

# Verb placement in relative clauses

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## 1. Introduction

The Scandinavian languages generally display V2 in main clauses (but see Bentzen 2014a, who discusses clauses introduced by *maybe*, which constitute an exception to this pattern). However, in embedded contexts, V2 is only available in certain restricted contexts, such as certain embedded *that*-clauses (see Bentzen 2014b). In most other embedded contexts, such as embedded *wh*-questions and relative clauses, V2 is not possible. In these types of clauses we see a division between the Mainland Scandinavian languages and Icelandic. Whereas Icelandic displays V-to-I verb movement in such clauses, Mainland Scandinavian typically has no verb movement at all. (See e.g. Holmberg and Platzack 1995 and Vikner 1995 for overview). This is illustrated with an Icelandic example from Angantýsson (2011:12) and the corresponding Norwegian example. As the examples show, in relative clauses, the finite verb precedes negation in Icelandic and follows it in Norwegian:

- (1) a. Það er ein Íslendingasaga sem ég hef ekki lesið. (Icelandic)  
*there is one Icelandic saga that I have nor read*
- b. Det er en islendingesaga som jeg ikke har lest. (Norwegian)  
*there is one Icelandic saga that I not has read*  
 ‘There is an Icelandic saga that I haven’t read.’

However, within the last couple of decades, several people have pointed out that V-to-I movement appears to be optionally available also in certain dialects of Mainland Scandinavian (cf. among others Platzack and Holmberg 1989 and Bentzen 2003; for a more detailed discussion, see section 3). Moreover, Angantýsson (2001, 2011) has argued that V-to-I movement may be optional in certain embedded contexts in Icelandic. Thus, verb placement in embedded contexts was tested for relative clauses in the ScanDiaSyn survey. In Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish the position of the finite main verb relative to the adverb *always* (*often* in Danish), and for Norwegian also for the position of auxiliary *have* with respect to the adverb *completely*. Unfortunately, these types of clauses were not tested in Iceland and the Faroe Islands.

