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RIGHTWARD DISPLACEMENT OF NPs IN ICELANDIC:  
FORMAL AND FUNCTIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

0. Introduction

Aims: To look at two rightward movement rules of Icelandic syntax; Indefinite NP Postposing (INPP) and Heavy NP Shift (HNPS).

- (1)a Maður er í dyrunum  
A man is in the doorway
- b Það er maður í dyrunum  
There is a man in the doorway

- (2)a Ég gaf gamla manninum sem ég hitti á spítalanum bókina  
I gave the old man whom I met at the hospital the book
- b Ég gaf bókina gamla manninum sem ég hitti á spítalanum  
I gave the book (to) the old man whom I met at the hospital

1. Form

1.1 INPP and There-insertion

INPP "is the Icelandic equivalent of There-insertion in English" (Maling 1980:181n). But There-insertion applies to a limited number of verbs, whereas INPP applies to all sorts of verbs, transitive as well as intransitive.

- (3)a Margt fólk kom í veisluna  
Many people came to the party
- b Það kom margt fólk í veisluna  
There came many people to the party

- (4)a Einhverjir strákar brutu gluggann  
Some boys broke the window
- b Það brutu einhverjir strákar gluggann  
There broke some boys the window

The dummy það is not needed (and in fact impossible) when something else than the subject is fronted:

- (5) Í veisluna (\*það) kom (\*það) margt fólk  
 To the party (\*there) came (\*there) many people

The "landing site" of the subject can be at various places in the predicate:

- (6)a Gamall maður hefur komið hingað í dag  
 An old man has come here today
- b Það hefur gamall maður komið hingað í dag
- c Það hefur komið gamall maður hingað í dag
- d Það hefur komið hingað gamall maður í dag
- e Það hefur komið hingað í dag gamall maður

Instead of inserting það, the place adverbial hingað or the PP í dag could be fronted in each of the sentences (6)b-e:

- (7)a Hingað hefur komið gamall maður í dag  
 Here has come an old man today
- b Í dag hefur komið hingað gamall maður  
 Today has come here an old man

"Indefiniteness" conditions must be observed:

- (8)a \*Það hefur komið gamli maðurinn hingað í dag  
 There has come the old man here today
- b \*Hingað hefur komið gamli maðurinn í dag  
 Here has come the old man today

Postposing of objects appears to be governed by the same principles:

- (9)a Ég sá einhvern mann þarna í gær  
 I saw some man there yesterday
- b Ég sá þarna í gær einhvern mann  
 I saw there yesterday some man

c \*Ég sá þarna í gær Jón  
I saw there yesterday John

### 1.2 Arguments for a movement rule

Bresnan's (1982) claim: There-insertion is not a movement rule, and the "extra" NP is not the subject, but rather an object. Inapplicable in Icelandic for several reasons:

- (i) doubling of all subcategorization frames;
- (ii) many new phrase-structure rules;
- (iii) troubles with Ss like (7);
- (iv) the "extra" NP obligatorily triggers reflexivization.

Bresnan's main arguments against a movement rule: In certain dialects of English the number of be depends on the first conjunct in an immediately following coordinate structure:

- (10) There  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} * \text{were} \\ \text{was} \end{array} \right\}$  a man and three women here
- (11)  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{A man and three women} \\ \text{Three women and a man} \end{array} \right\} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} * \text{was} \\ \text{were} \end{array} \right\}$  here
- (12) There  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} * \text{was} \\ \text{were} \end{array} \right\}$  three women (and a man) here

A paradox in rule ordering is bound to appear, Bresnan states.

The situation in Icelandic:

- (13) Það  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} ? \text{komu (pl.)} \\ \text{kom (sg.)} \end{array} \right\}$  karlmaður og þrjár konur hingað  
There came (sg. preferred) a man and three women here
- (14) Þrjár konur og karlmaður  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} * \text{kom (sg.)} \\ \text{komu (pl.)} \end{array} \right\}$  hingað  
Three women and a man came (pl.) here

Number agreement with a predicate NP in the nominative:

- (15) Þetta (sg.)  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} * \text{er (sg.)} \\ \text{eru (pl.)} \end{array} \right\}$  hestar (pl.)  
This are horses

### 1.3 Postposing of subjects by HNPS

Postal (1974): The rule does not move subjects:

- (16)a All of the men who recovered from mononucleosis are happy

b \*Are happy all of the men who recovered from mononucleosis

(17)a Maðurinn sem ætlar að gera við bílinn er kominn  
The man who is going to repair the car has come

b \*Er kominn maðurinn sem ætlar að gera við bílinn  
Has come the man who is going to repair the car

d Það er kominn maðurinn sem ætlar að gera við bílinn  
There has come the man who is going to repair the car

2. Function

2.1 Conditions on postposed NPs

Definite NPs: Personal pronouns, proper names, NPs having a definite article. Compare (1)b, (3)b and (4)b with (18)-(20):

(18)a Hann er í dyrunum  
He is in the doorway

b \*Það er hann í dyrunum                      Það er maður í dyrunum  
There is he in the doorway                      There is a man in the doorway

(19)a Jón kom í veisluna  
John came to the party

b \*Það kom Jón í veisluna                      Það kom margt fólk í veisluna  
There came John to the party                      There came many people to the party

(20)a Strákarnir brutu gluggann  
The boys broke the window

b \*Það brutu strákarnir gluggann                      Það brutu einhverjir strákar gluggann  
There broke the boys the window                      There broke some boys the window

2.2 Why indefiniteness?

Apparent counterexamples:

(21) Það var tröðfullur salurinn þegar sýningin hófst  
There was full (of people) the theatre when the performance started

(22) Það festist rútan á leiðinni norður  
There got stuck the bus on the way north

(23) Það er horfinn allur snjórinn  
 There has disappeared all the snow

(24) Það skín alltaf sólin  
 There shines always the sun

Given (or old) information is that knowledge which the speaker assumes to be in the consciousness of the addressee at the time of the utterance. So-called new information is what the speaker assumes he is introducing into the addressee's consciousness by what he says. (Chafe 1976:30)

### 2.3 Postposing of new information

Proposal: Let us put new instead of indefinite in the characterization of NPs that can be postposed. Hence, formal features such as presence or absence of a definite article can no longer be used to predict which NPs can be postposed.

(25) Það er kominn hingað til okkar í stúdíóið Jón Jónsson, og ...  
 There has come here to us in the studio John Johnson, and ...

Most "heavy" NPs which get postposed contain either a PP or an S, which serves to identify or explain the content of the head NP:

(26) Ég mætti konunni í gráa húsinu í morgun  
 I met the woman (who lives) in the grey house this morning

(27) Jón hjálpaði gamla karlinum sem öllum þykir vant um  
 John helped the old man who everybody is fond of

### 3. Conclusion

Both formal and functional factors must be considered when we describe the conditions on rightward movement in Icelandic.

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