The Icelandic verb phrase: a description

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The Icelandic verb phrase: a description

1 The order of elements in the verb phrase

All syntactic constituents have a core-word or a head. Thus, an adjective is the head of an adjective phrase, AP, an adverb is the head of the adverbial phrase, AdvP, a noun or a pronoun is the head of a noun phrase, NP, and a verb is the head of the verb phrase, VP. Other parts of syntactic constituents are either determiners, modifiers or complements of the head. Thus, in the VP read the book, the verb read is the head of the VP, and the object the book is the head's complement (see also on heads, complements, determiners and modifiers in chapter 6, on noun phrases).

The Icelandic verb phrase is basically verb initial, beginning with either an auxiliary or a main verb. However, the tensed verb normally moves out of the verb phrase, to the Tense position in subordinate clauses and all the way to the C-position in main clauses. This means that the ‘remaining’ verb phrase, ‘left behind’ or ‘stranded by’ the verb movement, does not contain a tensed verb, whereas it often contains non-tensed verbs. In case the clause contains only one (tensed) verb, no verb is within the verb phrase. The tensed verb is underlined in the following examples; the verb phrase is within brackets, the slot showing that the tensed verb has moved from the verb phrase’s initial position (to Tense in (1a), to C in (1b)):

(1) a. … að hann hefur liklega ekki [__ tekið lestina].
   … that he has probably not taken train.the
b. Þá hefur hann liklega ekki [__ tekið lestina].
   then has he probably not taken train.the

The basic order of elements in the Icelandic verb phrase is:

(2) Main verb – Indirect object – Direct object – Bound adverbials / predicative complements

This is illustrated in (3) and (4):

(3) a. Ég ætla að gefa henni penna í jólagjöf.
   I intend to give her.DAT pen.ACC in Christmas-present
   ‘I will give her pens as a Christmas present.’
b. Hann hefur svipt hana lifsgleðinni.
   he has deprived her.ACC life-joy.the.DAT
   ‘He has deprived her of her happiness.’
c. Ég er búinn að setja fískinn á pönnuna.
   I am done to put fish.the.ACC on pan.the
   ‘I have (already) put the fish into the pan.’
d. Hún hefur liklega verið góður læknir.’
   she has probably been good doctor
   ‘She was probably a good doctor.’
e. Hún mun hafa verið í grænum jakka.
   she shall have been in green jacked
   ‘She was in a green jacket, they say.’
f. Henni voru gefnir pennar af forsetanum.
    her.DAT were.3PL given.PL pens.NOM by president.the
    ‘She was given a pen by the president.’

(4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>X</th>
<th>Main verb</th>
<th>Indirect object</th>
<th>Direct object</th>
<th>Bound adverbials / Predicative complements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Óg ætla að I intend to</td>
<td>gefa give</td>
<td>henni her.DAT</td>
<td>penna pen.ACC</td>
<td>i jólagjöf for christmas-present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hann hefur he has</td>
<td>svíft deprived</td>
<td>hana her.ACC</td>
<td>lífsgleðinni life-joy.the.DAT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Óg er búinn að I am done to</td>
<td>setja put</td>
<td>fiskinn fish.the.ACC</td>
<td>á pönnuna on pan.the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hún hefur líklega she has probably</td>
<td>verið been</td>
<td></td>
<td>gòður læknr (a)good doctor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hún mun hafa she shall have</td>
<td>verið been</td>
<td></td>
<td>i grænum jakka in green jacket</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henni voru her.DAT were.3PL</td>
<td>gefnir given.PL</td>
<td>pennar pens.NOM</td>
<td>af forsetanum by president.the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MANNER ADVERBIALS have their canonical position next after the direct object (when they are not clause-initial):

(5) a. Óg setti bókina varlega á borðið.
     I put book.the cautiously on table.the
     ‘I put the book cautiously on the table.’

b. *Óg setti varlega bókina á borðið.

c. ??Óg setti bókina á borðið varlega.

STAGE-SETTING ADVERBIALS of space and time, on the other hand, have their canonical position clause-finally, after the VP (when they are not clause-initial). Normally, space precedes time:

(6) Við vildum helst hafa sagt þér þetta [i London] [um helgina].
     we would most have told you this in London over weekend.the
     ‘We would preferably have liked to tell you this in London over the weekend.

OBJECTS sometimes shift around a sentence adverbial and thereby out of the minimal VP by so-called OBJECT SHIFT, see further section … and section 5.4 below. Also, objects may either precede or follow PARTICLES, as will be discussed in 5.3.

2 Reflexive Verbs

TRANSITIVITY divides verbs into several major classes:

- Intransitive verbs take no object
- Transitive (or monotransitive) verbs take one object
- Optionally transitive verbs may or may not take an object
Ditransitive verbs (or double object verbs) may take two objects

This is illustrated below with English examples:

1. a. She died. / *She died it. intransitive
   b. She took it. / *She took. transitive
   c. She sang. / She sang it. optionally transitive
   d. She gave him the book. ditransitive

Many transitive verbs may take a reflexive regular object: She respects herself, etc. This is common in all Germanic languages. In addition, however, all Germanic languages except English have a class of reflexive verbs, where the verb and the reflexive pronoun have developed a special meaning together, usually corresponding to the meaning of a single verb in English:

- German: sich hüten (self guard = ‘take care’), sich sehnen (self long = ‘long for’)
- Swedish: ånga sig (regret self = ‘regret’), gräma sig (fret self = ‘fret’)

In Icelandic, –st-verbs, to be discussed in chapter 9, often correspond to reflexive verbs in the Mainland Scandinavian languages:

2. a. Dörren öppnade sig långsamt. Swedish
   The door opened SELF slowly
   ‘The door opened slowly’.
   b. Dyrnar opnuðu st hægt. / *Dyrnar opnuðu sig hægt. Icelandic
   the door opened-st slowly / the door opened SELF slowly

However, Icelandic also has many reflexive verbs:

3. a. Hann áttaði sig á þessu.
   he orientated SELF.ACC on this
   ‘He understood this/figured this out.’
   b. Hann jafnaði sig.
   he levelled SELF.ACC
   ‘He recovered.’
   c. Hann flýtti sér heim.
   he hurried SELF.DAT home
   ‘He hurried home.’
   d. Hann gætti sin ekki á hættunni.
   he heeded SELF.GEN not on danger.the
   ‘He didn’t look out for the danger.’

There are some instances where a reflexive verbs (e.g. klæða sig ‘get dressed’) can be replaced by an –st-verb (e.g. klæðast ‘get dressed’) but generally, this is not the case.

Some reflexive verbs cannot take a non-reflexive object (átta sig ‘figure out’ vs. *átta Pétur), and those that can take a non-reflexive object have a different meaning when they do (jafna sig ‘recover’ vs. jafna deilu ‘settle a dispute’). – Ordinary transitive verbs can of course take a reflexive object without any radical shift in meaning: raka sig ‘shave oneself’ vs. raka
Jón ‘shave John’ (whereas e.g. skera sig ‘cut oneself’ is a borderline case, often with a non-agentive or a non-volitional reading).