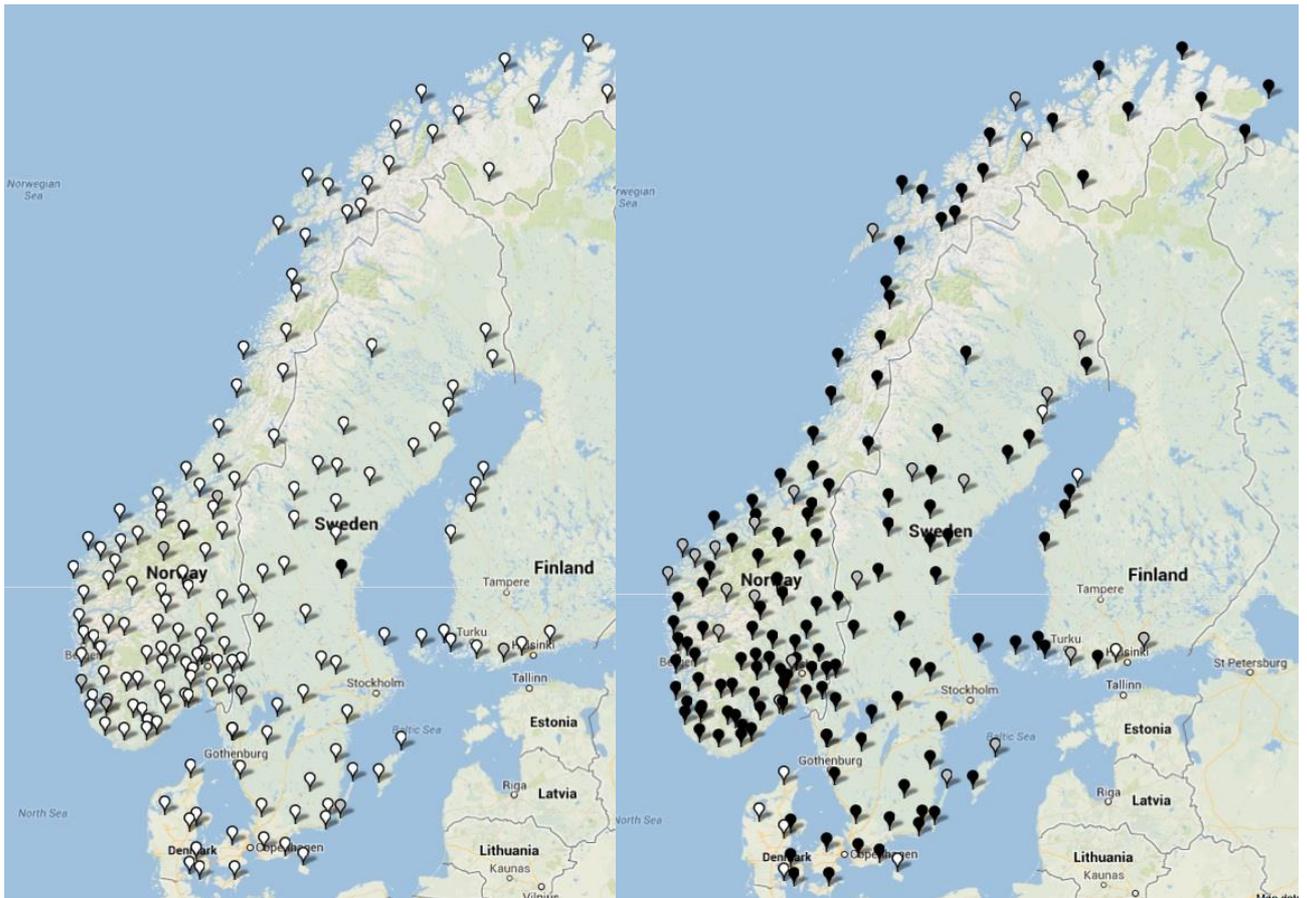
## 2. Results

### 2.1 Nordic Syntax Database (NSD)

In this chapter, we will only consider results from the Nordic Syntax Database (NSD). In Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish, the position of the finite main verb with respect to the adverbs *always/often* was tested with pair of sentences of the following kind (here illustrated with Norwegian examples). Note that these really are embedded wh-questions with an obligatory complementizer *som* ‘that’. Embedded wh-questions are expected to behave similarly to relative clauses with respect to verb placement.

- (2) a. Vet du hvem som **bærer** alltid ut søpla hjemme hos dem? (#998)  
 (Norwegian)  
*know you who that carries always out trash.the home by them*
- b. Vet du hvem som alltid **bærer** ut søpla hjemme hos dem? (#999)  
 (Norwegian)  
*know you who that always carries out trash.the home by them*  
 ‘Do you know who always takes out the trash at their house?’

The results in the Nordic Syntax Database show that the informants are quite reluctant to accepting V-to-I movement in these clauses. The two maps below show the judgments for the clauses testing the position of the finite main verb. Map 1 shows that, as expected, lack of verb movement is accepted everywhere (except in Delsbo in Sweden). In contrast, Map 2 shows that the word order where the finite main verb precedes the adverb *always* is rejected almost everywhere in Norway, Sweden, and Finland. Only occasional medium scores are found in these countries, and high scores are found in Kåfjord in Northern Norway, Byske in Sweden, and in Larsmo and Kyrklätt in Finland. Note, however, that in Denmark, the verb preceding the adverb *often* is accepted in half of the locations. On Jutland (Nordjylland, Vestjylland, and Østjylland) as well as in Als and Bornholm, the sentence in (2a) received a high score. In the other five locations in Denmark (Århus, Fyn, Ærø, Sjælland, and Falster) this sentence is rejected. The fact that the word order V-Adv is more often accepted in Denmark than in Norway, Sweden, and Finland may be an effect of the different adverbs used in the test sentences, see discussion below.



Map 1: *always-V in relative clauses*

Map 2: *V-always in relative clauses*

(#999: *Vet du hvem som bærer alltid ut søpla hjemme hos dem?* 'Do you know who always takes out the trash at their house?')

(#998: *Vet du hvem som alltid bærer ut søpla hjemme hos dem?* 'Do you know who always takes out the trash at their house?')

