

NORDIC WORD ORDER

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ABSTRACT

This article gives an overview of the word order patterns found in the Nordic Word Order Database (NWD), providing maps that illustrate variation in argument placement and verb placement across the North Germanic languages. All investigated phenomena show variable word order in at least one of the languages, and categorical word order in other languages, considering at least one of the investigated variables. Apart from the differences between the languages, the data in NWD reveal little regional variation (apart from non-V2 in questions and particle-subject order in regional Norwegian). Instead, variation found within languages is very often within speaker variation. Different speakers can have different preferences, but the preferences are not geographically determined.

[1] INTRODUCTION

The Nordic Word order Database (NWD) contains experimental data from all of the North Germanic languages, covering several different word order phenomena. The database was launched in 2019; data collection and experimental design is discussed in detail in Lundquist et al. (2019).¹ The other papers in this special issue discuss the results considering verb placement and argument placement in the different North Germanic languages. In this paper, we give an overview of the word order patterns across languages, focusing on the main results and providing a cross-linguistic comparison. Section 2 gives an updated overview of the data in NWD. Sections 3–7 provide overviews of the main results on subject shift (Section 3), object shift (Section 4), particle shift (Section 5), verb placement in main clauses (Section 6), and embedded verb placement (Section 7). References are given to the papers on the individual languages. Section 8 is a conclusion.

[1] The experiment scripts and material used in the experiments are available in a GitHub repository: <https://github.com/maudwestendorp/NWD>

[2] THE CURRENT STATE OF THE NORDIC WORD ORDER DATABASE

Since the Nordic Word order Database was launched in 2019, it has been extended with data from additional locations. An updated map of the fieldwork locations is given in Figure 1 below. Not all details of the locations are pictured in the map. In Iceland, all recordings were carried out in Reykjavík (see Larsson 2022). The Faroese data come from three locations, Tórshavn, Fuglafjørður and Klaksvík (see Westendorp 2020: 29, Figure 1). The locations in Sweden and Finland include Gothenburg, Stockholm and Åland (Larsson & Lundquist 2022: 76, Map 1). The Danish field work was carried out in and around Copenhagen (Larsson & Tengesdal 2022: 121, Figure 1). Norwegian data was first collected in Oslo and Tromsø, but included speakers from different areas in Norway (Lundquist & Tengesdal 2022: 45, Fig. 1). Additional data were collected in Bjugn (Fosen/Trøndelag, Norway) after publication of Lundquist & Tengesdal 2022. In Amsterdam, The Netherlands, data was collected from L2 speakers of Scandinavian.

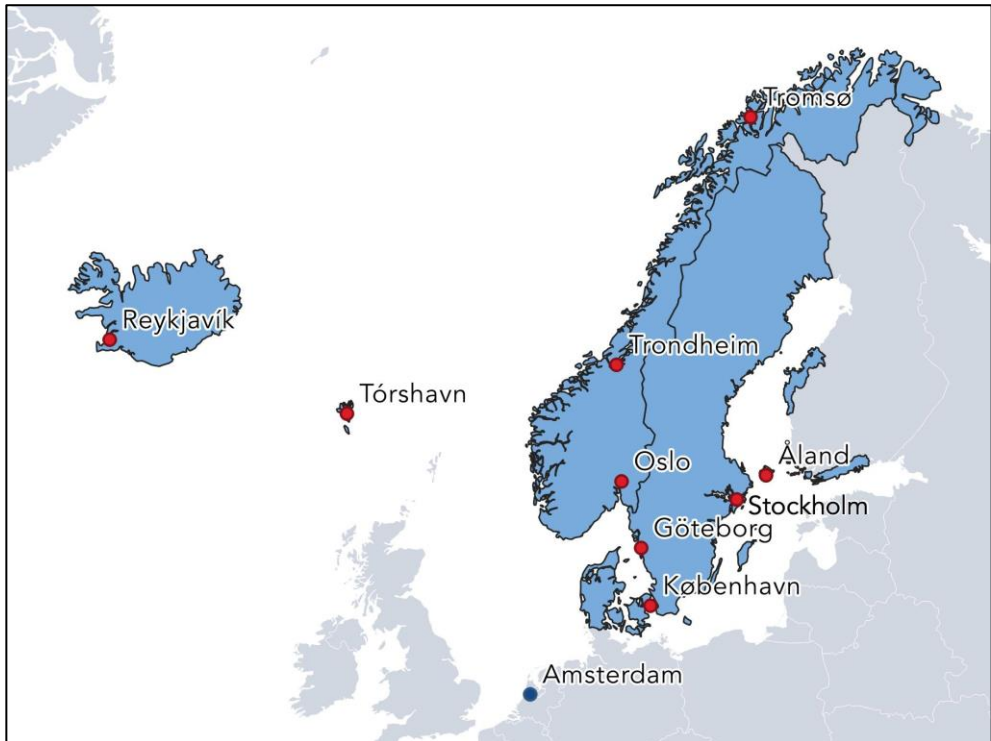


FIGURE 1: Recording locations NWD (up to October 2024).

Table 1 gives an overview of the locations in the database, and the number of participants. The Norwegian regions are based on self-reported dialect (see

Westendorp 2021a: Fig. 1); regions in Sweden and Finland are recording locations. For Danish, Faroese and Icelandic, no distinction between regions is provided in NWD.

NWD contains data from two experiments (with the same overall design; see Lundquist et al. 2019), one that elicits argument placement, and one that elicits verb placement in main and embedded contexts. The verb placement experiment has, however, not been carried out in all locations, and we currently lack data from Iceland (cf. Table 1).

