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ICELANDIC WORD ORDER
AND það-INSERTION

0. Introduction

Aims: (i) To review two analyses of Icelandic word order; those of Maling and Zaenen (1978; cf. also Maling 1980, Zaenen 1981), and the analysis proposed by Platzack (1982).

(ii) To come up with a new analysis of the basic structure of Icelandic sentences, much in line with Platzack's, but avoiding the wrong predictions of that analysis.

(iii) To argue that some factors of Icelandic word order, especially extractions and það-insertion, cannot be explained on purely structural grounds.

1. Icelandic Word Order

1.1 V/2

"Icelandic has a strict Verb-Second Constraint (V/2) that applies to all tensed clauses, embedded as well as main" (Maling & Zaenen 1978: 491).

(1) Ég veit að $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} * \emptyset \\ \text{það} \end{array} \right\}$ hefur einhver lesið bókina

I know that there has someone read the book

(2) Ég veit að $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} * \emptyset \\ \text{það} \end{array} \right\}$ var dansað á skipinu í gær

I know that there was danced on the ship yesterday

(3) Sveinn veit ég að $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} * \text{það} \\ \emptyset \end{array} \right\}$ hefur lesið bókina

Sveinn know I that has read the book

(4) Þetta er maðurinn sem $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} * \text{það} \\ \emptyset \end{array} \right\}$ las bókina

This is the man who read the book

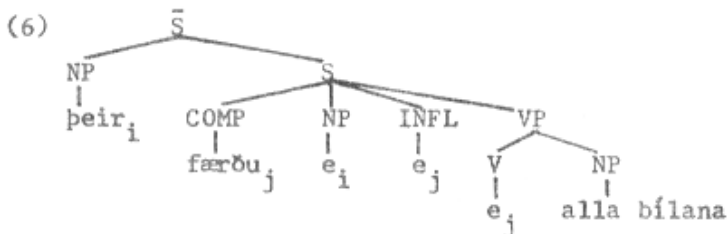
"in binding domains það must be omitted" (Zaenen 1981:9).

1.2 Platzack's analysis

Main features:

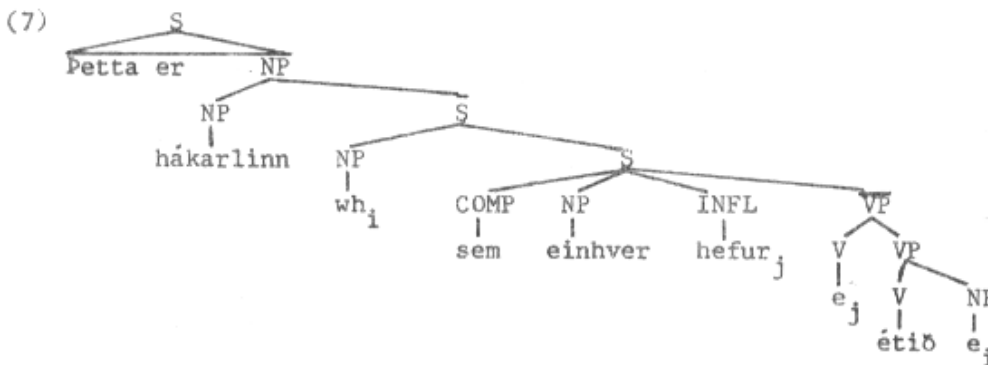
- (5)a Both a COMP and an INFL node
- b COMP is a constituent of \bar{S} , not \bar{S}
- c \bar{S} branches into S and X^{\max} , which is the landing site for topicalized phrases and the place where pað is generated
- d The finite verb always moves to INFL, and sometimes from there to COMP, if necessary to prevent violations of the ECP
- e Subordinate clauses with pað-insertion, and those out of which something has been extracted, have a special \bar{S} -level

The structure of four sentences, according to this description:



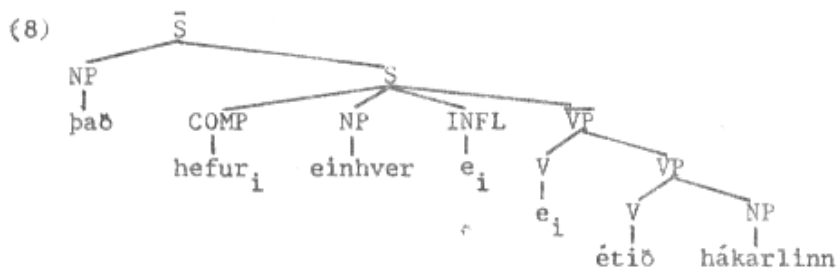
They moved all the cars

The finite verb has moved twice; from VP to INFL, and then to COMP. The subject has moved to X^{\max} ; the result is an ordinary declarative.