With respect to word order, the reflexive of a reflexive verb behaves like an ordinary reflexive object, always preceding verb particles: Hann sleit sér út ‘he wore himself out’, Hún setti sig inn í málið ‘she acquainted herself with the issue’ (lit. ‘put herself into the issue’).

3 Particle verbs and verb particles

Like other Germanic languages, Icelandic has numerous verb particles, that is to say, particles that make up a semantic unit with a verb. Such verbs are usually referred to as particle verbs. They function semantically like a single predicate, denoting a single event (where ‘event’ refers to states as well as processes). Usually, the meaning of particle verbs differs quite markedly or even radically from the meaning of the basic verb alone:

(1) a. taka ‘take’
   b. taka fram (take forth) ‘state, mention (explicitly)’
   c. taka til (take towards) ‘clean up’
   d. taka upp (take up) ‘record’
   e. taka út (take out) ‘suffer; withdraw cash’
   f. taka við (take with) ‘receive; take over’

In fact, particle verbs often have two or more different meanings. Also, reflexive particle verbs have meanings of their own that may differ markedly from the meaning of the particle verb without the reflexive:

(2) a. taka til ‘clean up’ vs. taka sig til ‘get oneself ready’
   b. taka upp ‘record’ vs. taka sig upp ‘move (to live somewhere else)’
   c. taka út ‘suffer; withdraw cash’ vs. taka sig vel út ‘look good’
   d. taka við ‘receive; take over’ vs. taka við sér ‘respond’

Most simple adverbs that denote direction or movement toward a place may function as verb particles (draga = ‘pull’, fara = ‘go, leave’, færa = ‘move’, setja = ‘put, place’):

(3) a. aftur ‘back’: fara aftur ‘get worse’, taka aftur ‘take back (ones word)’
   b. fram ‘forth’: fara fram ‘make progress’, draga fram ‘highlight’, setja fram ‘state’
   c. inn ‘in(to)’: færa inn ‘enter, book’, setja inn ‘put in prison’
   d. út ‘out’: fara út ‘go out’, færa út ‘carry out’, taka út ‘suffer; withdraw cash’
   e. niður ‘down’: setja niður ‘lower (in prestige)’, taka niður ‘write down’
   f. upp ‘up’: færa upp ‘stage (a play)’, taka upp ‘record; pick up’

Related adverbs that denote location (inni ‘inside’, úti ‘outside’, etc.) or direction or movement from a place (innan ‘from within’, utan ‘from outside of’, etc.) may also function as particles, albeit not as frequently. In addition, many prepositions can function as particles:

(4) a. Við tókum á.
   we took on
   ‘We used our strength.’
b. Hún sat hjá.
   she sat by
   ‘She did not participate.’

c. Hann fór úr.
   he went from/out of
   ‘He undressed.’

d. Þeir lögðu af.
   they layed off
   ‘They lost weight.’

Sometimes, also, particles are combinations of an adverb and a preposition, as in liða út af ‘faint’ (lit. ‘glide out off’), setja út á ‘make a negative remark’ (lit. ‘put out on’), skella upp úr ‘burst out in laughter’ (lit. ‘slam up from’).

Many particles are evidently ‘gapped’ adverbial or preposition phrases:

(4) a. Hún skellti tólinu á (simann).
    she slammed receiver.the on (telephone.the)
    ‘She hung up (agressively).’

b. Hún tók peningana út (úr bankanum).
   she took money.the out (of bank.the)
   ‘She withdrew the cash.’

Many particle verbs take an object, as in (5). The object, however, always gets its case from the verb, never from the particle, not even from prepositional particles:

(5) a. Hún tók frá nokkra miða.
    she took from several tickets.ACC
    ‘She reserved several tickets.’

b. Hún færði til nokkra stóla.
   she moved to several chairs.ACC
   ‘She moved several chairs (around).’

Both taka and færa usually take an accusative object (e.g. taka nokkra miða ‘take several tickets’, færa nokkra stóla ‘move several chairs’), whereas the prepositions frá ‘from’ and til ‘to, towards’ take datives and genitives, respectively (e.g. nokkrum miðum.DAT, nokkurra stóla.GEN).

The order of particle verbs, particles and complements is either verb-particle object, \texttt{Prt-O}, as in (5) above, or verb-object-particle, \texttt{O-Prt}, as in (6):

(6) a. Hún hafði tekið inn nokkrar pillur. \texttt{Prt-O}
    she had taken in some pills

b. Hún hafði tekið nokkrar pillur inn. \texttt{O-Prt}

Usually, the order \texttt{O-Prt}, with the object intervening between the verb and its particle, requires a specific reading of the object. As opposed to quantified NPs, bare indefinite NPs cannot usually have a specific reading and are thus rather awkward in the pre-particle position:
Conversely, definite NPs tend to have a specific reading rather than an unspecific one and hence they normally precede particles:

(8) a. ?Hún hafði slegið niður strákana. Pre-O
she had knocked down boys.the

b. Hún hafði slegið strákana niður. O-Prt
she had knocked boys.the down

Pronouns (even stressed ones), usually have to precede the particle:

(9) a. *Hún hafði slegið niður  há. Prt-O
she had knocked down them

b. Hún hafði slegið  há niður O-Prt

In contrast with particles, prepositions always precede and case-mark their objects (except perhaps in poetry, with forced riming):

(10) a. Hún talaði til nokkurra kvenna. Prep-O
 she talked to several women.GEN
 'She spoke to several women.'

b. *Hún talaði nokkurra kvenna til. *O-Prep

(11) a. Hún talaði til nokkrar konur. Prt-O
 she talked to several women.ACC
 'She persuaded several women.'

b. Hún talaði nokkrar konur til. O-Prt
 'She persuaded several women.'

There is some tendency that a verb and a preposition form a semantic unit, in a somewhat similar fashion as a verb and a particle. As these examples would seem to suggest, however, it is generally the case that the meaning of a verb and preposition is much more transparent and predictable than the meaning of verb plus a particle.

Icelandic does NOT usually allow the particle to INCORPORATE into the verb so as to form a complex verb of the form Prt-V: for instance take frá ‘reserve’, slá niður ‘knock down’, kasta út ‘throw out’, NOT *frátaka, *niðurslá, *útkasta. Exceptions like útbúa ‘fix’, útfjera ‘realize, carry out’ can be found, though. In contrast, Icelandic has numerous verbs with an incorporated preposition, as e.g. undirstrika ‘underline’, yfirfara ‘chek’ (lit, ‘overgo’), aðgæta ‘check’, álíta ‘consider’. That undir, yfír, að and á in these examples are really prepositions rather than participles is suggested by the fact that when not incorporated these elements obligatorily precede their complements:

(12) a. strika undir orðin vs. *strika orðin undir
 line under words.the

b. fara yfír textann vs. *fara textann yfír
 go over text.the
Incorporating prepositions into verbs to form nouns in nominalizations is also a very common and characteristic trait of Icelandic and the other Scandinavian languages (Ice. innkeyrsla, Sw. inkörsel, Da. inkørsel, etc., ‘drive’ (lit. in-drive)).

