelandic this is clearly the case. However, Kristoffersen (1991, 1994) has claimed that Old Icelandic is different in this respect. He says:

Faarlund 1980 points out that the reflexive pronoun *sik* and the possessive pronoun *sinn* with a reflexive function in Old Norse can also refer to other phrases than the subject. Faarlund concludes from this that a nominative phrase in Old Norse does not differ from nominal phrases bearing other cases on this point: They are all able

to control reflexive pronouns. However, it looks as if he has overlooked an important difference between these two pronouns.

Faarlund 1980 peiker på at det reflexive pronomenet *sik* og eigendomspronomenet *sinn* med reflexiv funksjon i norrønt også kan vise til andre ledd enn subjektet. [...] Faarlunds konklusjon på dette er at eit nominativsledd i norrønt på dette punktet ikkje skil seg frå substantivledd med andre kasus: Dei kan alle kontrollere reflexive pronomen. Her ser det likevel ut til at han har oversett eit viktig skilje mellom dei to pronomena. (Kristoffersen 1991:81-82)

The important difference that Kristoffersen is referring to is the following:

In Old Norse, there is a difference between the reflexive pronoun *sik* and the possessive pronoun *sinn*, in that only subjects can control *sik* whereas phrases bearing other functions can also control *sinn*.

I norrønt er det ein skilnad på det reflexive pronomenet *sik* og eigendomspronomenet *sinn*, ved at bare subjekt kan kontrollere *sik*, mens også ledd med andre funksjonar kan kontrollere *sinn*. (Kristoffersen 1994:59)

It would be interesting if this were true. It would mean that the two anaphors in question obey different binding conditions, like they appear to do to some extent in Norwegian, as Strahan (2002) and Lødrup (2007) have shown. However, it should be noted here that Kristoffersen is using this as an argument against the subject status of dative experiencers in Old Icelandic. He concludes that they must be counted as objects instead (1991:89). Under that interpretation, his statement quoted above is clearly wrong. A number of examples can be found where *sig/sér* refers to a dative experiencer. Kristoffersen (1991:82-83) refers to Cole, Harbert, Hermon and Sridhar (1980:722) who claim that the verb *þykja* ‘seem, find’ behaves exceptionally in this respect. They refer to Rose (1976), who

lists several instances in which dative experiencers of this verb serve as antecedents of reflexive pronouns (a function normally restricted to subjects) [...] There seem to be no attestations in which such reflexivization is controlled by passivized non-accusative objects, or by experiencer NP’s other than those occurring with *þykkia*.

As shown below, such examples are not only found with the verb *þykja* (6a-c), but also with *virðast* ‘seem’ (6d) and *sýnast* ‘seem’ (6e); and it is even possible to find examples where the reflexive pronoun refers to a dative phrase which is not an experiencer in a passive sentence (i.e., a “passivized non-accusative object”, cf. above) (6f):

- (6) a. ... honum_i þótti sig_i skorta við oss (*Brennu-Njáls saga*, p. 194)
him found REFL lack with us
‘he found himself to lack power compared to us’
- b. En þeim_i þykja áður brotin lög á sér_i. (*Eyrbyggja saga*, p. 622)
but them find before broken law on REFL
‘but they find they are treated unfairly’
- c. ... honum_i þótti maður koma að sér_i ógurlegur (*Sneglu-Halla þáttur*, p. 2215)
him found man come at REFL terrible
‘he felt as if a terrible man was coming towards him’

- d. En er hann sá bréf þetta virðist honum_i það bréf fjörráð við sig_i (*Íslendinga saga*, p. 352)
 but when he saw letter this seems him that letter dead plot with REFL
 ‘but when he saw this letter, he found it a plotting against his life’
- e. Nú sýndist Lofti_i sér_i óvarlegt að sitja í Dýrafirði fyrir ófriði Þorvalds (*Hrafn saga Sveinbjarnarsonar*, p. 232)
 now seemed Loft REFL dangerous to sit in Dyrafjord for discord Thorvald’s
 ‘Now it seemed dangerous to Loft to stay in Dyrafjord because of Thorvald’s discord’
- f. Feldir voru þeim_i fengnir yfir sér_i því að skóklæði þeirra voru frerin (*Bjarnar saga Hítðælakappa*, p. 109)
 cloaks were them given over REFL because shoes theirs were frozen
 ‘They were given cloaks to wear because their shoes were frozen’