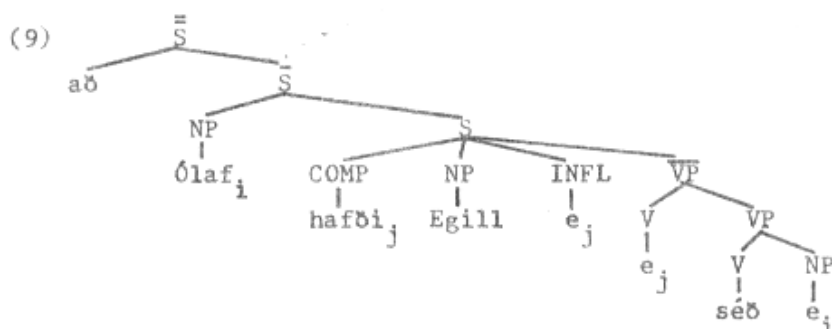
This is the shark that someone has eaten

Relatives are assumed to be derived by means of wh-movement under Platzack's analysis; hence the wh-element in X^{\max} .



There has someone eaten the shark

The verb moves twice, as in (6); but as pað is generated in X^{\max} , the subject does not get moved.



that Ólafur had Egill seen

að must have a double representation, because topicalization is often possible in subordinate clauses.

Predictions of this analysis as regards topicalization, extractions and pað-insertion:

- (10)a Topicalization in relative clauses should be impossible, as the X^{\max} -position, which is the landing site of topicalized phrases, is occupied by a wh-element
- b Extractions out of topicalized clauses should be excluded, because subordinate topicalized clauses must have a special \bar{S} -level, which is an absolute barrier to extractions
- c Extractions out of subordinate clauses with pað should be excluded for the same reason; these clauses must have the \bar{S} -level
- d pað-insertion should be impossible in relative clauses, for the same reason as topicalization should be excluded (cf. (10)a)

1.3 Counterexamples

NPs (11) and PPs (12) can be fronted in relative clauses:

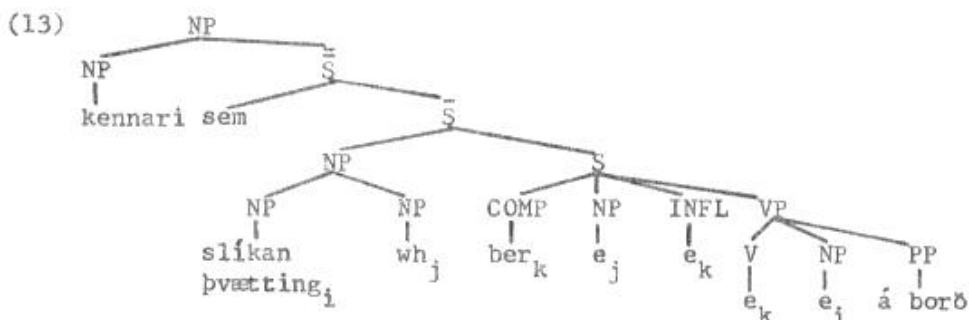
- (11) Kennari [sem slíkan þvætting ber ___ á borð fyrir nemendur] er til alls vís

A teacher who such nonsense tells his students can do anything

- (12) Flokkurinn [sem um fjögurra ára skeið hefur verið í stjórn ___] tapaði kosningunum

The party which for four years' time has been in the government lost the election

Can we get rid of this problem by assuming a double representation for sem, just as for að?



Two elements will have to be moved to X^{\max} ; neither can c-command its trace.

Reasonably good examples of extractions out of topicalized clauses can be found (cf. Rögnvaldsson 1982:180):

- (14) Í gær veit ég [að þar hefur verið slegist ___]]

Yesterday know I that there has been fought

- (15) Þessar bækur hélt ég [að þér myndi ekki nokkur maður lána ___]]

These books thought I that you would not any man lend

... wh-elements are often secondary themes whereas topics and heads of relatives are primary themes ... and ... one can only extract a primary theme over a secondary one, but not vice versa. Extraction of a theme over another one of equal importance is also difficult. (Zaenen 1980:225, fn. 2.)

It is also possible to find examples of extractions out of subordinate clauses with það-insertion:

- (16) Hvenær heldur þú [að það geti allir keypt sér íbúð ___] ?
When think you that there can everyone buy himself a flat?
- (17) Hvaða vintegund heldur þú [að það sé drukkið mest af ___ á Íslandi] ?
Which sort of wine think you that there is drunk most of in Iceland?
- (18) Þessa mynd finnst mér nú [að það verði allir að sjá ___] ?
This picture think I that there must everyone see

Some examples of það-insertion in relative clauses are not too bad for many speakers:

- (19) Þetta er maðurinn [sem það var talað við ___ í sjónvarpinu í gær] ?
This is the man who there was talked with on the television yesterday
- (20) ?Þetta er stelpa [sem það eru margir skotnir í ___] ?
This is a girl who there are many in love with