4 Objects

4.1 Object types and object positions

Transitive verbs (or monotransitive verbs, to be more exact) take one object and potentially also some PP complement (underlined in (1b)):

(1) a. Pétur keypti bók.
Peter bought book
b. Pétur keypti bók handa Mariú.
Peter bought book for Mary

Some verbs that are basically monotransitive can take an ‘extra’ FREE BENEFATIVE (dative) complement:

(2) Pétur keyti sér bók
Peter bought self.DAT book.ACC

Free benefactives, however, have a rather limited distribution in Icelandic as compared to many or most of the other Germanic languages. In Icelandic, they are largely limited to reflexive pronouns (and ‘reflexive usage’ of 1st and 2nd person pronouns):

(3) a. Hún lagaði sér kaffi.
she made self.DAT coffee
b. Ég lagaði mér kaffi.
I made myself.DAT coffee
c. ?Hún lagaði mér kaffi.
she made me.DAT coffee
b. ?Ég lagaði henni kaffi.
I made her.DAT coffee

With some predicates, however, free benefactives are perfectly grammatical in Icelandic too:

(4) a. Hún orti honum ljóð.
she wrote him.DAT poem
b. Þeir reistu honum minnisvarða.
they erected him.DAT monument

It is interesting that e.g. English *She made me some coffee* is a perfect sentence, whereas Icelandic *Hún lagaði mér kaffi* is questionable. On the face of it, one might expect that the dative case would license free benefactives in Icelandic as compared to e.g. Swedish and
English, but it is the other way around: Free benefactives are ‘more free’ or more available in both Swedish and English than in Icelandic.

Free benefactives are only compatible with certain predicates (in Icelandic as in many other languages):

(5) a. Ég keypti/skaffaði/útvegaði/fékk mér bók.
    I bought/procured/provided/got me book
b. ??Ég las mér bók.
    I read me book

Free benefactives almost always take the same position as indirect objects, between the main verb and the direct object, as in e.g. (5a).

Objects are most commonly noun phrases, as in the examples above. However, like other arguments, objects may also be either infinitives or full finite clauses:

(6) a. Ég sagði honum [þetta].
    I told him this
b. Ég sagði honum [þessa ótrúlegu sögu].
    I told him this incredible story
c. Ég sagði honum [að fara].
    I told him to leave
d. Ég sagði honum [að þú værir farinn].
    I told him that you were gone

As we have seen, Icelandic is a verb-object or a VO language, and hence the object usually follows the main verb, unless it has been fronted to the Initial Field:

(7) a. Ég hef ekki lesið þessa bók enn.
    I have not read this book yet
b. Þessa bók hef ég ekki lesið ___ enn.
    this book have I not read yet
    ‘This book, I have’nt read yet.’

As discussed in section …, however, the object sometimes precedes the sentence adverbial, by so-called OBJECT SHIFT. Object Shift usually only takes place if the clause contains no more than one verb form (i.e. contains no auxiliary, but see further below); under these circumstances Object Shift applies obligatorily to normal ‘light’ pronouns, preferably to stressed pronouns and definite NPs but only reluctantly or not to indefinite NPs. Compare the examples in (9), with Object Shift, and the corresponding examples in (10), without Object Shift:

(9) a. *Hún les bækur ekki.
    she reads books not
b. Hún les sumar bækur ekki
she reads some books not
‘She does not read the books.’
c. Hún les bækurnar ekki.
she reads books.the not
‘She does not read the books.’
d. Hún les þÆR ekki.
she reads THEM not
e. Hún les þær ekki.
she reads them not

(10) a. Hún les ekki bækur.
she reads not books
‘She does not read books.’
b. Hún les ekki sumar bækur.
she reads not some books
c. (? )Hún les ekki bækurnar.
she reads not books. the
d. ?Hún les ekki þÆR.
she reads not THEM
e. *Hún les ekki þær.
she reads not them

However, even a clause like (9a) becomes substantially better with a contrastive stress on the verb (so-called verum focus) and an appropriate continuation:

(11) ?Hún LES bækur ekki, flettir þeim bara.
she READS books not, browses-through them only

Object Shift takes place in subordinate clauses as well as in main clauses, and it even takes place in certain infinitives, that is, in clausal að-infinitives (PRO-infinitives):

(12) a. Ég veit að hún les þær ekki. / * … ekki þær.
I know that she reads them not
‘I know that she does not read them.’
b. Það væri leiðinlegt að lesa þær ekki. / * … ekki þær.
it would-be boring to read them not
‘It would be boring not to read them.’

In this respect, Icelandic differs sharply from other Scandinavian languages (Holmberg 1986). Consider the Swedish facts in (13):

(13) a. Jag vet att hon inte läser dem. / * … dem inte läser (etc.).
I know that she not reads them
b. Det vore trist att inte läsa dem. / * … dem inte läsa (etc.).
it would-be boring to not read them

This generalization behind these facts is often referred to as HOLMBERG’S GENERALIZATION. It may be formulated in a somewhat simplified manner as in (14):
Object Shift takes place only if the main verb moves to the left.

Icelandic has verb movement or verb raising to the Tense position in both subordinate clauses and PRO-infinitives (section 4.4.1.1), hence it also has Object Shift in these clause types. This is illustrated in (15), where the arrow indicates movement:

(15)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial field</th>
<th>Middle field</th>
<th>Final field</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Subject</td>
<td>Tense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>að</td>
<td>hún</td>
<td>les</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>að</td>
<td>PRO</td>
<td>lesa</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As mentioned in section 4.3., adverbial and relative clauses sometimes do not apply verb raising to tense. In such clauses, Object Shift is excluded (just as in mainland Scandinavian languages):

(16) a. … þegar hún loksins las þær. / * … þegar hún þær loksins las.
   … when she finally read them

b. … sem ekki las þær. / * … sem þær ekki las.
   … who not read them

Also, in case the clause contains an auxiliary, it is the auxiliary and not the main verb that raises to Tense (or all the way to C in main clauses). In such clauses, Object Shift is excluded, in Icelandic as well as in other Scandinavian languages:

(17) a. Hún hefur ekki lesið þær. / * Hún hefur þær ekki lesið (etc.).
   she has not read them

b. … að hún hefur ekki lesið þær.
   … that she has not read them

c. … að hafa ekki lesið þær.
   … to have not read them

Icelandic allows topicalization or preposing of main verbs to the Initial Field (Main Verb Topicalization) only very reluctantly:

(18) ?Hitt hef ég marga merkilega menn.
   met have I many noteworthy persons

However, to the extent this is possible, Object Shift must take place:

(19) a. ?Hitt hef ég hann ekki, en ég hef skrifað honum.
   met have I him not, but I have writtin (to-)him

b. *Hitt hef ég ekki hann, en ég hef skrifað honum.