Language	Region	# of speakers	Experiment
Danish	n/a	36	argument placement & verb placement
Faroese	n/a	81	argument placement & verb placement
Icelandic	n/a	30	argument placement
Norwegian	East	36	argument placement & verb placement
	North	105	argument placement & verb placement
	Central (Trøndelag)	36	argument placement & verb placement
	West	7	argument placement & verb placement
Swedish	Göteborg	24	argument placement
	Stockholm	42	argument placement & verb placement
	Åland	4	argument placement
total		422	

TABLE 1: Overview of database locations and participants.

Since the establishment of the database and its introduction in Lundquist et al. (2019), subsequent research has continued to utilize and expand upon the methodologies originally developed for NWD. Data on argument placement was collected from 21 L2 speakers of Swedish and Norwegian in Amsterdam (for a discussion of subject and object shift patterns and a comparison with L1 data, see Westendorp & Lundquist 2021). Furthermore, a project in Tromsø, which was

also extended to Trondheim, focused on the effects of elicitation in different modalities (written standard vs. spoken dialect). The results from the Tromsø-study were published in Lundquist, Westendorp & Strand (2020). Størdal (2022) conducted a similar set of experiments in Trondheim. In the Tromsø-based project *Experimental Approaches to Syntactic Optionality* (PI: B. Lundquist), data was collected to investigate processing and production difficulties, and both new data and original NWD-data was text-to-speech aligned (see, e.g., Lyskawa et al. 2022). Additional material from this project, focusing on subject placement in relation to various adverbs, as well as more L2-data, will be uploaded to NWD in the future. The data from all these projects have been integrated in the database, but will not be discussed in the present article.

In the following, we look at the main results from NWD provided in the articles on the individual languages in this special issue, setting aside the L2 data and the experiments that investigate different modalities. Sections 3–5 are concerned with argument placement; Sections 6–7 present results from the verb placement experiment.

[3] SUBJECT SHIFT

The data in NWD covers placement of definite NP-subjects and pronouns relative to negation and other adverbs. Here, we focus exclusively on the ordering of subjects and negation, but note that the word order preferences might be different with other adverbs (see Lundquist & Tengedal 2022: 63). Following established terminology, the order subject–negation is referred to as involving *subject shift*, whereas subjects that follow negation are referred to as *unshifted*.

Examples of subject placement from Swedish are given in (1) (from Larsson & Lundquist 2022: 77); the percentage sign in (1b) marks that the order negation–subject is accepted by some speakers, but not all.

- (1) a. Idag kunde läraren/hon inte svaret. [Sw.]
 Today knew teacher.DEF/she not answer.DEF
 b. Idag kunde inte läraren/%hon svaret.
 Today knew not teacher.DEF/she answer.DEF
 ‘The teacher/she didn’t know the answer today.’

In NWD, the placement of pronominal subjects is categorical in all of the North Germanic languages: subject pronouns always precede negation; see Figure 2.² Moreover, non-pronominal subjects precede negation categorically in Icelandic, Faroese and Danish (see Lundquist 2020: 15, Larsson 2022: 16, Larsson &

[2] Here and in the following, we have excluded the word order category ‘Other’ in the figures, since it mostly involves irrelevant production errors. See the papers on the individual languages for details.

Tengesdal 2022: 123). It should be noted, though, that the similarity between the languages is most likely a result of the type of subject — definite NPs — included in the experimental items: subject shift is expected to be obligatory with definite subjects in Icelandic, but not with indefinite NPs (see, e.g., Thráinsson 2007: 45–55 and references therein), but categorical with both definite and indefinite subjects in Danish (with a few exceptions; Ørsnes 2009). With respect to Faroese, it is not completely clear if indefinite subjects would follow negation (as in Icelandic), or if Faroese would pattern with Danish (cf. Jonas 1993); Lundquist (2020: 23) observes that argument placement in the Faroese data in NWD is overall strikingly similar to Danish.

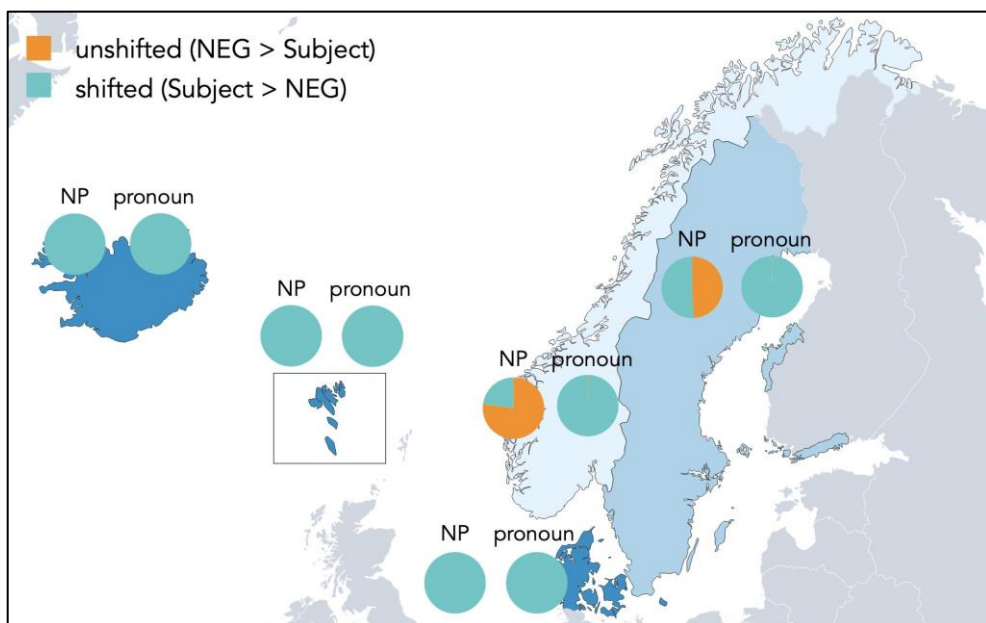


FIGURE 2: Subject shift with NPs and pronouns. Pie charts indicate the proportion of each word order by country; shading intensity reflects higher percentage of shifted NP-subjects.