Such sentences are far from being exceptional; there are dozens or even hundreds of examples similar to (6a-c) in the Old Icelandic corpus. If we, *contra* Kristoffersen, classify the dative phrases in (6) as subjects, his statement quoted above appears to be a correct description of the Old Icelandic corpus. I have not come across any sentences where *sig* refers to phrases which are unequivocally objects. For such examples to occur, we would need to have either coreference between the second object and the first object, or coreference between a prepositional object and a direct or indirect object. Both types are extremely rare, and such sentences appear to be very uncommon in Modern Icelandic. Therefore, I don’t think this lack of examples can be used as an argument for a real syntactic difference between *sig* and *sinn*.

1.4 Reflexives in non-finite clauses

In non-finite clauses, reflexives are almost always used if an object of a verb or a preposition refers to a preceding subject NP. This NP can be the subject of the main clause, as in (7a-b), or the covert subject of the non-finite clause, i.e. PRO, as in (7c-d). It is even possible to have two reflexives with different antecedents in the non-finite clause, as in (7e).

- (7)a. En er hann kemur á bæinn biður hann_i húsfreyju_j [PRO_j skipta hestum við sig_i (*Gísla saga Súrssonar*, p. 927)
 but when he comes on the farm asks he housewife exchange horses with REFL
 ‘But when he comes to the farm, he asks the housewife to exchange horses with him’
- b. Eftir jólin sendir biskupsefni_i mann_j ... að [PRO_j boða Hrafn Sveinbjarnarsyni til fundar við sig_i í Miðfjörð (*Prestssaga Guðmundar Arasonar*, p. 204)
 after Christmas sends bishop-elect man to summon Hrafn Sveinbjarnarson to meeting with REFL in Midfjord
 ‘After Christmas, the bishop-elect sends a man to summon Hrafn Sveinbjarnarson to a meeting with him in Midfjord’
- c. Þorvaldur bað hann_i [PRO_i hafa sig_i spakan (*Grettis saga*, p. 1011)
 Thorvald asked him have REFL calm
 ‘Thorvald asked him to keep calm’

- d. ... hann_i ... fór í hernað að [PRO_i fá sér_i fjár og liði sínu_i. (*Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar*, p. 229)
 he went to fight to get REFL money and troops REFL
 ‘He became a viking in order to get money for himself and his troops’
- e. Hún_i bað Finnboga_j [PRO_j fá sér_i Gunnbjörn son sinn_j til fósturs (*Finnboga saga ramma*, p. 659)
 she asked Finnbogi give REFL Gunnbjorn son REFL to foster
 ‘She asked Finnbogi to give her his son Gunnbjorn to foster him’

In accusative with infinitive constructions, reflexives in the non-finite clause usually refer to the main clause subject. The reflexive can stand as objects (of a verb or a preposition) as in (8a), as (oblique) subjects, as in (8b), and even in both positions, as in (8c). In a few cases, the reflexive refers to the subject of the non-finite clause, as in (8d).

- (8) a. Kári_i kvað [hann sýnt hafa í þessu venskap mikinn og trúleik við sig_i. (*Brennu-Njáls saga*, p. 329)
 Kari said him shown have in this friendship great and faithfulness with REFL
 ‘Kari said that he had shown great friendship and faithfulness to him in this’
- b. Grettir_i sagði [sér_i það eigi mundu vera vel hent. (*Grettis saga*, p. 968)
 Grettir said REFL it not would be well suited
 ‘Grettir said that it would not be well suited for him’
- c. Þorgils_i sagði þá konungi [sig_i eiga stórar erfðir í Sogni eftir göfga frændur sína_i. (*Flóamanna saga*, p. 736)
 Thorgils said then king REFL own great inheritance in Sogn after noble relatives REFL
 ‘Then Thorgils told the king that he had a great inheritance in Sogn after his noble relatives’
- d. Már kvað [þá_i sýna af sér_i óvingjarnlegar heimsóknir (*Vatnsdæla saga*, p. 1878)
 Mar said them show of REFL unfriendly visits
 ‘Mar said that they were paying unfriendly visits’

Just as in Modern Icelandic, there are no examples of a matrix object serving as an antecedent of a reflexive in a non-finite clause.