The reason is, again, that the main verb has moved to the left:
Negative objects (ekkert ‘nothing’, engan ‘no-one’, and so on) and other negative constituents normally cannot be placed any further to the right than the negation itself:

(21) a. Hún hefur engar bækur lesið.  
    she has no books read  
    Cf. Hún hefur ekki lesið neinar bækur.  
    she has not read any books

b. Hún mundi ekkert hafa lesið.  
    she would nothing have read  
    Cf. Hún mundi ekki hafa lesið neitt.  
    she would not have read anything

c. Hún vill um ekkert gamalt lesa.  
    she wants about nothing old read  
    Cf. Hún vill ekki lesa um neitt gamalt.  
    she wants not read about anything old

(22) a. *Hún hefur lesið engar bækur.  
    b. *Hún mundi hafa lesið ekkert.  
    c. *Hún vill lesa um ekkert gamalt.

Some quantified objects can also precede the main verb, albeit with somewhat variable acceptability:

(23) a. Hún hefur eingverjar bækur lesið. / Hún hefur lesið eingverjar bækur.  
    she has some books read

b. ?Hún hefur margar bækur lesið. / Hún hefur lesið margar bækur.  
    she has many books read

The order [quantified object – main verb] is most commonly found in idiomatic expressions (e.g. Þeir hafa marga hildi háð ‘They have many a battle fought’). – Even for non-quantified objects, the order [object – main verb] is found in certain frozen expressions: Með lögum skal land byggja ‘With the law (one) shall land found’, Með illu skal íllt út reka ‘With evil (one) shall evil out drive’.

4.2 Case-marking of (single) objects

Objects are most commonly THEMES (including patients), BENEFACTIVES or MALEFACTIVES. Accusative is the most common and the unmarked object case and can represent all these central object roles, as illustrated below:

(1) a. Hann hitti mig.  
    ACC THEME  
    he met me.ACC

b. Hann studdi mig.  
    ACC BENEFATIVE  
    he supported me.ACC

c. Hann rændi mig.  
    ACC MALEFACTIVE  
    he robbed me.ACC

However, both the genitive and the dative are also used as object cases, the dative quite commonly so but the genitive much less frequently. In part, the use of different object cases seems to be irregular, simply decided by the idiosyncratic lexical demands of individual verbs; consider:
(2) a Við fengum mikið fé. we got much money.ACC
   ACC THEME
b Við söfnuðum miklu fé. we(N) collected much money.DAT
   DAT THEME
c Við öfluðum mikils fjár. we(N) procured much money.GEN
   GEN THEME

To a considerable extent, however, object case is affected or controlled by semantic properties of the predicate, namely, by its thematic roles and its aspectual properties, or perhaps rather by its aktionsart properties, but I am not making a distinction between aspect and aktionsart here. The Icelandic dative as an object case commonly relates to either thematic role or to aspect whereas the Icelandic genitive as object case primarily or exclusively relates to aspect. – Similar phenomena can also be seen in other case languages, at least to an extent: The cases are used, first, to distinguish between different participants in an event (thematic roles) and, second, to more explicitly specify their relation to the event (aspect/aktionsart).

The DATIVE as an object case is commonly taken by both verbs of control and verbs of movement:¹

**SOME DATIVE-TAKING VERBS OF CONTROL:**
aka ‘drive (e.g. a car)’, beina ‘direct’, fljúga ‘fly’ (e.g. an aeroplain), halla ‘lean, tilt’, leiðbeina ‘direct, guide’, ráða ‘decide, control’, riða ‘ride (e.g. a horse), róa ‘row’, sigla ‘sail’, snúa ‘turn (e.g. a horse or a boat), stjórna ‘control, govern’, stýra ‘steer; direct’

**SOME DATIVE-TAKING VERBS OF MOVEMENT:**

Some examples:

(3) a. Hann leiðbeindi okkur.
   he guided us.DAT
b. Þú ræður þessu.
   you decide this.DAT
   ‘It is up to you to decide this.’

(4) a. Hún hvolfiði bátunum.
   she turned-over boat.the.DAT

¹ In this context, the term ‘control’ is not used in the well-known syntactic, technical sense but only in the purely semantic, non-technical sense ‘verbs that indicte that the subject has control over its object’ (like a driver, for instance, controls a vehicle he is driving).
b. Hún kastaði boltanum.  
she threw ball.the.DAT

The drawing line between these two semantic verb classes is obviously somewhat fuzzy. Crucially, both the dative of control and the dative of movement expresses an ASPECT OF WHOLENESS or completeness. Thus, objects that are controlled or moved as a whole tend to be dative, whereas objects that are effected or only affected in an unspecified manner are usually accusative. This is highlighted by pairs of the following sort:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATIVE OBJECTS MOVED AS A WHOLE:</th>
<th>ACCUSATIVE EFFECTED/AFFECTED OBJECTS:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>hlaða steinum ‘pile bricks’</td>
<td>hlaða hús ‘build a house (of bricks)’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>moka sandi ‘shovel sand’</td>
<td>moka skurð ‘dig a ditch’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nudda kremi ‘rub cream (into/onto)’</td>
<td>nudda augun ‘rub one’s eyes’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skjóta kúlunni ‘shoot the bullet’</td>
<td>skjóta manninn ‘shoot the man’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skutla spjóti ‘throw a spear’</td>
<td>skutla hvalinn ‘harpoon the whale’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>snúa lyklinum ‘turn the key’</td>
<td>snúa fótinn ‘twist ones foot/ankle’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sópa ruslinu ‘sweep the garbage’</td>
<td>sópa gólfið ‘sweep the floor’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This ‘wholeness’ use of the dative is closely related to the (semantic) INSTRUMENTAL, but it is much more general than the Icelandic instrumental dative, which has become periphrastic, although still seen in (rather formal) examples like stinga einhvern knífi ‘stab someone (with a) knife.DAT’. The wholeness or completeness aspect is in a way the opposite to the PARTITIVE aspect, expressed by partitive or genitive case in some case languages, but it is largely limited to movement and control verbs (i.e. Icelandic does not regularly express wholeness or completeness through case). Conversely, also, not all verbs of complete movement take a dative object; some take an accusative object instead, e.g. the basic verbs that mean ‘move’, flytja, færa (til), and hreyfa.