As is evident from Figure 2, non-pronominal subjects have variable placement in both Norwegian and Swedish (see also Bentzen 2014a). In Norwegian, there is a clear preference for unshifted non-pronominal subjects (as has also been pointed out in previous studies; e.g., Westergaard 2011, Lundquist & Tengesdal 2022: 35 and references therein), whereas in Swedish, the distribution is more balanced (for details, see Larsson & Lundquist 2022, Section 5.1; cf., e.g., Svenonius 2002). Importantly, despite the different preferences, there is intra-individual variation in both languages, which is not necessarily regionally determined

within the languages (see in particular Larsson & Lundquist 2022: Figure 1), and which (given the experimental data) cannot be explained with reference to information structure.³

[4] REGULAR AND LONG OBJECT SHIFT

The data in NWD includes sentences with contexts for so-called (regular) object shift, i.e., the possibility for objects to precede negation or other sentence adverbs (see, among others, Holmberg 1986, Thráinsson 2007: 32–33, 75–79, Andréasson 2010, Bentzen 2014b). In addition, NWD includes data on long object shift: the possibility in some varieties to place a pronominal object to the left of the subject (e.g., Holmberg 1986, Börjars et al. 2003). Examples from Swedish are given in (2) (adapted from Larsson & Lundquist 2022: 2). The example in (2a) illustrates that object shift across negation is only expected to be possible with pronominal objects in Swedish (as in the other Mainland North Germanic languages). In (2b) the indirect object pronoun can be placed either before or after the subject; placement to the left of the subject would be an instance of long object shift.

- (2) a. Lisa köpte {den/*boken} inte {den/boken}. [Swedish]
 Lisa bought it/book.DEF not it/book.DEF
 ‘Lisa didn’t buy it/the book.’
- b. Idag gav {mig} Lisa {mig} en ny bok.
 today gave me Lisa me a new book
 ‘Today, Lisa gave me a new book.’

Considering regular object shift, the placement of objects relative to negation was tested in all locations, whereas object shift across other sentence adverbs was only included on Iceland (where type of adverb has consequences for NP-object shift; see Larsson 2022: 19). Here, we therefore only give an overview of placement relative to negation, which was tested with NP-objects, as well as first and third person pronominal objects (see Figure 3). Since object shift can interact with subject shift (a non-shifted NP-subject blocks regular object shift; see Larsson & Lundquist 2022: 93–94), we only include items with a pronominal subject or a sentence-initial NP-subject.

The results show that pronominal object shift is categorical in Icelandic. In Mainland North Germanic and Faroese, on the other hand, there are instances of non-shifted pronominal objects – more so in Swedish than in the other

[3] In both Norwegian and Swedish, there is a difference in subject placement between part 1 and part 2 of the experiment, which most likely is an effect of priming, due to the elicitation method (see Larsson & Lundquist 2022: 100, Lundquist & Tengedal 2022: 64).

languages. In Swedish, third person pronouns are more prone to remain unshifted (111/280; 39.6% unshifted) than first person pronouns (61/292; 20.8% unshifted) (based on Larsson & Lundquist 2022: 95, Table 6). In Norwegian it is the other way around (4.7% unshifted third person pronouns (21/449) and 7.6% (22/290) unshifted first person pronouns; based on Lundquist & Tengedal 2022: 57, Table 4). The difference between first and third person pronouns is only significant in Swedish.⁴ As expected, NP-object shift is robustly attested in Icelandic (e.g., Thráinsson 2013), although unshifted NPs are more common (60% unshifted NPs in sentences with negation; Larsson 2022: 19, Table 2). For Faroese, it is unclear how the 11 examples of NP-shift should be interpreted; they mostly involve one test item (Lundquist 2020: 18–19, 24). In Swedish, there are altogether 3 examples of NP-object shift produced by 2 different speakers, and they can probably be disregarded (Larsson & Lundquist 2022: 95). See also Larsson & Tengedal (2022: 126, Table 5) for the Danish data; Lundquist (2020: 22, Table 4) for Faroese; Larsson (2022: 16, 19) for Icelandic; Lundquist & Tengedal (2022: 57, Table 4) for Norwegian; and Larsson & Lundquist (2022: 95, Table 6) for Swedish.