(White = high score; grey = medium score; black = low score)

The position of a finite auxiliary with respect to the adverb *completely* was tested in Norway with the following pair of sentences:

- (3) a. Jeg vet hvem som **hadde** helt glemt leksene sine. (#1002)  
(Norwegian)  
*I know who that had completely forgotten homework.the REFL*
- b. Jeg vet hvem som helt **hadde** glemt leksene sine. (#1003)  
(Norwegian)  
*I know who that completely had forgotten homework.the REFL*  
'I know who had completely forgotten his/her homework.'

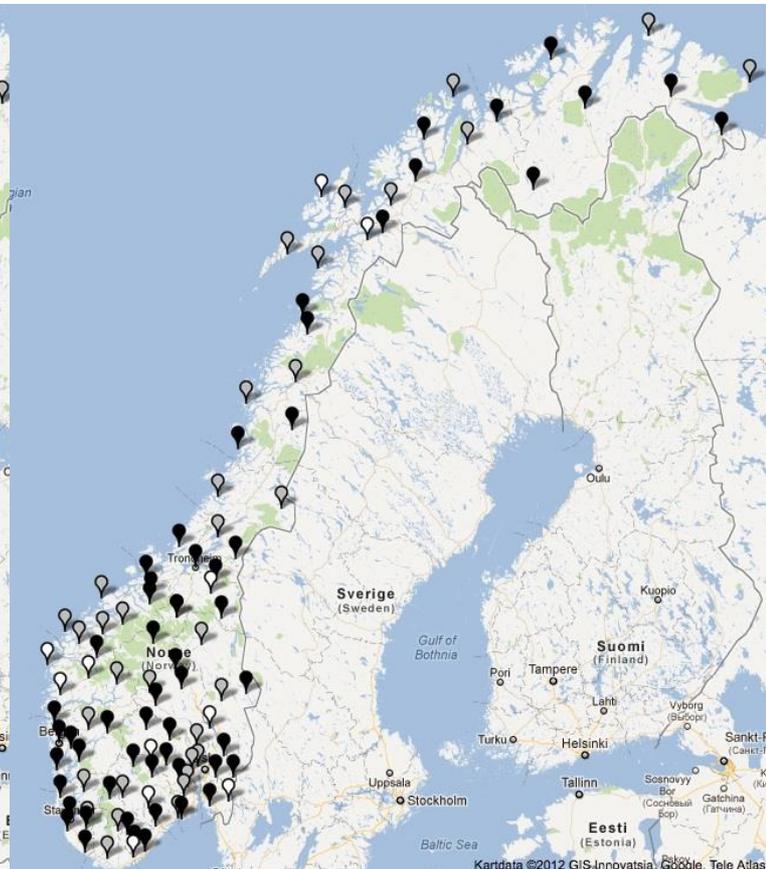
Again, as Map 3 shows, lack of verb movement was generally accepted in the tested sentence (3b), while the word order with the auxiliary preceding the adverb *completely*, (3a), tends to be rejected, as illustrated in Map 4. Note however, that the rejection rate for this clause is substantially lower than it was for the clause with the main verb preceding the adverb *always* in (2a):



Map 3: *completely-V* in relative clauses

(#1003: *Jeg vet hvem som helt hadde glemt leksene sine. 'I know who had completely forgotten his/her homework.'*)

(White = high score; grey = medium score; black = low score)



Map 4: *V-completely* in relative clauses

(#1002: *Jeg vet hvem som hadde helt glemt leksene sine. 'I know who had completely forgotten his/her homework.'*)

### 3. Discussion

Since we only have data from the three Mainland Scandinavian (MSc) languages Danish, Norwegian and Swedish within the Nordic Syntax Database, this discussion will not address the issue of verb placement in embedded clauses in Faroese and Icelandic.

As stated in the introduction, it has been pointed out that in contrast to traditional assumptions, V-to-I movement appears to be optionally available in certain dialects of Mainland Scandinavian. Verb placement in embedded clauses has been mentioned in various traditional dialect studies. For example, Levander (1909) points out that the Swedish dialect spoken in Älvdalen in Sweden allows verbs preceding negation in non-V2 contexts like relative clauses. For the Norwegian dialect of Setesdal,

Heggstad (1916) notes the same. These findings have been replicated in more recent studies by Piotr Garbacz for Övdalian (Garbacz 2010) and Christine Østbø Munch for both Övdalian and the Setesdal dialect (Østbø Munch 2013). They find that the present-day dialects appear to optionally allow the finite verb to precede a short form of negation as well as the adverb *never*, (4)-(5). However, the verb apparently cannot precede other types of adverbs. In that sense, this verb movement type is different from that seen in Icelandic, which does not distinguish between negation and various types of adverbs. ((4) is from Garbacz 2010:125 and (5) is from Østbø Munch 2013.)