Even more closely related to the instrumental is the DATIVE OF EMISSION (bodily, heavenly and so on):


Examples:

(5) a. Hann ældi blóði.  
he vomited blood.DAT

b. Það rignir gulli.  
it rains gold.DAT

The dative as an object case is also common for BENEFACTIVES. Thus, the following verbs are among dative taking verbs:

SOME DATIVE-TAKING VERBS OF BENEFIT:
‘take pity on’, *mæla með ‘recommend’, *sinna ‘attend to, serve’, *umbuna ‘reward’, *vinka ‘wave’, *þjóna ‘serve’, *þyrma ‘spare’

Examples:

(6) a. Hann borgaði *mér fyrrir bókina.
   he payed me.DAT for book.the

b. Hann hjálpaði *henni í prófinu.
   he helpted her.DAT in test.the

c. Hermaðurinn þyrmti *ókkur.
   soilier.the spared us.DAT

In addition, *FREE BENEFACTIVES are regularly dative: *laga sér kaffi ‘make oneself.DAT coffee’, *elda sér súpu ‘cook onself.DAT a soup’, *yrkja *henni ljóð ‘write her.DAT a poem’.

Some further roles or relations tend to be expressed as dative objects. Thus, some verbs of *POTENTIAL RECIPROCITY take a dative object:

**SOME DATIVE-TAKING VERBS OF POTENTIAL RECIPROCITY:**

Examples:

(7) a. Þeir andmæltu *mér.
   they contradicted me.DAT

b. Þeir heilsuðu ekki hvor *óðrum.
   they greeted not each other.DAT

c. Hún giftist *hónum.
   she married him.DAT

This is perhaps not surprising, as verbs of benefit also have the inherent possibility of being construed reciprocally (i.e. one can say e.g. *help each other* much as one can say e.g. *answer each other* or *marry each other*). – Also here, the drawing line between the classes is far from clear cut.

As was illustrated above, verbs of movement and ‘control’ commonly make a distinction between accusative affected or effected objects and dative objects moved or controlled as a whole. Similarly, some verbs make a distinction between accusative affected (or effected) objects and dative BENEFACTIVE objects:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATIVE BENEFACTIVE OBJECTS:</th>
<th>ACCUSATIVE AFFECTED OBJECTS:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>greiða barninu</td>
<td>greiða hárið</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘comb the child’</td>
<td>‘comb the hair’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>klóra sér</td>
<td>klóra hana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘scratch oneself’</td>
<td>‘scratch her (leaving marks)’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>strjúka henni</td>
<td>strjúka sig allan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘pat her’</td>
<td>‘stroke oneself all over’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>þurrka barninu</td>
<td>þurrka hárið</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘dry the child’</td>
<td>‘dry the hair’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>þvo barninu</td>
<td>þvo fangana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘wash the child’</td>
<td>‘wash the prisoners’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Again, however, we are only dealing with a tendency, not a rule; some verbs take an accusative benefactive object: *aðstoða* ‘assist’, *bera* ‘carry’, *lækna* ‘cure’ (compare *hjúkra* ‘nurse’, taking a dative object), *stýðja* ‘aid, support’, *styrkja* ‘support, subsidize’, and so on.

It should also be noted that the choice between accusative and dative objects has not been grammaticized, i.e. it is not only ‘promoted’ or ‘encouraged’ by semantic regularities but also blocked by lexical idiosyncrasies. Consider:

(8) a. *bifa henni* ‘(be able to) move it/her.DAT’ vs. *hreyfa henni*\(^2\)
b. *hreyfa hana* ‘move it/her.ACC’ vs. *bifa hana*

(9) a. *fylgja henni* ‘follow, accompany her.DAT’ vs. *fylgja hana*
b. *elva hana* ‘follow, pursue her.ACC’, vs. *elva henni*

In addition, the aspectual status of complements is normally expressed by prepositions, rather than by the cases as such:

(10) a. *hugsa um eitthvað* ‘think about something’ vs. *hugsa eitthvað* ‘think something’
b. *lesa í bókinni* ‘read in the book’ vs. *lesa bókina* ‘read the book’
c. *taka af þessu* ‘take (some) of this’ vs. *taka þetta* ‘take this’

- and so on.

The **genitive** is most commonly either adnominal or prepositional. However, it is sometimes used as an object case:

**Some genitive-taking verbs**


Examples:

(11) a. Ëg beĩð *þín* lengi.
   I waited you.GEN long
   ‘I waited long for you.’
b. Hann gat *hennar* ekki.
   he mentioned her.GEN not
   ‘He did not mention her.’
c. Þeir krefjast *frelsis*.
   they demand freedom.GEN

As the list would seem to suggest, most genitive objects denote **unaffect ed themes**. Such themes are typically expressed as prepositional complements. It is therefore not surprising that many genitive objects alternate with prepositional objects, e.g. *leita einhvers* ‘look (for) something.GEN’, vs. *leita áð einhverju* ‘look for something.DAT’, *biðja einhvers* ‘ask (for) something.GEN’ vs. *biðja um eitthvað* ‘ask for something.ACC’.

\(^2\) The dative is possible in the expression *hreyfa máli* ‘mention an issue’.
4.3 The Double Object Construction

Ditransitive verbs take two objects (a ‘double object’). This gives rise to the DOUBLE OBJECT CONSTRUCTION, as in (1):

(1) a. Við gáfum **henni** bækurnar.
   we gave her.DAT books.the.ACC
b. Við skiluðum **henni** bókunum.
   we gave-back-to her.DAT books.the.DAT

The first of the two objects is traditionally referred to as the INDIRECT OBJECT, whereas the second object is referred to as the DIRECT OBJECT. The logic behind these notions is that the direct object is more closely semantically related to the verb than is the indirect object, in spite of being ‘farther away’ from it. Thus, ‘give books’ can function as a full predicate (as in e.g. She always gives only books), whereas ‘give (to) somebody’ cannot, at least not usually. Also, it is often possible to replace the indirect object with a preposition phrase (as in He sent the books to her vs. He sent her the books), whereas this is not possible for the direct object (e.g. *He sent her of the books).

The most common CASE PATTERN in the double object construction is by far DAT-ACC, that is, a dative indirect object and an accusative direct one. However, several other patterns are found:

1. DAT-ACC: e.g. gefa ‘give’, senda ‘send’, segja ‘tell’
2. DAT-DAT: e.g. skila ‘return, give back’, lofa ‘promise’
3. DAT-GEN: e.g. óska ‘wish’, varna ‘deny, block’
4. ACC-DAT: e.g. leyna ‘conceal from’, raena ‘rob’
5. ACC-GEN: e.g. dylja ‘conceal from’, spyrja ‘ask’
6. ACC-ACC: only two verbs: kosta ‘cost’, taka ‘take’
   (e.g. kosta tíu krónur ‘cost ten crowns, taka tíu minútur ‘take ten minutes’)

The number of verbs that fall into the first five classes is approximately as follows (see Jónsson 2000); only the DAT-ACC class is an open, productive class:

1. DAT-ACC: 220
2. DAT-DAT: 29
3. DAT-GEN: 28
4. ACC-DAT: 37
5. ACC-GEN: 21

These numbers are ‘maximal’, in the sense that they include idiomatic expressions, verbs that are old-fashioned or formal as ditransitives, as well as verbs that require a reflexive indirect object (and the drawing line between these and free benefactives is often quite unclear).