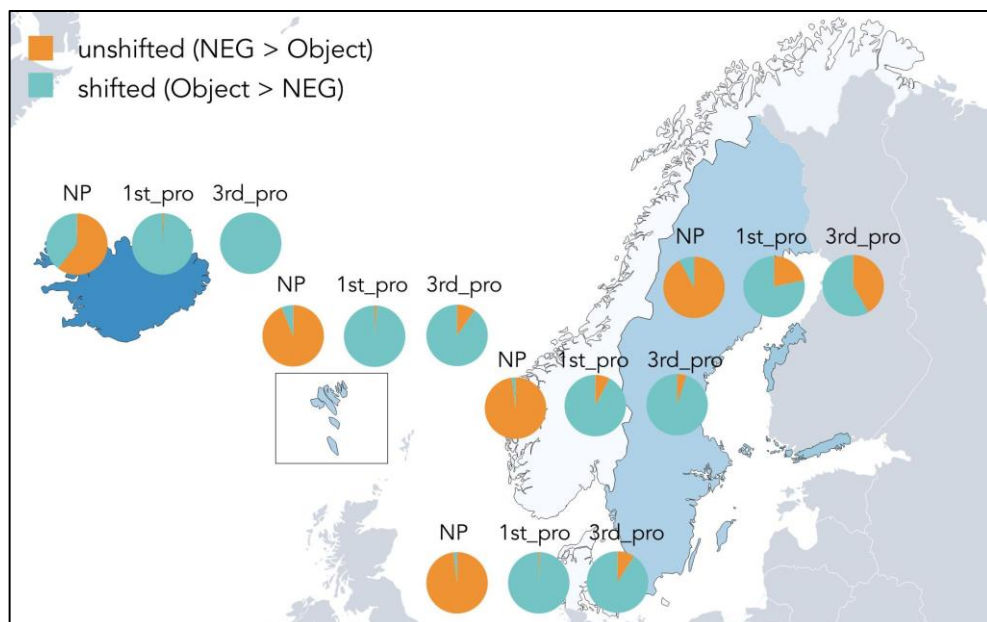


FIGURE 3: Object shift with NPs and first and third person pronouns. Shading intensity reflects higher percentage of shifted NP-objects.

[4] Pearson's Chi-square tests were conducted in R (R Core Team 2022) to examine the effect of type of pronoun on the proportion of unshifted word orders within each language. For Swedish the difference between first and third person pronouns was significant ($\chi^2(1) = 23.0, p < .001$); for Norwegian it was not ($\chi^2(1) = 2.22, p = .137$).

Reflexive object shift was tested in sentences that also elicit subject placement, where long object shift is a possibility for some speakers. In Swedish, 3.7% of the reflexive pronouns follow negation (Larsson & Lundquist 2022: 91, Table 4). In Icelandic and Faroese, reflexive pronouns always shift across negation (Larsson 2022: 17), and in Danish there are only a couple of exceptional examples of unshifted reflexives (Larsson & Tengesdal 2022: 126). In Norwegian, unshifted subjects block reflexive object shift, but in contexts where object shift is a possibility, only 2.8% of the reflexives remain unshifted (see Lundquist & Tengesdal 2022: 57, Table 4).

The data in NWD confirm that long object shift of an object pronoun across a subject is possible in Swedish, but not in the other North Germanic languages (Holmberg 1986, Heinat 2007, Thráinsson 2007: 71, Larsson & Lundquist 2022, and many others). In Swedish, long object shift across an NP-subject is frequent with reflexives: 79.4% of the reflexives undergo long object shift (Larsson & Lundquist 2022: 92, Table 5). Pronominal objects shift across the subject much more rarely (8.5%), and only some speakers produce long object shift with pronouns (Larsson & Lundquist 2022: 92). The variable ordering of subjects, pronominal or reflexive objects and negation in Swedish is striking; the only order that is not attested in NWD is Negation–Object–Subject (Larsson & Lundquist 2022: 91, Table 4). However, the data in NWD does not reveal any regional variation within Swedish.

The other North Germanic languages show considerably less variability, given that regular object shift is categorical or near-categorical, and that long object shift is banned. However, the results also show that there is at least some variability in object shift in Norwegian, less than in Swedish, but still not completely negligible. This confirms results from previous corpus studies, which show some limited variability in Norwegian (Bentzen et al. 2013), as well as studies using acceptability judgements, which show that many Norwegians accept both shifted and unshifted object pronouns (Bentzen 2014b).

[5] REGULAR AND LONG PARTICLE SHIFT

In addition to subject shift and object shift, NWD also covers the placement of subjects and objects vis-à-vis verb particles. We refer to the order particle–subject as involving long particle shift, and the order particle–object as involving regular particle shift (without making any theoretical claims about the derivation of the word orders).

Let us first consider regular particle shift. As with object shift, NWD includes contexts with particles and both pronominal and NP-objects. In Icelandic and Norwegian, word order can depend on whether the object is pronominal or not: pronouns generally precede particles; cf. (3a) and (3b) (and see Lundquist &

Tengesdal 2022: 32).

- (1) a. Vaktene kastet ut studenten/%ham i går. [Norwegian]
 guard.PL.DEF threw out student.DEF/him yesterday
 b. Vaktene kastet studenten/ham ut i går.
 guard.PL.DEF threw student.DEF/him out yesterday
 ‘The guards threw the student/him out yesterday.’

In addition to the two types of objects, NWD also distinguishes different kinds of verb particles: directional particles (like *kaste ut* ‘throw out’ in (3)), semantically non-transparent particles (metaphorical particles like No. *skjelle ut* ‘scold’), prepositional particles (e.g., *bygge om* ‘rebuild’), and directional particles combined with a PP (*kaste ut av puben* ‘throw out of the pub’). In Icelandic and Norwegian, there are somewhat different patterns for the different types (Larsson 2022: 22; Lundquist & Tengesdal 2022: 59). Here, we only distinguish particles with a PP (see Figure 5); the other types have been collapsed in the overview in Figure 4.