In a few cases, personal pronouns are used instead of reflexives in non-finite clauses to refer to the main clause subject. This is done for the sake of clarity (“for tyde-ligheds skyld”), Nygaard says (1905:341), and only in rather complex sentences. Two examples are shown in (9):

- (9) a. ... konungur_i ... býður þeim_j að [PRO_j taka við skírn eftir boði hans_i. (*Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar*, p. 206)
 king order them to take with christening after order his
 ‘the king orders them to be christened according to his orders’
- b. Sigríður_i sagði það að svo skyldi hún_i leiða smákonungum_j að [PRO_j fara af öðrum löndum til þess að [PRO_j biðja hennar_i. (*Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar*, p. 194)
 Sigrid said it that so should she lead the kinglets to go of other countries to propose her
 ‘Sigrid said that she should tempt the kinglets to travel from other countries in order to propose to her’

1.5 The complex reflexive *sjálfan sig*

It is well known that in addition to *sig*, Modern Icelandic also has a complex reflexive, *sjálfan sig* ‘SELF reflexive’, which has somewhat different binding properties than the simple reflexive (see e.g., Sigríður Sigurjónsdóttir 1992). Modern Norwegian also exhibits different behaviour of simple and complex reflexives; see e.g. Hellan (1988) and Lødrup (2007). Neither Nygaard (1905) nor Faarlund (2004) mention *sjálfan sig*, but since its counterpart occurs both in Modern Icelandic and Modern Norwegian, we would expect it to be found in Old Icelandic. And in fact it is, although the examples are not many. As far as I can see, its distribution is the same as in Modern Icelandic; in a simple sentence, it refers to the subject (10a-b) or the object (10c), and in a non-finite clause, it can either refer to the main clause subject (10d) or to the subject of the non-finite clause (10e).

- (10) a. Þórður ... kvaðst aldregi ætlað hafa að hann; mundi sjálfan sig; undan draga. (*Þórðar saga kakala*, p. 467)
Thord said never meant have that he would self REFL from beneath draw
‘Thord said that he had never meant to exempt himself’
- b. Steinunn; ... fal honum á hendi sjálfa sig; (*Íslendinga saga*, p. 250)
Steinunn gave him on hand self REFL
‘Steinunn asked him to take care of her’
- c. Hafið þér séð ólíkara mann; piltar sjálfum sér; en hann er nú eða þá var hann? (*Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings*, p. 1321)
have you seen more different man guys self REFL than he is now or then was he
‘Guys, have you ever seen a man who has changed so much?’
- d. ... hann; ... sagði sjálfan sig; margar raunir á því hafa. (*Prestssaga Guðmundar Arasonar*, p. 177)
he said self REFL many evidence on it have
‘he said that he had many evidence for that’
- e. Nú bið eg þig að þú látir þá; kenna á sjálfum sér; fyrir sín; illyrði. (*Króka-Refs saga*, p. 1522)
now ask I you that you let them feel on self REFL for REFL foul language
‘Now I ask you to turn their foul language against them’

1.6 Reflexives referring to other phrases

In a few cases, a reflexive pronoun refers to oblique phrases other than the object:

Only rarely does the reflexive pronoun refer in this manner to a noun that has another relationship to it than an object or an indirect object.
Sjelden henviser det refl. pron. paa denne maade til et nomen, der staar i et andet forhold end objekt eller hensynsbetegnelse. (Nygaard 1905:339)

In (11a), the antecedent of the reflexive is the object of a preposition, in (11b) the antecedent of both reflexives is a genitive modifier of a noun, and in (11c) the antecedent of the first reflexive is a genitive modifier of an adjective.