The order of the objects is usually quite strict, although it may be reversed in (at least) the DAT-ACC class, if the direct and indirect objects are ‘out of balance’, such that the indirect object is distinctively ‘heavier’ or longer than the direct one:
(2)  
a. Við gáfum það nokkrum fátækum börnum.
   we gave it.ACC several poor kids.DAT
b. ??Við lofuðum því nokkrum fátækum börnum.
   we promised it.DAT several poor kids.DAT

Authentic examples of reversed order are not easy to find, but the following one is authentic:³

(3)  
Og svo sýndum við það fólki sem …
   and then showed we it.ACC people.DAT who
   ‘And then we showed it to people who …’

Negated objects in the double object construction precede the main verb, much as negated objects in general:

(4)  
a. Við höfum engum gefið þessar bækur. / * … gefið engum …
   we have nobody.DAT given these books.ACC
   ‘We haven’t given these books to anybody.’
b. Við höfum engar bækur gefið henni. / * …gefið engar bækur …
   we have no books.ACC given her.DAT
   ‘We haven’t given her any books.’

If both objects are unstressed pronouns, they both shift across a sentence adverb by Object Shift:

(5)  
a. Við gáfum henni það ekki.
   we gave her it not
b. *Við gáfum henni ekki það.
   *Við gáfum ekki henni það.
(6)  
a. Við lofuðum henni því ekki.
   we promised her it not
b. *Við lofuðum henni ekki því.
   *Við lofuðum ekki henni því.

If only the indirect object is a pronoun, the direct object preferably stays behind the adverbial:

(7)  
a. Við lofuðum þeim ekki bókunum.
   we promised them not books.the
b. ?Við lofuðum þeim bókunum ekki.

If, on the other hand it is the direct object that is a pronoun, both objects preferably shift:

(8)  
a. ?*Við lofuðum stúdentunum ekki þeim.
   we promised students.the not them
b. Við lofuðum stúdentunum þeim ekki.

³ From a conversation with a friend.
In most of the double object construction classes, the direct object cannot be passivized ‘across’ the indirect one:

(9) Við skiluðum (henni) bókinni.
    we returned her.DAT book.the.DAT

(10) a. Henni var skilað ___ bókinni.
    her.DAT was returned book.the.DAT
    ‘She was given back the book.’

b. *Bókinni var skilað henni ___.

c. Bókinni var skilað ___.
    ‘The book was returned/given back.’

However, in class 1, the DAT-ACC class of verbs like gefa ‘give’ and senda ‘send’, this restriction does not hold, i.e. the direct object may be passivized across the indirect one.

(11) Við gáfum henni bókina.
    we gave her.DAT book.the.ACC

(12) a. Henni var gefin ___ bókin.
    her.DAT was given book.the.NOM
    ‘She was given the book.’

b. Bókin var gefin henni ___.

5 Predicative complements

A PREDICATIVE COMPLEMENT is a word or a phrase that functions as a predicate with respect to a noun phrase. Traditionally, the notion predicative is restricted to noun phrases (NPs) and adjectival or participial phrases (APs or PcpPs) that function as predicatives of subjects or objects, as illustrated in (1); the NPs are underlined, the predicatives boldfaced:

(1) a. She is an excellent linguist.  subject – NP
    b. She must have been drunk.   subject – AP
    c. They elected him president. object – NP
    d. We saw him killed in his home. object – PcpP

However, neither of these traditional restrictions hold, that is:

• Any NP can take a predicative
• Most phrase types can function as a predicative

The following examples illustrate that both indirect objects and prepositional complements can take a predicative:

(2) a. Við sýndum honum övirðingu drukknum.
we showed him.DAT disrespect.ACC drunk.DAT

b. Við fórum aldrei til hans drukkins.
we went never to(-see) him.GEN drunk.GEN

Also, various kinds of phrases may function as predicatives, for instance full clauses (3a), infinitives (3b), adverbs (3c) and PPs (4):

(3) a. Þetta var þegar ég var stúdent.
this was when I was student
b. Drykkjuskapur er að gefast upp.
drinking is to give up
c. Hann hefur verið hér.
he has been here

(4) a. Hann er með tösku.
he is with bag
‘He is carrying a bag.’
b. Hann er í jakka.
he is in jacket
‘He is wearing a jacket.’
c. Hann er á tónleikum.
he is on concert
‘He is listening to a concert.’
d. Hann er hjá Pétri.
he is by Peter
‘He is at Peter’s.’

Consider:

(6) a. Hann er ljóshærður.
he is fair-haired
‘He is blond.’
b. Hann er með ljóst hár.
he is with fair hair
‘He is blond.’

There is no good reason to count the adjective ljóshærður as a predicative and not to count the PP með ljóst hár as a predicative. – In passing, notice that Icelandic vera + P constructions often express semantic relations that are expressed with single verbs in English and other Germanic languages, for instance: vera á ‘attend’; vera i ‘wear; attend’; vera með ‘wear; carry; have’.
Even simple pronouns and numerals can be predicatives:

(7) a. Það er ég.
it is.1SG I.NOM
‘It is me.’
b. Þetta hafa sennilega verið þær.
this has.3PL probably been they.NOM
It has probably been them.’

C. bjófarnir voru þrir.
theaves.the.NOM were three.NOM

Conversely, predicatives can be quite complex, as illustrated for predicative APs and NPs in (8):

(8) a. Hún er mjög dugleg að skrifa um mál sem vekja athygli.
   she is very good at writing about issues that raise interest
b. Hún er mjög duglegur kennari sem tekur starfið alvarlega.
   she is very successful teacher who takes job.the seriously

A common type of predicatives is introduced by comparative sem ‘as’:

(9) a. Við kynntumst henni sem prestar.
   we.NOM got-to-know her as preasts.NOM
b. Við kynntumst henni sem presti.
   we got-to-know her.DAT as preast.DAT
c. Við kusum hana sem prest.
   we elected her.ACC as priest.ACC

As seen, predicative NPs agree in case with their predicational NP. In addition, predicative adjectives and participles normally show number and gender agreement:

(10) a. Konurnar hittu manninn drukkinn.
    women.the.NOM met man.the.ACC drunk.ACC.M.SG
    'The women met the man (when he was) drunk.'
b. Konurnar hittu manninn drukknar.
    women.the.NOM met man.the.ACC drunk.NOM.F.PL
    'The women met the man (when they were) drunk.'

NPs, in contrast, have their own number and gender:

(11) a. Bítlarnir voru besta hljómsveitin.
    Beatles.the.NOM.M.PL were best band.the.NOM.F.SG
    'The Beatles were the best band.'
b. Hann var mikið skáld.
    he.NOM was great poet.NOM.N.SG
    'He was a great poet.'
c. Hún er góður prestur.
    she.NOM is good priest.NOM.F.SG
    'She is a good priest.'

