Although there are empirical and conceptual reasons to think that the thematic domain—the “vP”—constitutes a locality domain like CP (a “phase”) (see e.g. Kahnemuyipour & Megerdoomian 2011), empirical evidence of vP as a phase on par with CP is harder to come by (see Den Dikken’s 2006 criticisms of Legate 2003). In this talk, we provide novel support for vP’s phasehood, on the grounds that it explains a previously unsolved problem for defining the locality of Icelandic Stylistic Fronting (SF). We show that Icelandic SF can only cross one phase boundary, a locality generalization that is empirically superior to “clause-boundedness.” Similar to Legate’s 2003 arguments, the evidence here applies with equal force to verbs with and without thematic external arguments (namely, raising verbs like ‘seem’).

Importance of SF: SF has provided important support for our understanding of EPP effects (Maling 1990; Holmberg 2000; Sigurðsson 2010). SF is movement of a non-finite verb, verbal particle, adverb, adjective, PP or DP to the left of a finite verb, optionally possible when there is a subject gap, i.e., whenever SpecTP is not filled by phonologically overt material, e.g. in subject-extracted relative clauses.

1) [DP Bókin [CP sem stolið hefur verið stolið ]] er á gólfinu.
   [DP the.book [CP that stolen.PRT has been stolen ]] is on the.floor
   ‘The book that has been stolen is on the floor.’

One important property of SF, which is the focus of this talk, is that it is clause bounded, as illustrated for a finite clause in (2) and a control clause in (3).

2) * [DP Bókin [CP sem stolið var sagt [CP að þú hefðir stolið ]]] er á gólfinu.
   [DP the.book [CP that stolen.PRT was said [CP that you had stolen ]] is on the.floor

3) * þetta er [DP maðurinn [CP sem lesa lofaði [CP að lesa allar bækurnar ]]].
   this is [DP the.man [CP who read.INF promised [CP to read all the.books ]]]

Empirical Problem: While everyone agrees that SF is clause bounded, the analysis, and even the formal description of this constraint has resisted explanation. In Holmberg’s (2000) analysis, the closest frontable constituent moves to the left of the verb; clause-boundedness must be stated separately. Jónsson (1991) points out that it is not enough to say that CP is a barrier for SF, since raising verbs, standardly assumed to take a TP, and not a CP complement, do not allow it. (See (9) for evidence in favor of this distinction.)

4) [DP þeir [CP sem {*taka } virðast [XP {taka } kartöflur upp ]] eru álfar.
   [DP they [CP who {*pick.INF} seem [XP {pick } potatoes up ]]] are elves
   ‘The ones who seem to pick up potatoes are elves.’

Thráinsson (2007:374) proposes that the problem is not clause-boundedness per se, but the intervention of an overt complementizer head, and points out that some verbs which do not select for a complementizer allow SF, as illustrated in (5). However, this explains neither the unacceptability of SF in (4), nor the impossibility of SF in (6), where the causative verb láta ‘make’ takes a subjectless infinitive complement, or the impossibility of SF in (7), where fá ‘get/manage to’ takes a perfect participle complement (cf. (8)).

5) þetta er [DP maðurinn [CP sem {lesa } vildi [XP {lesa } allar bækurnar ]]].
   this is [DP the.man [CP who {read.INF} wanted [XP {read } all the.books ]]]
   ‘This is the man who wanted to read all the books.’

6) þetta er [DP maðurinn [CP sem {*brenna } lét [XP {brenna } allar bækurnar ]]].
   this is [DP the.man [CP who {*burn.INF} made [XP {burn } all the.books ]]]
   ‘This is the man who had/ made (people/ someone) burn all the books.’

7) þetta er [DP maðurinn [CP sem {*brennt } fékk [XP {brennt } allar bækurnar ]]].
   this is [DP the.man [CP who {*burnt.PRT} got [XP {burnt } all the.books ]]]
   ‘This is the man who managed to burn all the books.’

8) þetta er [DP maðurinn [CP sem {brennt } hefur [XP {brennt } allar bækurnar ]]].
   this is [DP the.man [CP who {burnt.PRT} have [XP {burnt } all the.books ]]]
   ‘This is the man who has burnt all the books.’