- (11) a. Það er mér sagt að þú grípir fyrir mönnum; göss sitt; (*Grettis saga*, p. 1039)
it is me told that you grasp for men goods REFL
‘I am told that you steal people’s goods from them’

- b. ... mörg er sú ráðagerð hans_i, bæði fyrir sjálfum sér_i og mönnum sínum_i, er hætting mun á þykja hvernug tekst (*Ólafs saga helga*, p. 312)
many is that plan his both for self REFL and men REFL that risk will on seem how works out
'Many of the plans he makes, both for himself and his men, are considered rather risky'
- c. Konungur_j sagðist og minnugur vera skyldi Sæmundar_i fyrir sínar_i tiltekjur og drottinssvik við sig_j. (*Vatnsdæla saga*, p. 1854)
king said also remembering be shall Sæmund for REFL actions and treason with REFL
'The king also said that he would remember Sæmund's actions and treason against him'

Similar sentences occur sporadically in texts from older Icelandic up to the 18th century at least, but they are so rare that it is impossible to say whether they represent the real grammar of (some) speakers, or whether they are just anomalies of some sort. Jakob Jóh. Smári (1920:132) claims that sentences like (11a) have completely disappeared from Modern Icelandic, but I am quite sure that similar examples can occasionally be heard in the spoken language and seen on the Web. However, I don't think they are a part of anyone's internalized grammar, and I tend to believe that they never have been.

2. Long Distance Reflexivization

2.1 LDR

One of the most discussed characteristics of Modern Icelandic syntax is the existence of Long Distance Reflexivization (LDR), where a reflexive in a subordinate clause refers to an antecedent in its mother clause. It has long been recognized that LDR is not as common in Old Icelandic as it is in the modern language (cf. for instance Friðrik Magnússon 1985, Eiríkur Rögnvaldsson 1986:90, Halldór Ármann Sigurðsson 1990:313). Faarlund (2004) does not mention LDR at all, but Nygaard (1905) says:

In all other subordinate clauses (in the conjunctive or in the indicative), reflexive pronouns only exceptionally refer to the subject of the main clause. Usually, a personal (demonstrative) pronoun is used in such sentences.

I alle andre underordnede sætninger (i konj. eller i ind.) forekommer kun undtagelsesvis refl. pron. henvisende til hovedsætningens subjekt. Almindelig bruges her pers. (dem.) pron. (Nygaard 1905:342)

Nygaard gives only three examples of LDR, none of it from the Family Sagas. Friðrik Magnússon (1985) studied the use of reflexives in (parts of) 16 different texts from the 13th through the 18th centuries. In the older texts, from the 13th through the 15th centuries, he found only two few examples of LDR. From the 16th century onwards, the general rule seems to be to use a reflexive rather than a personal pronoun in a subordinate clause to refer to an antecedent in a superordinate clause. Up to the 19th century at least, the use of reflexives does not seem to be limited to subjunctive clauses; see 2.4 below.

From this it might be concluded that LDR did not exist in Old Icelandic, and this has in fact been claimed (Juntune 1978:422). This would be surprising since LDR occurs in Norwegian where it is considered an archaic feature (Strahan 2002:174). However, I have found several examples of LDR in Old Icelandic (Eiríkur Rögnvaldsson 2005:613):

