Icelandic passives and middles: Event structure and case licensing

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It is by now fairly standard to assume a 'little *v*' head in clause structure, and to attribute a wide range of properties to this *v*. The *v*, among other things, has been implicated in the assignment of the external theta role, bearing of voice features, checking of various cases, carrying the categorial features of the verb, providing a landing site for successive-cyclic A-bar movement, triggering phasal spell-out, and many other things.

In this talk I develop an analysis of some structures in Icelandic which involve event structure and case licensing, and use them to argue in favor of a decomposition of *v* into more specialized parts.

Icelandic has a periphrastic passive with properties similar to the passive in English: a 'perfect' or 'past' participle combines with an auxiliary and allows a range of eventive and stative readings but with a 'demoted' or missing external argument, and usually some kind of concomitant promotion of an internal argument. As in English, the eventive and stative readings can be distinguished by various diagnostics such as agentive adverbials (favoring the eventive reading) and adjectival modification (favoring the stative reading).

However, Icelandic also has some properties which make it easier to see what is happening in these structures, in particular overt case and agreement morphology which further distinguish the different structures (and the so-called 'new passive' provides yet another structure with another set of clues).

In addition, Icelandic has a productive morphologically marked "middle" construction which combines some properties of the eventive passive with some properties of the stative passive, providing yet another probe into the *v* domain.

Though the talk focuses on a relatively narrow class of phenomena from a single language, the account that I develop has important consequences for phase theory (it motivates a reconception of the 'edge', based on the fragmentation of *v*), cartography (the independent arguments that I provide for decomposing *v* supports the finer-grained approach to other categories), nanosyntax (verbal morphology must spell out more than a single head), case theory (I show that the distinction between 'inherent' and 'structural' case has been exaggerated), and other aspects of morphosyntax and syntax–semantics.