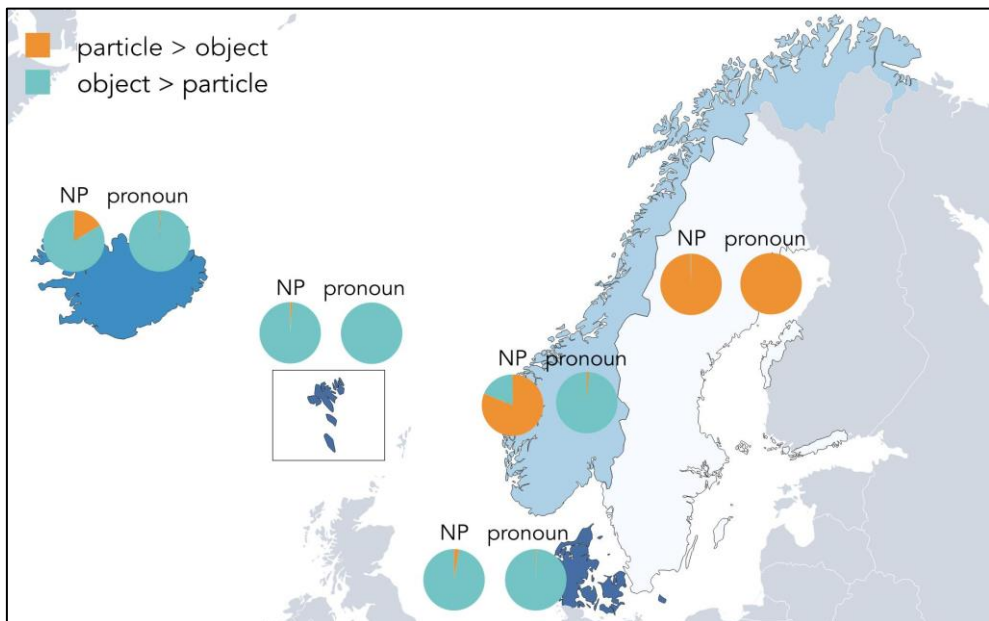


FIGURE 4: Particle constructions with NPs and pronouns. Shading intensity reflects higher percentage of NP-object > particle orders.

As can be seen in Figure 4, the word order in particle constructions is categorical (or near categorical) in Danish (Larsson & Tengesdal 2022: 127) and Faroese (Lundquist 2020: 22) with both types of objects preceding particles, and in Swedish, where particles instead precede objects (Larsson & Lundquist 2022: 97).

Icelandic and Norwegian have the Danish word order with pronouns, but variable placement of NP-objects relative to particles (Larsson 2022: 22; Lundquist & Tengesdal 2022: 59). In Icelandic, the order NP–particle is preferred. The order particle–NP is more common with metaphorical particles (31%) than with directional particles (6%) (Larsson 2022: 22, Table 3). In Norwegian, the order particle–NP is clearly preferred with all types of particles (in the absence of a PP), but as in Icelandic this preference is stronger with metaphorical particles (88.4%) than with directional particles (66.4%) (see Lundquist & Tengesdal 2022: 59 for details).

Figure 5 gives an overview of the word order in directional particle constructions with a PP that introduces a source or goal (*kaste ut av puben* ‘throw out of the pub’). Again, the word order is categorical in Danish, Faroese and Swedish. Moreover, it is near-categorical in Icelandic: both pronominal and NP-objects precede particles. This is not necessarily a consequence of the PP: as mentioned, the order NP–particle is a strong preference with directional particles independently of the PP (see Larsson 2022: 22). In Norwegian, on the other hand, the PP has a clear effect: the order particle–NP is much more common in contexts with a directional PP than otherwise (see Lundquist & Tengesdal 2022: 59; cf. Larsson 2022: 26).

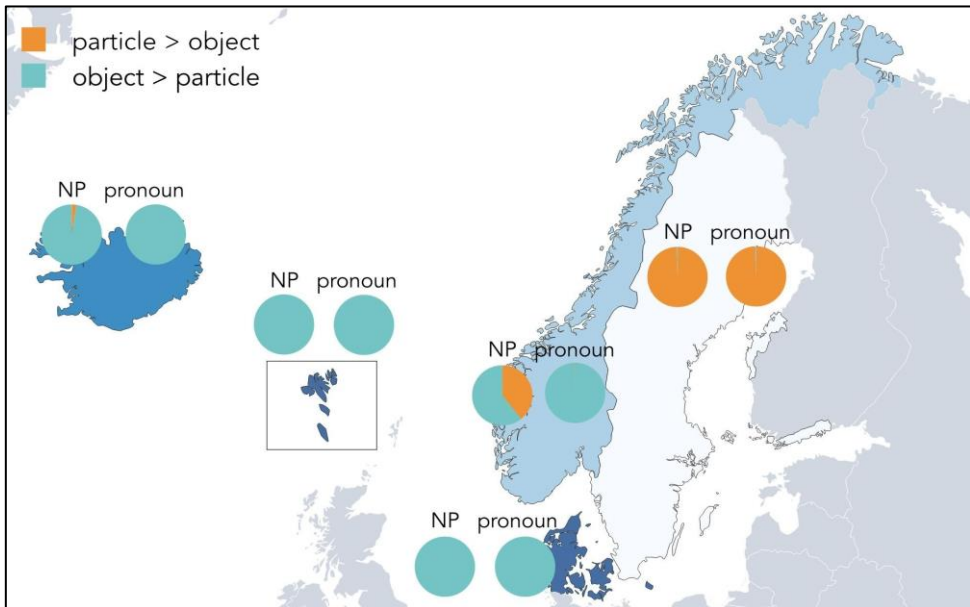


FIGURE 5: Particle shift of directional particle followed by source/goal PP with NPs and pronouns. Shading intensity reflects higher percentage of NP-object > particle orders.