Predicative agreement is discussed in more detail in chapter …

Most predicatives are SUBJECT PREDICATIVES and also PRIMARY PREDICATES. Most such predicatives can be referred to in discourse by neuter singular það ‘it, that’:

(12) a. Hún er prestur og hann er það líka.
    she is priest and he is that too
‘She is a priest and so is he.’

b. Húsið er gult en það er bíllinn ekki.
   ‘The house is yellow, but the car isn’t.’

c. Hann er með dökktt hár og hún er það líka.
   ‘His is with dark hair and she is that too’

d. Hann var hér í morgun en það var hún ekki.
   ‘He was here in morning but that was she not’
   ‘He was here this morning, but she wasn’t.’

Notice that það cannot be left out, nor can it be replaced by a regular, gender agreeing pronoun (læknir is a masculine noun):

(13) a. Jón er læknir og María er það líka.
   John is doctor and Mary is that too

b. *Jón er læknir og María er líka.
   John is doctor and Mary is too

c. *Jón er læknir og María er hann líka.
   John is doctor and Mary is he too

When an NP is referential, on the other hand, it is referred to by a gender/number agreeing pronoun:

(14) Læknirinn kom í morgun og hann/*það var með töskuna.
   ‘The doctor came this morning and he had his bag.’

Subject predicatives are most commonly complements of some of the following verbs:

(15) vera ‘be’, verða ‘will be, become, get’, gerast ‘become, get’ (lit. ‘make oneself ’),
   heita ‘have the name’, kallast ‘be called’, nefnast ‘be called’

(16) a. Hún verður þangað rík.
   she will-be soon rich.NOM

   b. Hún gerðist læknir.
   she made-self doctor.NOM
   ‘She became doctor (by conscious effort).’

c. Hún varð læknir.
   she became doctor.NOM

   d. Hún heitir María.
   she has-the-name Mary.NOM
   ‘Her name is Mary.’

Subjects can also take predicatives that are SECONDARY PREDICATES; as indicated by the parentheses in (17), secondary predicates are optional in the sense that clauses are grammatical without them:

(17) a. Hún fór þangað (mjög hamingjusöm).
she went there (very happy.NOM)
b. Hún kom hingað (nýbakaður læknir).
she came here (new-baked doctor.NOM)
‘Se came here right after having graduated as a doctor.’
c. Hún talaði við okkur (sem prestur).
she talked with us (as priest.MOM)

OBJECT PREDICATIVES are also optional:

(18) a. Við sáum hana (mjög hamingjusama).
we saw him (very happy.ACC)
b. Við hittum hana (nýbakaðan lækn). we met her (new-baked doctor.ACC)
c. Við töluðum við hana (sem prest).
we talked with her (as priest.ACC)

Much as English as-phrases, Icelandic sem-phrases differ from most other predicatives in not being able to function as a primary predicate:

(19) a. *Hún var sem prestur.4
she was as priest
b. Hún var dugleg sem prestur.
she was successful as priest
c. Við þekktum hana sem prest.
we knew her as priest

Sem introduces only secondary NP predicates, i.e. it cannot introduce for instance AP predicatives:

(20) *Við töluðum við hana sem duglega.
we talked with her as sucessful.ACC

Objects and their predicatives make up a SMALL CLAUSE (see …). The predicative agrees in case with the object:

(21) a. Við skiluðum [bílnum hreinum].
we returned car.the.DAT clean.DAT
b. Við höfum aldrei heilsað [honum fullum].
we hve never greeted him.DAT drunk.DAT

(22) a. Við skírðum [drenginn Ólaf].
we named boy.the.ACC Olaf.ACC
b. Við sögðum [Ólaf veikan].
we said Olaf.ACC sick.ACC
c. Við kusum [Ólaf forseta].
we wlected Olaf.ACC president.ACC
d. Við töldum [hana góðan prest].

---

4 However, this is acceptable in formal style in the sense ‘She was like a priest’.
we considered her.ACC good priest.ACC
e. Við létum [hana eina].
we let her.ACC alone.ACC

Examples like the ones in (22) have an accusative object and an accusative predicative. In the corresponding passives, both accusatives are ‘replaced’ by nominative forms:

(23) a. Drengurinn var skírður Ólafur.
    boy.the.NOM was named Olaf.NOM
b. Ólafur var sagður veikur.
    Olaf.NOM was said (to be) sick.NOM
c. Ólafur var kosinn forseti.
    Olaf.NOM was elected predisent.NOM
d. Hún var talin góður prestur.
    she.NOM was considered good priest.NOM
e. Hún var látin ein.
    she.NOM was let alone.NOM

6 Content Adverbials

Adverbials in general split into SENTENCE ADVERBIALS, discussed in section 2.5, and CONTENT ADVERBIALS. Content adverbials, in turn, split into four major classes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTENT ADVERBIALS:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adverbs of degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complemental adverbials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manner adverbials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene-setting adverbials</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, many adverbial relations (of reason, purpose and so on) are expressed by adverbial clauses.

In this section, I will describe the positioning of content adverbial, primarily with respect to verbs and verb phrases, discussing their structure and meaning in chapter 8.

ADVERBS OF DEGREE are never used as independent adverbials at the clause level, but are instead exclusively used as modifiers of:

A Adjectives, as in (1), and
B Other adverbials (mainly sentence and manner adverbials), as in (2):

(1) a. **Mjög** gáfaður stúdent uppgötvaði þetta.
    very intelligent student discovered this
b. Hann er **ákaflega** gáfaður.
    he is intensively intelligent

(2) a. Hann hefur **afar** sennilega lesið bókina.
he has very probably read book.the
b. Ég get ekki komið svona oft hingað.
   I can not come so often (to-)here

Since adverbs of degree are modifiers, they don’t have any favorite clausal position of their
own, so to speak. Other adverbials have different canonical positions within the clause.

**COMPONENTAL ADVERBIALS** (which are usually PPs) have their canonical position
directly after the main verb or after the main verb and its object or objects (underlined in
(3b,c)):

(3)  a. Ég vil tala [við þig] [um þetta].
   I want.to talk with you about this.
   b. Ég sagði henni frá þessu.
   I told her about this
   c. Ég gaf henni bók í jólajöf.
   I have her book in Christmas-present
   ‘I gave her a book for Christmas.’

