

# Preface

This book is a revised version of my 2012 Ph.D. dissertation at New York University. While the general theoretical and empirical picture is mostly the same here, I have added numerous further examples, references, and considerations that go beyond the dissertation. Many of these additions are direct responses to comments and questions that have arisen in the 2 years since I finished my dissertation, and others draw on, or provide reference to, research that has been conducted since then. I have added various ‘gray boxes’ throughout; these are intended to draw attention to additional facts and/or considerations that go beyond the main discussion.

I hope that this book will be of interest to several kinds of linguists. As such, many linguists should not feel the need to read every section of it. The following overview of chapters is intended to give a sense of what sections might be relevant to the reader, depending on his/her aims and interests.

The first part of Chap. 1 begins with an overview of the general research program that the proposal in this book pursues. It then presents the specific assumptions of the system pursued, followed by some background on Icelandic syntax (along with some pointers toward recent, interesting work). These parts are probably necessary for the reader to understand the details of the chapters that follow, and what I hope to accomplish in them are more generally, at a more than cursory level. However, it is also entirely possible to skip the details of the system and return to them later if something in subsequent chapters warrants it. That is, Chap. 1 is the place to go if something in later chapters is unclear, for example some assumption about Icelandic or about how semantic composition or morphological spellout works.

Chapter 2 is devoted to the morphosyntactic properties of the *-st* morpheme, and includes a rather lengthy argument that we should think of it as a clitic. I put this discussion first because I felt that if I had not, it would have been the elephant in every other chapter’s room. I do not, in those chapters, draw out the ‘full trees’ all the way up to the clausal level. Instead, I generally focus on the internal structure of

the verb phrase, which is understood here as VoiceP. If these structures were left alone, however, some readers would be left wondering how they relate to the rest of the clause and how *-st* ends up attaching to the ‘verb word’. Chapter 2 is intended to address those questions up front, so that they will not be nagging at the reader throughout. But for readers who are more interested in understanding what role *-st* plays in the building of verb phrases, Chap. 2 can probably be safely skipped.

Chapters 3 through 5 lay out the core proposal of the book. They are each partly independent, but also partly interdependent in a variety of ways. I have made every effort to cross-reference when necessary throughout, so that if something in Chap. 5 depends on a conclusion from Chap. 3, the reader will know where to go to find that conclusion. For example, the analysis of dative-nominative constructions in Chap. 5 depends in large part on the analysis of anticausatives in Chap. 3, and the analysis of ingestives in Chap. 5 depends in large part on the analysis of figure reflexives in Chap. 4. Chapters 3 and 5 make similar use of semantic coercion of DPs. Each chapter focuses most of the analysis on some key examples, and then has separate sections on how different lexical roots may occur in different structures.

Chapter 6 is, in a way, similar to Chap. 2, in that it is intended to address some further questions about the properties of the *-st* morpheme. Here, however, the questions involve other ‘uses’ of the morpheme in distinct constructions. This chapter should be read by those who are especially interested in the range of constructions that *-st* participates in. The analysis of these constructions does not serve as the basis for the proposal pursued in this book. Nevertheless, some readers will wonder how these other uses of *-st* fit into the overall proposal. Chapter 6 is an attempt to do this. I hope it will be useful not only for people interested in *-st* itself, but also for people who are interested in the range of uses of ‘middle voice’ cross-linguistically. Although I do not use the term ‘deponent,’ people who are interested in deponents may be interested in some of the constructions in this chapter.

For those who are generally interested in the structure of Icelandic, I hope that this book provides a useful way of organizing and understanding argument structure alternations. The *-st* morpheme is as ubiquitous in Icelandic as it is mysterious, and I hope that a major contribution of this book is that it presents a way that we can clarify the role that this morpheme plays in the language. The clarification comes from separating the semantic contribution of the lexical root from the contribution of the syntactic structures themselves. With respect to *-st*, it is common to ask whether the *-st* form of a verb is still ‘the same verb’ as the non-*-st* form. To answer this question, we must ask: what does it mean to be a ‘different verb’? In this study, there is a sense in which transitive *brjóta* ‘break’ and intransitive *brotna* ‘break’ are different verbs from the perspective of morphology, but the same verb from the perspective of the semantics. Conversely, consider phrases like *skjóta henni í búðina* ‘shoot(≈drive) her to the store’ versus phrases like *skjóta fugla* ‘shoot birds’. These two uses of *skjóta* ‘shoot’ are the same verb from the perspective of morphology, but different verbs from the perspective of semantics. More generally, we ask what the semantic contribution of the root is, on the one hand, and what the

morphological realizations of verbal affixes are, on the other. When we ask the question this way, I think that we see a lot of morphosyntactic systematicity hidden behind the idiosyncratic contributions of lexical roots.

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Jim Wood



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Wood, J.

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