- (4) Eð ir biln so an **will** it ávå (Trad.Övd)  
*it is car.the that he wants not hava*  
 ‘This is the car that he doesn’t want to have.’

- (5) Her va ein mann som **fann** kji hesten atte. (Setesdal)  
*here was a mad who found not horse.the again*  
 ‘Here is a man who didn’t find his horse.’

Surprising verb placement patterns in embedded non-V2 clauses have also been found in other varieties of MSc. Platzack and Holmberg (1989) argue that the Swedish dialect of Kronoby (a village in the Swedish-speaking area in Nord-Österbotten in Finland) optionally allows the verb to precede negation and adverbs. A similar observation was made for this dialect by Alexiadou and Fanselow (2001). This is illustrated in (6) ((6a) is from Platzack and Holmberg 1989:74 and (6b) is from Alexiadou and Fanselow 2001):

- (6) a. He va bra et an **tsöfft** int bootsen (Kronoby)  
*it was good that he bought not book.the*  
 ‘It was good that he didn’t buy the book.’
- b. foltsi som **gar** tykelt i tsyrtsen...  
*people who go often in church*  
 ‘people who often go to church...’

Along similar lines, Bentzen (2003, 2005, 2007a,b) argues that a certain variety of Northern Norwegian (termed *Regional Northern Norwegian*, ReNN) also allow a version of V-to-I movement in non-V2 contexts (cf. also Wiklund et al. 2007). Furthermore, Bentzen and Wiklund et al. show that the verb placement pattern of this variety of Norwegian is also slightly different from that found in Icelandic. Interestingly, however, it displays the opposite restriction from that argued for Övdalian and the Setesdal dialect; verb movement across negation (as well as certain adverbs like *always* and *never*) is unavailable, while verb movement across certain other adverbs (like *often* and *usually*) is possible, as shown in (7) ((7a) is from Bentzen 2007b: 54; (7b) is from Bentzen 2003:581). In a further investigation (Bentzen 2007b), Bentzen shows that the same type of restrictions found on embedded verb placement in ReNN

hold for the Northern Ostrobothnian (NOB) region (including Kronoby). This is illustrated in (8) (Bentzen 2007b:55-56):

- (7) a. Plassen som han **krangla** vanligvis til sæ va opptatt idag. (ReNN)  
*place.the that he quarrelled usually to REFL was occupied today*  
 ‘The space that he usually managed to get through quarrelling, was occupied today.’
- b. \* Vi kjøpte pizza ettersom han Gøran **ville** ikke spise pølse.  
*we bought pizza as he Gøran would not eat hot.dogs*  
 ‘We bought pizza, as Gøran wouldn’t eat hot dogs.’

- (8) a. Ja föstoo int fövaa an **tvättar** så tåkält biln sin (NOB)  
*I understood not why he cleans so often car REFL*  
 ‘I didn’t understand why he cleaned his car so often.’
- b. \* Ja veit fövaa Gøran **itär** int korv.  
*we bought as Gøran would not hot.dogs*  
 ‘I know why Gøran doesn’t eat hot dogs.’