In addition to object placement relative to verb particles, NWD also contains data on the ordering of *subjects* and particles. Particles are generally verb phrase internal in the North Germanic languages, and since subjects are VP-external, they normally precede particles. There are a couple of exceptions involving indefinite subjects in the Icelandic data, but these probably involve VP-internal subjects (Larsson 2022: 23). More interestingly, there are more sporadic examples of definite subjects following particles in Icelandic and Norwegian (Larsson 2022: 24, Lundquist & Tengesdal 2022: 54); see (4) below.

- (4) I går rydda opp den nye studenten på kjøkkenet. [No.]
 yesterday cleaned up the new student.DEF in kitchen.DEF
 ‘Yesterday, the new students cleaned up in the kitchen.’ (FO02)

This word order is unexpected, but has been observed occasionally in spontaneous speech in Norwegian and Swedish (see Lundquist 2020: 9). In more recent data collection in Fosen in Norwegian Trøndelag, the order particle–subject has been more firmly attested, with as much as 13.1% (23/175) particle–subject order.⁵ In the data from other parts of Norway in NWD, there are only a couple of examples. The example in (4) comes from the Fosen data.

[6] EMBEDDED VERB PLACEMENT

As outlined in Section 2, NWD contains data from two experiments. The second experiment elicits verb placement in main and embedded contexts. The verb placement experiment was carried out on the Faroe Islands (Westendorp 2020), in Stockholm (Sweden), Denmark (Westendorp 2021b), and in Norway (Westendorp 2021a). The Swedish and Faroese experiments only tested verb placement in embedded clauses; the Danish and Norwegian experiments in addition include verb placement in main clauses.

The Mainland North Germanic languages have “asymmetric” verb second (V2), meaning that the finite verb appears in second position, directly after the initial constituent, in main but not in embedded clauses (e.g., Vikner 1995, Holmberg 2015). However, some assertive embedded clauses allow so-called embedded V2 (EV2) (e.g., Holmberg & Platzack 1995, Vikner 1995, Julien 2007). Earlier stages of Mainland North Germanic and contemporary Icelandic, on the other hand, are generalised V2-languages where the verb moves to a high position independent of clause type (e.g., Falk 1993, Holmberg & Platzack 1995). The exact status of embedded verb placement in Faroese has been under discussion,

[5] Trøndersk is known to allow the order particle–pronominal object, unlike other Norwegian dialects, but like Swedish (e.g., Larsson & Lundquist 2014). Note, however, that the order particle–subject does not occur in the Swedish data in NWD.

but it has been shown to be at a late stage of losing generalized V2 (see Westendorp 2020: 29f. for an overview of relevant literature).

NWD contains data on embedded verb placement in several contexts. Here, we focus on two constructions and examine the placement of the finite verb vis-à-vis adverbs in assertive complements of the verb ‘to say’ as in (5) and embedded yes/no-questions as in (6).

- (5) Marit sier at ... [No.]
 Marit says that ...
 hun {kommer} aldri {kommer} for sent på jobb.
 she come never come too late at work
 ‘Marit says she never gets to work late.’
- (6) Páll spurdi um ... [Faroese]
 Paul asked if ...
 Óli {súkkklar} altíð {súkkklar} til arbeiðis.
 Ole bikes always bikes to work
 ‘Paul asked if Ole always bikes to work.’

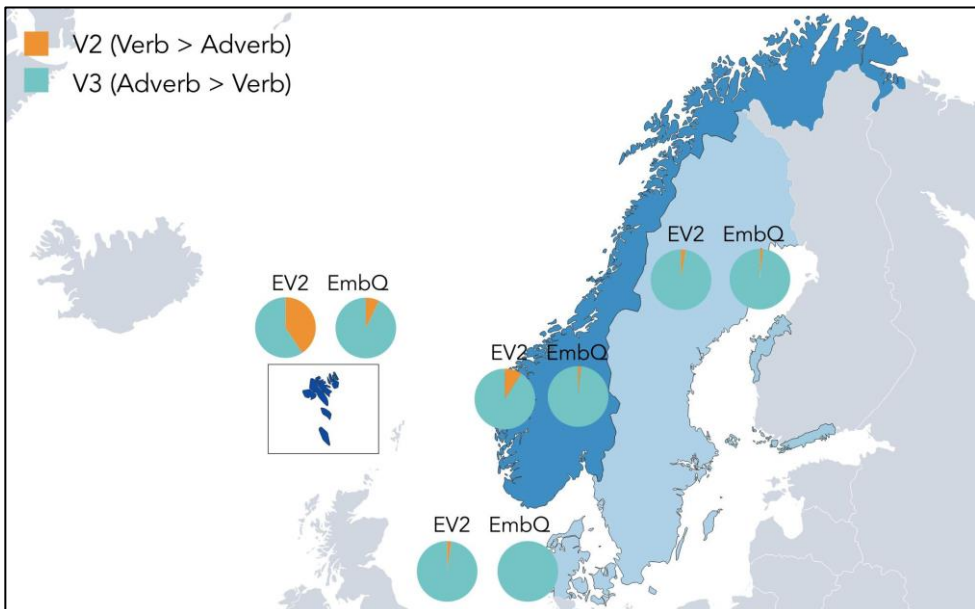


FIGURE 6: Embedded verb placement in assertive complements and embedded yes/no questions. Shading intensity reflects higher percentage of EV2 in assertive embedded clauses.