- (12) a. Hugði hann_i [að Styr mundi þykja ódælla við sig_i að eiga ef hann hefði slíka fylgdarmenn sem þeir bræður voru]. (*Eyrbyggja saga*, p. 563)
 thought he that Styr would find more difficult with REFL to deal if he had such companions that they brothers were
 ‘He thought that Styr would find it more difficult to deal with him if he had such companions as the brothers’
- b. ... þá biður hann_i húsfreyju [að hún skipti hestum við sig_i] ... (*Gísla saga Súrssonar*, p. 873)
 then asks he housewife that she exchanges horses with REFL
 ‘then he asks the housewife to exchange horses with him’
- c. En Þorgils_i svarar ... [að eigi mundi sig_i allmikið vanta þykja á við hann fyrir utan nafnbót]. (*Þorgils saga skarða*, p. 582)
 but Thorgils answers that not would REFL very much lack find on with him for exception title
 ‘But Thorgils said that he felt that he was almost his equal, except for the title’
- d. Kaupmenn_i sögðu [að sér_i væri ekki að borgnara hvað er verið hafði ef þá væri til einskis að taka]. (*Grettis saga*, p. 1014)
 merchants said that REFL were not that better off what that been had if then were to nothing to take
 ‘The merchants said that what had been in the past did not do them any good if there was no way out’
- e. Guðmundur_i sá nú [að sér_i gerði eigi annað]. (*Ljósvetninga saga*, p. 1672)
 Gudmund saw now that REFL did not other
 ‘Gudmund now saw that he had no other option’
- f. Enn barst Þór_i í draum Þorgils_i og sagði [að sér_i yrði eigi meira fyrir að taka fyrir nasir honum en töðugelti hans]. (*Flóamanna saga*, p. 745)
 still entered Thor in dream Thorgils’ and said that REFL would not more for to take for nostrils him than his home-boar
 ‘Once more, Thor showed up in Thorgils’ dream and said that he could just as easily close his nose as the nose of his home-boar’
- g. Litlu eftir það er Þoroddur_i kom út hafði hann_i uppi orð sín_i og bað Snorra_j goða [að hann_j gifti sér_i Þuríði systur sína_j]. (*Eyrbyggja saga*, p. 571)
 little after it that Thorodd came out had he up words REFL and asked Snorri Godi that he married REFL Thurid sister REFL
 ‘Shortly after Thorodd came to Iceland, he asked Snorri Godi to give him his sister Thurid for wife’
- h. Gunnar_i stóð upp og kom þar sem jarlinn var og spyr [hver sér_i skuli í móti koma]. (*Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfjfls*, p. 1161)
 Gunnar stood up and came there that the earl was and asks who REFL shall in against come
 ‘Gunnar rose and came to the earl and asked who should fight against him’
- i. Þeir_i spurðu að, sem inni voru, [hver sá væri [er sig_i vildi kæfa]]. (*Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfjfls*, p. 1156)
 they asked about who inside were who that were that REFL would choke
 ‘Those who were inside asked who was trying to choke them’
- j. Úlfar_i ... spyr [hví Þórólfur rændi sig_i]. (*Eyrbyggja saga*, p. 574)
 Ulfar asks why Thorolf robbed REFL
 ‘Ulfar asks why Thorolf has robbed him’

Nevertheless, it is clear that it is much more common to use a personal pronoun in such sentences, as Nygaard says (1905:342). In many of these sentences, it would be more natural to use a reflexive in Modern Icelandic, even though the personal pronoun is also a possibility for most speakers:

- (13) a. Gunnar_i lét ekki á sig_i finna að honum_i þætti eigi góð sættin. (*Brennu-Njáls saga*, p. 209)
 Gunnar let not on REFL find that him found not good the settlement
 ‘Gunnar did not express that he didn’t like the settlement’
- b. Þá mælti Þorvarður_i til Odda_j frá Mývatni að hann_j veitti honum_i. (*Ljósvetninga saga*, p. 1701)
 then said Thorvard to Oddi from Myvatn that he assisted him
 ‘Then Thorvardur said to Oddi from Myvatn that he should assist him’
- c. Hún_i hugði að hann legði höndina yfir hana_i. (*Gísla saga Súrssonar*, p. 869)
 she thought that he laid the hand over her
 ‘She thought that he had laid his hand upon her’
- d. Þeir_i sögðu að þeim_i þætti það eigi réttlegt. (*Bandamanna saga*, bls. 10)
 they said that them found it not fair
 ‘They said that they did not find it fair’
- e. Honum_i þótti sem maður kæmi að honum_i. (*Þorgils saga og Haflíða*, p. 29)
 him found that man came at him
 ‘He felt as if a man came towards him’

2.2 Oblique antecedents of LDR

As far as I know, the antecedent of a LDR is always a superordinate subject and cannot be an object, “even for speakers who accept some object-bound, clause-bounded reflexives”. (Halldór Ármann Sigurðsson 1990:311). The only exception from this rule that I have found is the following from the late 18th century, which can probably be regarded as an anomaly:

- (14) Eg fortaldi mínum góða vert_i frá óförum mínum og fékk ávítur, að eg hefði ei látið sig_i vita af þessu. (*Ævisaga séra Jóns Steingrímssonar – late 18th century*)
 I told my good landlord from defeat mine and got reprimand that I had not let REFL know of this
 ‘I told my good landlord about my defeat and was reprimanded for not letting him know about this’.

In this respect, it is interesting to note that we find a few cases where a LDR refers to an oblique phrase which would be analyzed as a subject in Modern Icelandic (Eiríkur Rögnvaldsson 1996; Jóhanna Barðdal and Thórhallur Eythórsson 2003).