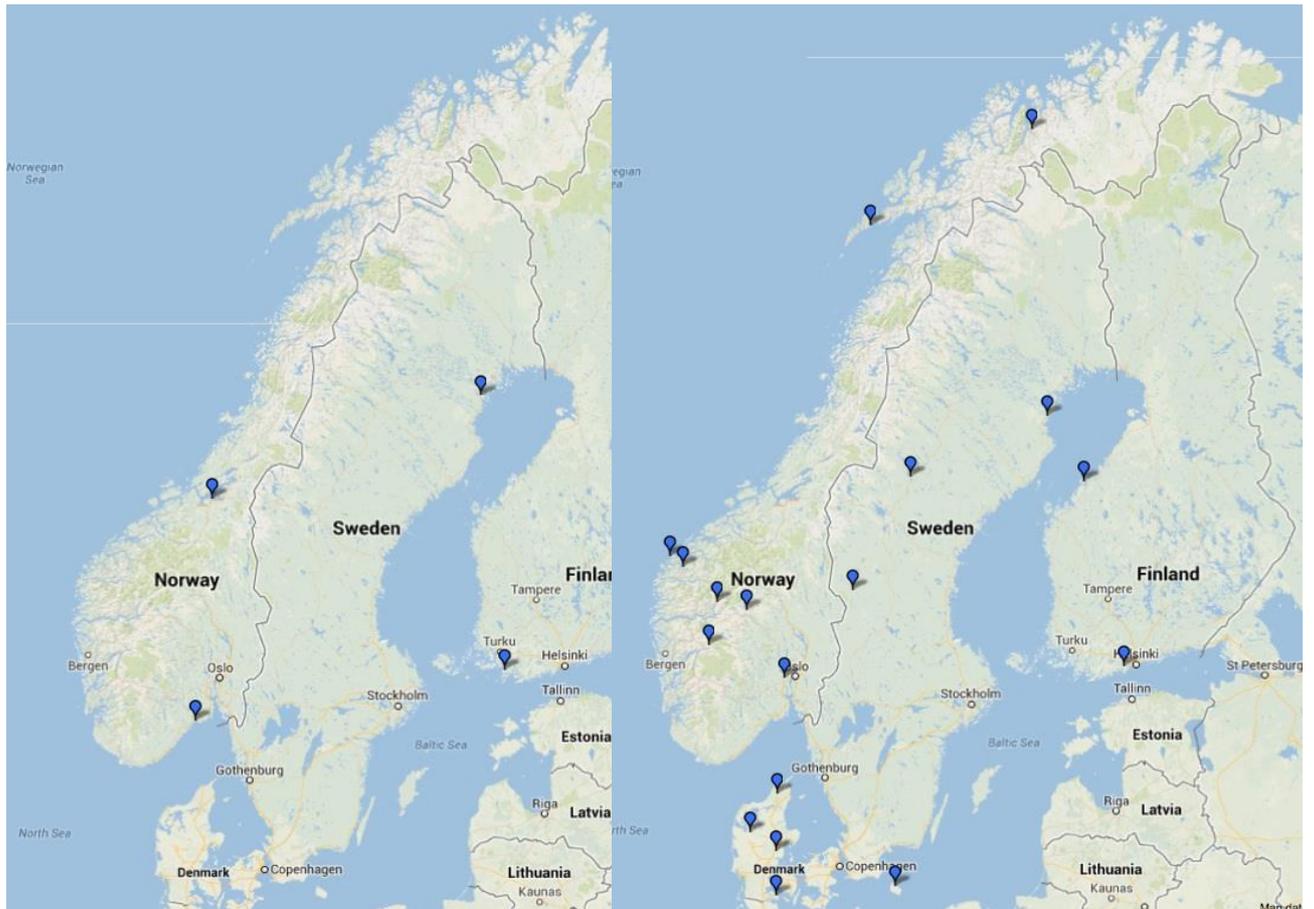
Turning to Denmark, Ringgaard (1973) points out that a characteristic property of the Jutland dialect is that word order in embedded clauses varies with respect to whether the verb precedes or follows adverbials. Examples are provided with typical non-V2 contexts like conditional clauses. Based on a more elaborate study, Pedersen (1996) claims that verb placement in front of negation and adverbs is widespread across non-V2 contexts in certain Danish dialects, here illustrated in (9) (adapted from Pedersen 1996:246, my translations):

- (9) Der kan være nogen der **kan** itte tåle det. (Jutland)  
*there may be someone who can not take it*  
 ‘There may be someone who cannot take it.’