Figure 6 shows that in assertive complements V2 (EV2 in Figure 6) is only found marginally in Danish and Swedish in NWD (ca. 2%). This is surprising given that

almost half of the complement clauses with negation in the spoken Danish LANCHART corpus has V2-order (Jensen & Christensen 2013). The discrepancy between the NWD-data and corpus data, provides an indication that EV2 requires a special pragmatic context – a context that our experimental paradigm does not set up for. Interestingly then, Norwegian participants produce slightly more embedded V2 (11.4%) than the Danish and Swedish speakers.⁶ There is a clear contrast with the Faroese data, however, where we find that verb placement after *segði* ‘to say’ is much more variable than in Mainland North Germanic (41% EV2). This confirms that the pragmatic requirements are not as strict in Faroese (see, e.g., Heycock et al. 2012 for a direct comparison of Faroese and Danish).

In embedded yes/no-questions (EmbQ in Figure 6), the order verb–negation is very rare in the Mainland North Germanic languages (see Westendorp 2021a for discussion of the Norwegian data, Westendorp 2021b for Swedish and Danish). In the Faroese data, around 7% of embedded yes/no-questions are produced with verb–adverb order. Because only subject-initial embedded contexts were included in NWD, it is impossible (based on this data exclusively) to know whether verb–adverb surface orders result from V-to-I movement or V-to-C. However, the proportion of verb–adverb orders differ between clause types in all languages, indicating that it is mainly V-to-C, not V-to-I we see here; clause type is generally assumed to be encoded in the C-domain, and we do not expect V-to-I movement to be sensitive to clause type.

NWD also includes data on embedded *wh*-questions. These *wh*-questions never included adverbs and acted first and foremost as fillers. Still, we will highlight some interesting observations. In Faroese, the relative marker *ið* may optionally follow the *wh*-constituent in embedded subject and non-subject *wh*-questions (Thrainsson et al. 2012: 196, 303f.). In Mainland North Germanic, the complementizer *som* (No./Sw.) or *der* (Da.), is obligatory in subject *wh*-questions. In non-subject *wh*-questions there is variation: in Swedish and Norwegian *som* is optional, but in Danish it is ungrammatical (Faarlund 2019: 242f).

In NWD, we find only 3 examples of the use of *ið* in Faroese, and only in subject questions such as (7).

- (7) Páll vildi vita ... [Faroese]
 Páll wanted know.INF
 hvør ið var í ballinum í gjárvöldið.
 who REL was in party.DEF yesterday.night.DEF
 ‘Páll wanted to know who was at the party yesterday.’

[6] Sentences with the adverb *ofte* ‘often’, which can occur clause-finally, were removed from the Norwegian data here. For discussion of sentences with this adverb, see Westendorp (2021: 20–22).

Even though the complementizer is obligatory in embedded subject *wh*-questions in the Mainland North Germanic languages, NWD contains a number of examples lacking this element: especially in Norwegian (10% of 578 examples) and Danish (6% of 48), and less so in Swedish (2% of 246). It seems reasonable to assume that most of these examples are actually direct questions, but it is unclear why we find more examples in Norwegian. One possibility is that there is individual variation – the examples are produced by a relatively small set of speakers. It can also be noted that omission of the complementizer is found most often when the *wh*-element is phrasal, as in (8).

- (8) Oscar spurgte .. [Danish]
 Oscar asked
 hvilke bands spillede på festivalen i weekenden.
 which band.PL played at festival.DEF in weekend.DEF
 ‘Oscar asked which bands were playing at the festival last weekend.’

Finally, we find a few instances of the complementizer *som* in Swedish and Norwegian embedded non-subject *wh*-questions:

- (9) Peter ville veta ... [Swedish]
 Peter wanted know.INF
 vilken film som eleverna såg igår.
 which film COMP student.PL.DEF saw yesterday
 ‘Peter wanted to know which film the students saw yesterday.’

[7] MAIN CLAUSE VERB PLACEMENT

As stated in the previous section, main clause verb placement was included in the Danish and Norwegian experiments only. Here, we divide the Norwegian data by region based on the participants self-reported dialect: Northern, Central (Trøndersk), Western, and Eastern Norwegian.

Verb placement was tested in two types of constructions. First, the data include main clause *wh*-questions, which are known to show verb placement variation in Norwegian dialects; see (10) below. Second, NWD includes main clauses with so-called V3-adverbs, i.e., adverbs that can occur in preverbal position, which are available in all North Germanic languages; see the Danish example in (11).

- (10) a. Hvem {som} lagde maten? [Norwegian]
 who COMP made food.def
 ‘Who made the food?’

b. Hva {jobbet} hun {jobbet} med?
 what worked she worked with
 ‘What did she do for work?’

(11) Danmark {knuste} bogstaveligt talt {knuste} Norge i finalen.
 Denmark crushed literally crushed Norway in final.DEF
 ‘Denmark literally crushed Norway in the final.’