- (15) a. Og er konungur_i frétti það þá líkar honum_i eigi þarvist þeirra og þykir eigi örvænt [að þeir muni þar eflast ætla til móts við sig_i]. (*Geirmundar þáttur heljarskinns*, p. 3)
 and when king hears it then likes him not sojourn their and finds not impossible that they will there strengthen will to against with REFL
 ‘And when the king hears this he does not like their stay and does not find it impossible that they want to increase their power and turn against him’

- b. og þótti honum_i [sem fóstara sínum_i mundi mein að verða]. (*Ljósvetninga saga*, p. 1681)
and found him as foster-father REFL would damage at become
'he felt as if his foster-father would be harmed by this'
- c. Hina næstu nótt eftir er Gestur var skírður dreymdi hann_i [að Bárður faðir sinn_i kæmi til hans_i] (*Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss*, p. 73)
the next night after Gest was baptized dreamt him that Bard father REFL came to him
'The next night after Gest was baptized he dreamt that his father Bard came to him'

These examples are not many, but not fewer than one could expect given the rarity of LDR in general in Old Icelandic. I think they present a strong evidence for the subjecthood of accusative and dative experiencers in Old Icelandic (cf. Eiríkur Rögnvaldsson 1996; Jóhanna Barðdal and Thórhallur Eythórsson 2003; Thórhallur Eythórsson and Jóhanna Barðdal 2005).

2.3 Explanations for the rarity of LDR in Old Icelandic

Even though LDR clearly exists in Old Icelandic and is not quite as rare as might be inferred from the literature, it is clearly not as common as in Modern Icelandic. It has been suggested that the rarity of LDR in Old Icelandic might be due to the general rarity of indirect speech in the sagas (Halldór Ármann Sigurðsson 1990:313, quoting Friðrik Magnússon and Höskuldur Thráinsson 1986). However, this can hardly be true. On the contrary – indirect speech is quite common in Old Icelandic narrative texts. This can for instance be deduced from the fact that the three typical verbs of saying, *segja*, *mæla*, and *kveða*, which all mean 'say', are relatively more frequent in Old Icelandic than in the modern language. Thus, *segja* is the third most frequent verb in Old Icelandic, *mæla* #6 and *kveða* #11, whereas in Modern Icelandic, *segja* is the fifth most frequent verb, but neither *mæla* nor *kveða* are among the 100 most frequent verbs (Eiríkur Rögnvaldsson 1990:59). It should be noted, however, that these verbs often take indicative complement in Old Icelandic (Halldór Ármann Sigurðsson 1990:313). Given that there is a correlation between subjunctive mood and LDR, this might contribute to the lower frequency of LDR in Old Icelandic than in the modern language.

It is also possible that the increased frequency of LDR has something to do with tense and mood. It is well known that in Modern Icelandic, there is a correlation between LDR and moods; as originally pointed out by Höskuldur Thráinsson (1976; see also Jakob Jóh. Smári 1920: 134-135), most speakers can only use LDR in clauses with a verb in the subjunctive. Anderson (1986) tries to explain the correlation by relating it to tense. He claims that a subordinate subjunctive clause must have the same tense as the main clause, and hence, tense need not be independently generated in the subordinate clause but can be copied from the main clause. Such copying will extend the anaphoric domain of the subordinate clause to include the main clause, making it possible (and obligatory) to apply LDR. However, the rule of tense copying is optional; we can also base-generate tense in the subjunctive clause, and if we do, LDR cannot apply. This explains the apparent optionality of LDR, according to Anderson (1986).

[T]he connection between the tense of a main clause and the tense of a subordinate clause, even in the subjunctive mood, appears to have been much looser in Old Icelandic than it is now; it is easy to find sentences with a different tense in a sub-

junctive subordinate clause than in the main clause (Eiríkur Rögnvaldsson 1986:90).

Some such examples are shown in (16); in all of these sentences, we have present tense in the main clause but past tense in the subordinate clause. In Modern Icelandic, we would have the same tense in the main and subordinate clauses in all these examples.

