

# Tailing off: Tracing the late stages of a syntactic change in Faroese

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Faroese has attracted the interest of syntacticians particularly since the work of Jonas (1996), as her work suggested that Faroese is currently undergoing the loss of V-to-T, a change that was completed in the Mainland Scandinavian languages three centuries ago. This phenomenon in Faroese is thus of potential interest for two reasons. First, it holds out the prospect of being able to bring the tools of synchronic linguistics to bear on a case of syntactic change in progress – and a change of a type whose historical trajectory has been studied in other languages. Second, it provides further data concerning the relation of clause-internal verb movement to rich agreement morphology. However, it has proved difficult to establish a sound empirical footing for the various claims about the syntax of this language, and as a result the literature contains a number of conflicting claims as to whether the change is or is not completed, and hence conflicting conclusions about the strength – or existence – of the link between verb movement and agreement morphology. In this talk I will present data from a recent project on verb movement in contemporary Faroese, both from spontaneous production and grammaticality judgment tasks. I'll show that while the frequency data in this kind of situation is very hard to draw conclusions from, carefully controlled grammaticality judgment tasks are able to pick up evidence for what I will argue to be a very late stage of the loss of V-to-T. In addition to establishing a firmer empirical basis for theories of verb movement, this study therefore makes the methodological point that grammaticality judgment tasks can yield extremely fine-grained results even in cases where variability is at issue.