More specifically, Pedersen found that relative clauses displayed this word order about 50% of the time in the dialects of Jutland and Fyn. In the Zealand and Bornholm dialects, however, such verb placement in relative clauses was not attested. The findings of this study stand in somewhat contrast to the more recent study by Jensen (2011). He investigated the dialect of Copenhagen and of Vinderup in Western Jutland, and in these locations he hardly found any instances of verbs preceding negation or adverbs in relative clauses. Copenhagen is situated on the Zealand island, so these findings do corroborate the findings in Pedersen. However, the two studies have contradictory results from the Jutland region. A plausible reason for this discrepancy is that the informants in Pedersen’s study are older than the informants in Jensen’s study.

In light of these studies, let us revisit the results from the Nordic Syntax Database. First of all, as verb placement in front of negation was not tested, our data can neither confirm nor reject the claims about the availability of this word order in Övdalian and the Setesdal dialect. Otherwise, the NSD data do not strongly corroborate the findings reported in the literature on Norwegian and Swedish cited here. Consider the sentence in (2a) where a finite main verb precedes the adverb *always*. Although two of the four locations that give this sentence a high score, Kåfjord in Northern Norway and Larsmo in Nord-Österbotten, are indeed in the regions where this word order has been reported to be acceptable (ReNN and NOb, respectively), most other locations, both within the ReNN and the NOb areas, as well as in other areas of Norway, Sweden, and Finland tend to reject this word order. However, it is possible that the overwhelming rejection of this sentence is partly an effect of the verb and the adverb involved. For one thing, Bentzen (2007a,b) points out that V-to-I movement of main verbs is more restricted than V-to-I movement of finite auxiliaries in both ReNN and NOb. Moreover, certain adverbs appear to be harder to move across than others. The adverb *always* is in fact listed as an adverb that it is particularly difficult to move the verb across. Thus, the full rejection of (2a) across Norway, Sweden, and Finland does not necessarily mean that all kind of V-to-I movement is impossible. The results in Norway for sentence (3a) indicate that movement of an auxiliary across the adverb *completely* is somewhat less degraded than the word order in (2a). Adverbs like *completely* and *often* are among the adverbs that Bentzen (2007a,b) claims are easier to get V-to-I movement across in ReNN and NOb.

It is also interesting to note that there is an age affect, especially in Norway, concerning the acceptability of sentence (2a) with a finite main verb preceding the adverb *always*. While it is more or less completely rejected by younger speakers, older speakers occasionally accept the word order V-Adv here and there in Norway. In Sweden and Finland this age affect is less notable.



Map 5: Younger speakers

Map 6: Older speakers

High scores for *for V-always* in relative clauses (#998: *Vet du hvem som alltid bærer ut søpla hjemme hos dem? 'Do you know who always takes out the trash at their house?'*)

This age affect was not found for the sentence with an auxiliary preceding the adverb *completely*, (3a).

The data from Denmark, on the other hand, are at least partly in line with the claims of Pedersen (1996): Verb placement in front of negation/adverbs in relative clauses is indeed found in Jutland. Note, however, that Jensen's study did not find the same pattern. Moreover, while Pedersen found this verb placement pattern also in Fyn, but claims it was rejected in Bornholm, the opposite result came out of the NDS investigation; informants in Fyn rejected this word order, whereas those on Bornholm accepted it. Note that, as mentioned above, the Danish test sentence was somewhat different from the one used for Norwegian and Swedish:

- (10) De som **går** ofte på café behøver ikke at drikke kaffe hjemme. (#998)  
(Danish)

*they who go often on cafe need not to drink coffee home*

'Those who often visit cafes need not drink coffee at home.'

In the Danish test sentence, the adverb *often* is used instead of *always*. This difference may have had an effect on the high acceptance rate in Denmark. Recall that Bentzen (2007a,b) point out that certain

adverbs may be easier to move the verb across in for example Northern Norwegian; *often* was one of these adverbs. Moreover, all the informants from Denmark are older speakers. As map 6 showed, older speakers in Norway were also more likely to accept this word order compared to younger speakers.

As is clear from the above discussion, verb placement in front of negation and/or adverbs in embedded non-V2 contexts like relative clauses is a marginal phenomenon in MSc, but notably more marginal in Norwegian and Swedish than in Danish. This word order is generally rejected, but there may be regions across MSc where (versions of) it is more easily accepted among speakers.

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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>
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