- (16) a. Konungur spyr (pres.) hvort það var (past ind.) Knúts konungs gjöf. (*Ólafs saga helga*, p. 472)
king asks whether it was Knut's king's present
'The king asks if it was a present from king Knut'
- b. Hann spyr (pres.) hvort hún léti (past subj) út bera. (*Finnboga saga ramma*, p. 629)
he asks whether she let out carry
'He asks whether she had left the baby in the open to die'
- c. Hann segir (pres.) að hann var (past ind.) þar. (*Heiðarvíga saga*, p. 1384)
he says that he was there
'He says that he is there'
- d. Móðirin flutti (past) sveininn til Hákonar jarls og segir (pres.) að hann var (past ind.) faðirinn. (*Haraldar saga gráfelds*, p. 141)
the mother moved the boy to Hakon earl and says that he was the father
'The mother brought the boy to earl Hakon and said that he was his father'
- e. En Kolbeinn segir (pres.) að hann var (past ind.) þá búinn til ferðar ... (*Þórðar saga kakala*, p. 514)
but Kolbein says that he was then ready to travel
'But Kolbein said that he was ready to travel'

[...] if Anderson's theory were correct[,], we would [...] say that tense was more often (or always) base generated in Old Icelandic, and hence the conditions for [LDR] were (almost) never met (Eiríkur Rögnvaldsson 1986:90).

For a number of reasons, however, it doesn't seem likely that Anderson's theory can be used to explain the increased frequency of LDR (cf. Eiríkur Rögnvaldsson 1986:90-93). One of the reasons is explored in the next section.

2.4 LDR in indicative clauses

Even though there is obviously a correlation between LDR and subjunctive mood, as pointed out above, this correlation is not perfect, neither in Old nor Modern Icelandic. Both Nygaard (1905:342) and Halldór Ármann Sigurðsson (1990:313) quote Old Icelandic sentences with LDR in indicative clauses, and I have found a few such examples myself:

- (17) a. Og er hann_i rak fyrir sér_i hestinn um göturnar sá hann_i [hvar maður gekk úr hrauninu ofan að sér_i]. (*Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss*, p. 57)
and when he drove for REFL about the paths saw he where a man walked of the lava field down to REFL
'And when he was driving the horse along the paths he saw where a man walked from the lava field towards him'

- b. Er hann_i sá [að pilturinn var kominn í höggfæri við sig_i] þá reiddi hann hátt saxið. (*Grettis saga*, p. 1028)
 when he saw that the boy was come in reach with REFL then brandished he high the sword
 ‘When he saw that the boy was in his reach, he brandished the sword’
- c. ... svo að hinir_i máttu eigi sjá fyrir þrönginni [hvað um sig_i var ...] (*Þorgils saga og Haflíða*, p. 38)
 so that others might not see for the crowd what around REFL was
 ‘so that the others could not see what was around them because of the crowd’
- d. Konungur_i ... segir hann hafa nú munu í móti vingan sína_i [ef hann gerir nú þetta sumarlangt fyrir orð sín_i]. (*Þormóðs þáttur*, p. 2277)
 king says him have now will in against friendship REFL if he does now this the summer long for words REFL
 ‘The king says that he will gain his friendship if he does this the summer long for his words’

Such sentences can be found in various texts from Old Icelandic up to the late 19th century at least (see Friðrik Magnússon 1985). Some of the examples I have found are shown in (18):

- (18) a. Georgíus_i ... bað guð að umbuna þeim_j þeirra_j bróðurlega ást og elsku er þeir_j höfðu til sín_i (*Georgíus saga – around 1500*)
 Georgius asked god to reward them their brotherly love and kindness that they had to REFL
 ‘Georgius asked god to reward them for their brotherly love and kindness towards him’
- b. ... líka sem að hann_i sér að Kristur hefir viður sig_i gjört (*Nýja testamentið*, p. 8 - 1540)
 also that that he sees that Christ has with REFL done
 ‘also what he sees that Christ has done with him’
- c. Þá mjög er nú orðið kvöldað, finnur Þorsteinn_i að sig_i tekur að syfja nálega (*Munnmælasögur 17. aldar – late 17th century*)
 then much is now become evening finds Thorstein that REFL takes to be sleepy almost
 ‘When it gets late in the evening Thorstein feels that he gets rather sleepy’
- d. ... fann keisarinn_i glöggliga, að af sér_i dró (*Benedikt Gröndal: Sagan af Heljar-slóðarorrustu – 1861*)
 found the emperor clearly that from REFL drew
 ‘the emperor felt clearly that he was losing strength’
- e. Síðan sér hann_i hvar að sér_i vegur draugur af karlkyni (*Þjóðsögur Jóns Árna-sonar – 1862-64*)
 then sees he where to REFL attacks a ghost of male gender
 ‘Then he sees where a male ghost attacks him’
- f. Ólafur_i sá, að sinn_i griðatími var á enda, ef biskup kæmist inn fyrr en hann. (*Torfhildur Hólm: Brynjólfur biskup Sveinsson - 1882*)
 Olaf saw that REFL peaceful time was on end if bishop came in before than he
 ‘Olaf realized that his peaceful time would be over if the bishop would come in before him’