PP complements have a status that is close to that of objects, that is, they are in many ways
argumental. This is illustrated by pairs like the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMPONENTAL ADVERBIALS:</th>
<th>OBJECTS:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>gá að einhverju</td>
<td>athuga eitthvað</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hlusta á eitthvað</td>
<td>heyra eitthvað</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gera við eitthvað</td>
<td>laga eitthvað</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>horfa á eitthvað</td>
<td>sjá eitthvað</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**MANNER ADVERBIALS** have their canonical position after the ‘minimal verb phrase’, so to
speak, that is:

A  Directly after the main verb in case it does not take an object, or
B  Directly after the objects of the main verb

In other words, manner adverbials come *between* the main verb and its adverbial
complements, if it has any, whereas they come *after* objects:

(4)  a. Hann vildi tala **varlega** um kvöldið.
   he wanted talk cautiously in evening.the
   ‘He wanted to talk causiously in the evening.’
   b. Hann vildi tala **varlega** við okkur um þetta um kvöldið.
   he wanted talk c tortuously with us about this in evening.the
   c. Hann vildi segja **varlega** frá þessu um kvöldið.
   he wanted tell c tortiously about this in evening.the
   d. Hann vildi segja okkur **varlega** frá þessu um kvöldið.
   he wanted tell us c tortiously about this in evening.the
   e. Hann vildi segja okkur þessar fréttir **varlega** um kvöldið.
   he wanted tell us these news c tortiously in evening.the
These facts suggest that objects are more intimately related to their verb than are adverbial complements—perhaps because objects get their case from their verb.

When not placed in the Initial Field, SCENE-SETTING ADVERBIALS of time and place are most commonly placed after the main verb and its complements (irrespective of whether the complements are objects or adverbial complements):

(5) a. Hann hafði talað um málið við okkur í London á laugardaginn.  
    he had talked about matter.the with us in London on Saturday.the

b. Hann ætlaði að segja okkur þetta í París á morgun.  
    he wanted to tell us this in Paris to morrow

Thus, one can discern an ordering hierarchy between different types of adverbials: Sentence adverbials (SA) normally precede manner adverbials (MA), which normally precede complemental adverbials (CA), which in turn precede scene-setting adverbials (ScA), that is:

(6) THE MAIN ADVERBIAL ORDERING HIERARCHY:  
    Sentence AdvPs > Manner AdvPs > Complemental AdvPs > Scene-setting AdvPs  
    or: SA > MA > CA > ScA

This is illustrated in (7):

(7) Hún ætlaði [liklega] að tala [rækilega] [við okkur] [næsta dag].  
    she intended [SA probably] to talk [MA thoroughly] [CA with us] [SCA next day]

In addition, ADVERBIAL CLAUSES and ADVERBIAL INFINITIVES normally follow all other adverbials (unless they are preposed to the Initial Field, of course):

(8) a. Hún ætlaði líklega að tala rækilega við okkur næsta dag, þegar við kæmum.  
    she intended probably to talk thoroughly with us next day, when we would-come

b. Hún ætlaði líklega að tala rækilega við okkur næsta dag, af því að við hættum.  
    she intended probably to talk thoroughly with us next day, by it that we quit

c. Hún ætlaði líklega að tala rækilega við okkur næsta dag til að upplýsa okkur.  
    she intended probably to talk thoroughly with us next day, for to inform us

d. Hún ætlaði líklega að tala rækilega við okkur næsta dag ef við kæmum aftur of seint.  
    she intended probably to talk thoroughly with us next day, if we would-come again too late

I refer to the hierarchy in (6) as ‘main’ adverbial ordering hierarchy, because there is also a more ‘subordinate’ hierarchy within the adverbial classes, most prominently among sentence adverbials. Several factors, such as ‘heaviness’ or informational richness, can interfere with the main adverbial ordering hierarchy, but I shall not detail here.

As discussed in section 2.5, there is a whole middle sphere in the clause, the SENTENCE ADVERBIAL MIDDLE FIELD, where sentence adverbials have their canonical positions in a rather strict order, as illustrated below:

(9) Hún hefur nú samt sennilega ekki alveg meint þetta þarna um kvöldið.  
    she has I.say however probably not really meant this there in evening.the
Icelandic differs from e.g. Swedish in not normally allowing any content adverbials in the sentence adverbial middle field, not even when it contains no sentence adverbs:

(10) a. Hon hade **om kvällen** druckit för mycket. Swedish
    she had in evening.the drunk too much
    b. Hon hade druckit för mycket **om kvällen**.
    she had drunk too much in evening.the

(11) a. *Hún hafði **um kvöldið** drukkið of mikið. Icelandic
    she had in evening.the drunk too much
    b. Hún hafði drukkið of mikið **um kvöldið**.
    she had drunk too much in evening.the

Most adverbials can be preposed, such that they occupy the Initial Field. If the adverbial is clausal or infinitival, it is often followed by an extra þá ‘then’:

(12) a. Ef hann kemur ekki núna þá fer ég.
    if he comes not now then leave I
    ‘If he doesn’t come now, (then) I’m leaving.’
    b. Til að verða ekki of seinn líka núna þá er best að taka leigubíl.
    for to be not too late also now then is best to take taxi
    In order not to come too late also now, it is best to take a taxi.

The ‘extra’ þá may also be used after some non-clausal adverbials, especially temporal ones

(13) ?Um kvöldið þá fór hann út.
    in evening.the then went he out
    ‘He went out in the evening.’

As indicated, this is somewhat marginal. In contrast, the ‘extra’ þá is excluded after preposed complemental adverbials:

(14) Um þetta (*þá) tala ég ekki við þig.
    about this then talk I not with you
    ‘About this, I am not talking with you.’

Presumably, the extra þá in (12) and (13) occupies a position and has a function that is different from the position and function of þá in the following examples:

(15) a. Sennilega þá veit hann bara ekkert um þetta.
    probably then know he just nothing about this
    ‘He probably just doesn’t know anything about this.
    b. Sennilega þá bara veit hann ekkert um þetta.

Icelandic is rather special in that even (a small group of) adverbs of degree may be placed in the Initial Field, that is, such adverbs can be dislocated or moved from their modifying constituent, as illustrated below; the slots show the positions from where the
adverbials have moved; notice that clauses of this type tend to have an exclamative rather than a declarative force:

(16)  a. **Mikið** hefur hún gert þetta [__ vel].
very has she done this well
‘How well she has done this. / She has done this very well.’
   
   b. **Svona** getur hann stundum verið [__ glaður].
so can he sometimes be happy
‘So happy he can sometimes be.’
   
   c. **Ákaflega** held ég að þetta sé [__ skemmtilegt].
intensively think I that this is pleasant
‘So very pleasant this must be.’

We may refer to this construction as **DEGREE ADVERBIAL FRONTING**.

In a similar fashion, **hvað** ‘what, how’, the most common wh-word that questions degree ‘strands’ or leaves behind the word it modifies:

(17)  a. **Hvað** hefur þú komið hingað [__ oft]? 
how have you come here often
‘How often have you come here?’
   
   b. **Hvað** heldur þú að hann sé [__ gamall].
how think you that he is old
‘How old do you think he is?’

Alternatively, one can use the more formal **hversu** ‘how’, **hve** ‘how’, that ‘pied pipe’ or ‘drag along’ the word they modify:

(18)  a. [**Hve(rsu)** oft] hefur þú komið hingað [__ ]?
how often have you come here
‘How often have you come here?’
   
   b. [**Hve(rsu)** gamall] heldur þú að hann sé [__ ].
how old think you that he is
‘How old do you think he is?’