(4), (6) and (7) cannot be explained by saying that they involve CP complements. Icelandic non-finite CPs (e.g. control verbs) have verb raising (e.g. past ekki ‘not’; láta ‘make’, fá ‘get’ and raising verbs do not.

9) a. Ég {reyndi að/*virtist /*lét } byggja ekki húsið. b. *Ég fékk byggt ekki húsið.
   I {tried to/*seemed/*made} build.INF not the.house I got built.PRT not the.house
   ‘I tried to not build the house.’
   ‘I managed to not build the house.’
New generalization: The novel data in (6) and (7) (along with (4)) reveals a previously unnoticed correlation: SF is disallowed past verbs which have their own argument structure—that is, past verbs which have their own vP layer and extended projection.

Látta ‘make’ and fá ‘get/manage to’ can be shown to have their own argument structure on the basis of the fact that they cannot embed oblique-subject verbs and preserve the embedded case, as shown below with the dative-taking verb takast ‘manage to succeed’.

   me.DAT will succeed.INF this me.DAT has always succeeded.PRT this
   ‘I will manage to succeed at this.’ ‘I have always managed to succeed at this.’

   me.DAT made succeed.INF this me.DAT got always succeeded.PRT this
   These facts support the view that látta ‘make’ and fá ‘get/manage to’ take their own thematic arguments; that is, that these verbs project their own extended vP layer.

Raising verbs like virðast ‘seem’ are different in that by definition, they involve raising of a lower argument; thus, the case of a lower dative is preserved, as shown in (12a). However, evidence that raising verbs like virðast ‘seem’ have argument structure and project their own extended vP comes from the fact that they may take experiencer dative arguments of their own, as shown in (12b).

   me.DAT seemed succeed.INF this her.DAT seemed me.DAT succeed.INF this
   ‘I seemed to succeed at this.’ ‘I seemed to her to manage to succeed at this.’

Moreover, raising verbs like virðast ‘seem’ may take the -st clitic, and according to the analysis of -st in Sigurðsson (2012) and Wood (2012), -st will only be possible on verbs which project their own extended vP layer; Sigurðsson (2012) independently argues that virðast ‘seem’ projects such a layer.

Analysis The correlation between having argument structure and disallowing SF is explained by phase theory, which treats vPs and CPs as the same from a locality perspective. The generalization is this: SF cannot cross any phase boundary other than the one they are generated in. Thus, they cannot cross a higher CP boundary or a higher vP boundary. This generalization supports treating vPs as phases, or more generally, as boundaries for locality on par with CPs. Verbs may move to the edge of their own vP, but they may only move to the “SF position” (whatever that may be) within their own extended projection.

(13) [CP sem [TP brenn [PerfP hefur [VP, brennt [PRT brennt]]]]]
   [CP who [TP burnt [PerfP has [VP burnt [PRT burnt all the.books]]]]]

(14) * [CP sem [TP brenn [VP fékk [AgrP brennt [PRT brennt]]]]]
   [CP who [TP burnt [VP got [AgrP burnt [PRT burnt all the.books]]]]]

This is easily statable in phase theory: verbs have v-features that match their extended projection (cf. Roberts 2010), but this does not enable them to move successive-cyclically through any phase edge. Our proposal makes novel predictions about apparent exceptions to the generalization, such as (5), which seems to involve a control verb, vilja ‘want’ (implying a vP layer), but one that allows SF. These should be analyzable not as having their own vP layer, but instead as restructuring verbs understood as functional heads in an extended projection (as in the analysis of modal verbs in Wurmbrand 1998, and in general Cinque 2004). Indeed, ‘want’ is a classic “mixed” case cross-linguistically (Wurmbrand 1998:272ff), which has, varyingly, both restructuring and lexical verb properties; as we will show, the same is true of vilja ‘want’. In sum, the present analysis provides support for the phasehood of vP, by showing how it solves the previously recalcitrant problem of the clause-boundedness of SF.