In the early 20th century, Jakob Jóh. Smári (1920:134-135) says that the general rule seems to be that a reflexive is used in subjunctive clauses, but a personal pronoun in indicative clauses. However, he says, this rule is often broken, and it is especially disagreeable when a reflexive is used in indicative clauses. Such usage is wrong, he states. It is clear that nowadays, most speakers reject LDR in indicative clauses (Höskuldur Thráinsson 2007:466-467), but some such sentences are apparently accepted by some speakers (cf. Halldór Ármann Sigurðsson 1990:313, 333).

3. Conclusion

Even though I may have given the impression that the rules for reflexivization in Icelandic are reasonably clear, it must be emphasized that there is considerable variation in speakers' judgements on certain aspects of reflexivization, and this has probably always been so (cf. Höskuldur Thráinsson 2007; Maling 1986; Halldór Ármann Sigurðsson 1990; Jakob Jóh. Smári 1920:133-135; and many others). A few such cases were discussed in 2.6 above. In addition, it deserves to be mentioned that personal pronouns are occasionally used instead of reflexives to refer to a subject antecedent in a simple clause, as shown in (19):

- (19) a. Þá einn dag, er þeir bræður_i voru á eintali allir um þeirra_i ráðhag (*Georgíus saga - around 1500*)
then one day when they brothers were on secret talk all about their situation
'Then one day when all the brothers were talking secretly about their situation'
- b. Þau gömlu hjón_i önduðust bæði á þeirra átræðsaldri hjá þeirra_i syni á Ósi í Steingrímsfirði. (*late 17th century*)
they old couple died both in their seventies at their son on Os in Steingrímsfjörður
'The old couple both died in their seventies at their son's home on Os in Steingrímsfjörður'
- c. ... juku þau_i risadóttir þar ætt þeirra_i. (*early 18th century*)
augmented they giant's daughter there kin their
'He and the giant's daughter had descendants there'
- d. Hann_i reið og ekki í hans_i vísitásiur (*early 18th century*)
he rode also not in his visitations
'He did not ride in his visitations either'
- e. ... svo þeir_i fá vel betalt þeirra_i erfiði (*late 18th century*)
so they get well paid their labour
'so they receive generous payment for their hard work'
- f. Hann_i var jarðlagður sunnanmegin við kirkjudyr á Flugumýri hjá moldum foreldra hans_i, föðurbróður og sonar hans. (*Ævisaga séra Jóns Steingrímssonar - late 18th century*)
he was buried south of the church door on Flugumýri at the graves parents' his, uncle and son's his
'He was buried to the south of the church door at Flugumýri by the graves of his parents, his uncle and his son'
- g. ... mikið þjáðist yðar elskaði_i síðasta mánuð ævi hans_i (*early 19th century*)
much suffered your beloved last month life his
'Your beloved one suffered much during the last month of his life'

Such sentences seem to be especially common in texts from the 18th century (cf. also Friðrik Magnússon 1985), but otherwise occur only sporadically. This could perhaps be attributed to foreign influence (Friðrik Magnússon 1985:8-9), but more research is needed before we can say anything conclusive about that.

The conclusion is, thus, that in all relevant respects, reflexivization behaves alike in all stages of Icelandic. To be sure, the relative frequency of some reflexive construction has changed. Thus, object controlled reflexives appears to have been more frequent than they are now, whereas LDR are more frequent now than they were in Old Icelandic. Furthermore, the correlation between LDR and subjunctive mood appears to be stronger in post-19th century Icelandic than it was in earlier stages of the language. In all cases, except possibly the last one, we are however dealing with a change in usage rather than a grammar change.

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