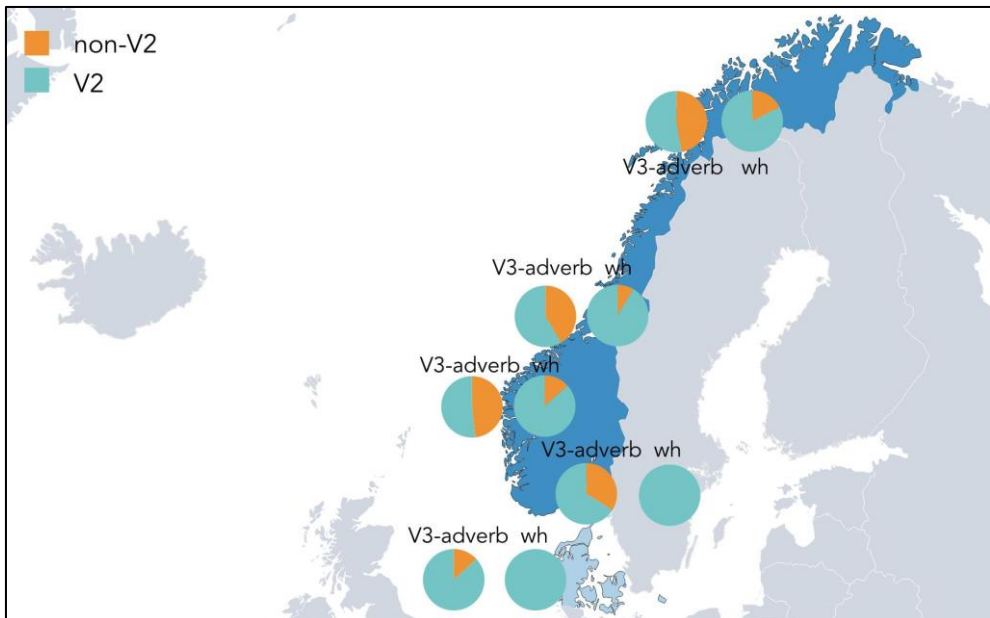


FIGURE 7: Main clause verb placement with V3-adverbs, and verb placement in main clause wh-questions in Danish and Norwegian. Pie charts for Norway by region: North, Central, West, East. Shading intensity reflects higher percentage of non-V2 orders with adverbs.

Consider first the V3-adverbs. As can be seen in Figure 7, V2 word order is the most common order found in NWD, even though non-V2 word order is an option with these adverbs. There is variation between the different adverbs tested (see Westendorp 2021b: 65–66 for Danish, and Westendorp 2021a: 24–27 for Norwegian). A relatively common strategy for both Danish and Norwegian speakers is to place the adverbs sentence-initially (see the Norwegian example in (12) from NOR041).

- (12) Bokstaveligt talt knuste TIL Rosenberg i bortekampen
 literally destroyed TIL Rosenberg in away-game.DEF
 ‘TIL literally destroyed Rosenberg in the away game.’

Unsurprisingly, all the Danish main clause *wh*-questions in NWD are produced with the standard verb second word order. In the Norwegian data, we find variable verb placement, depending on region: Eastern Norwegian speakers produce only V2 order; Northern (17.5% non-V2) and Western speakers (13.5%) produce the largest proportions of non-V2 orders (for discussion see Westendorp 2021a: 28).⁷

Across all the main clause verb placement data, we can observe that in the regions where more non-V2 orders are produced in *wh*-questions, more non-V2 orders are used with V3-adverbs as well. However, Lundquist, Westendorp & Strand (2020: 276) find that there is no correlation between the production of non-V2 structures in different clause types in Norwegian. The connection between these observations therefore remains unclear.

[8] CONCLUSION

NWD includes experimental data on argument placement and verb placement from all the North Germanic languages. Since the same phenomena have been investigated in all of the languages, and in the same controlled contexts, NWD provides an excellent starting point for cross-linguistic comparison. The data in NWD reveal considerable word order variation both within and across the North Germanic languages.

With respect to argument placement, there is very little variation in Faroese and Danish in NWD. Icelandic has variable placement of NP-objects relative to negation (and other sentence adverbs) and verb particles; the placement of subject and object pronouns is categorical. There is a difference between pronouns and NPs also in Norwegian and Swedish, but the placement of object pronouns is less categorical. Particularly in Swedish, the ordering of NP-subjects, object pronouns and negation is highly variable; the order particle-object, on the other hand, is strict.

Considering verb placement (which was not investigated in Iceland), there are again both categorical and variable patterns across the languages. In Norwegian, there is variation both in main and embedded clauses, with deviations from an asymmetric V2-pattern. In the Danish and Swedish data in NWD, on the other

[7] There are also differences in the proportions of V2 used based on the elicitation modality. That is, when using spoken dialect in stead of written standard language to elicit the NWD-sentences, we find a higher proportion of non-V2 structures (Lundquist, Westendorp & Strand 2020). See Westendorp (2021: 30–33) for a full overview of the effects in *wh*-questions and sentences with preverbal adverbs.

hand, there is less variation in verb placement, but some cases of embedded V2 in *that*-clauses, and some deviations from linear V2 with preverbal adverbs. There is, however, no evidence of non-V2 in main clauses in the way we observe in Norwegian. Faroese has considerably more embedded V2 than the Mainland North Germanic languages.

Apart from non-V2 in *wh*-questions (which is regional in Norwegian) and the order verb particle–subject (found in Fosen in Norwegian Trøndelag), the data in NWD reveal little regional variation – apart from the differences between the languages described above. Instead, variation found within languages is very often within speaker variation – and different speakers can have different preferences, although these preferences are not dialectal. The explanations for the variation across North Germanic, and the analysis of the intra-speaker variation, is still a task for future work. The data in NWD can provide a starting point for such analyses.

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