There is a clear difference between these sentences and (21); however, they should all be equally bad under Platzack's analysis:

- (21) *Þetta er stelpa [sem það ___ elskar alla] ?
This is a girl who there loves everybody

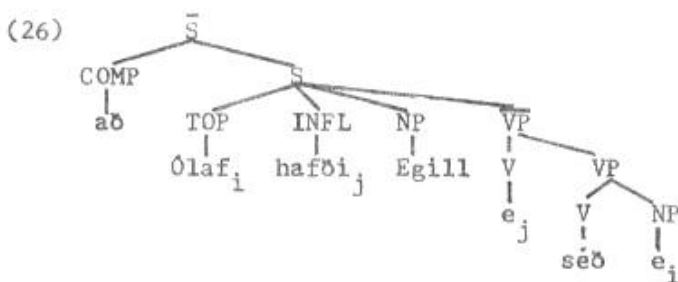
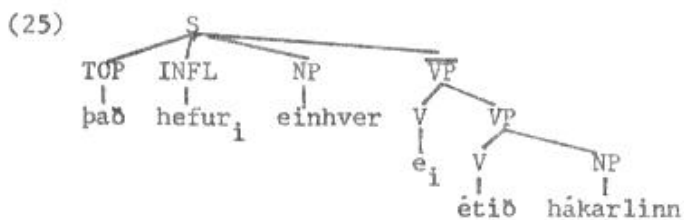
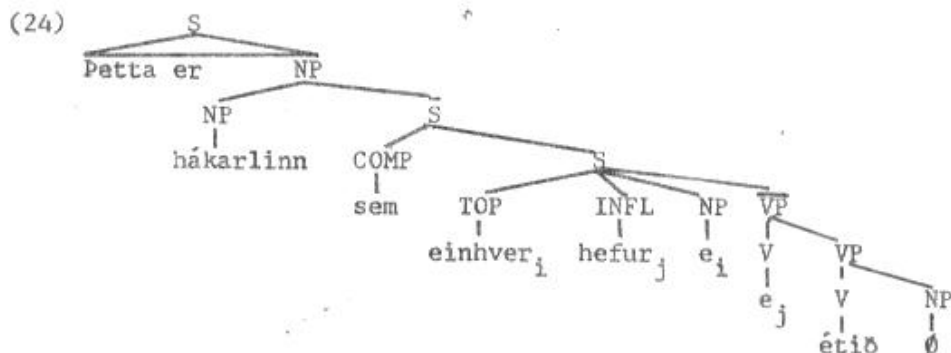
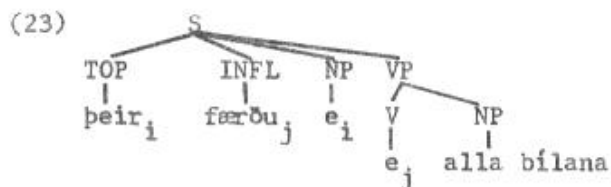
1.4 A new analysis

PS-rules:

- (22)a $\bar{S} \rightarrow \text{COMP S}$
b $S \rightarrow \text{TOP INFL NP VP}$

TOP corresponds to Platzack's X^{max} -node.

The structure of (6)-(9), according to this analysis, would be as shown in (23)-(26):



The adverb kannski is assumed to be base generated in sentences like (27), where we have an apparent V/3 order:

(27) Kannski ég komi á morgun

Maybe I come tomorrow

2. Conditions on það-insertion

2.1 Thráinsson's (1979) rule

(28) $[_{NP} e] V \Rightarrow [_{NP} það] V$

This rule would predict that (29)-(32) should be good:

- (29) *Ég spurði hvern það hefðu allir séð ___1
I asked whom there had everybody seen
- (30) ?*Þetta er maður ísem það sáu allir ___1
This is a man whom there saw everybody
- (31) *Þetta er maður ísem það hefur lesið bókina
This is a man who there has read the book
- (32) *Sveinn veit ég það það hefur lesið bókina
Sveinn know I that there has read the book

2.2 Zaenen's (1980) rule

(33)	X	COMP	S	I	V	W
	1	2			3	4
	1	2 það #			3	4

Condition: "in binding domains það must be omitted" (Zaenen 1981:9).
 A binding domain is the stretch between a binder (which can be a fronted element or sem) and a bindee (i.e., a gap). This condition would exclude both (29)-(32) and (16)-(20).

2.3 Troubles with the new analysis?

Stylistic Inversion shows that it is often not the það-insertion, but rather the postposing, which is bad:

- (34)a ??Þetta er bók sem það hafa allir lesið
This is a book which there has everybody read
- b ?*Þetta er bók sem lesið hafa allir
This is a book which read has everybody
- (35)a ??Hann spurði hvað það hefði einhver étið
He asked what there had someone eaten
- b ?*Hann spurði hvað étið hefði einhver
He asked what eaten had someone

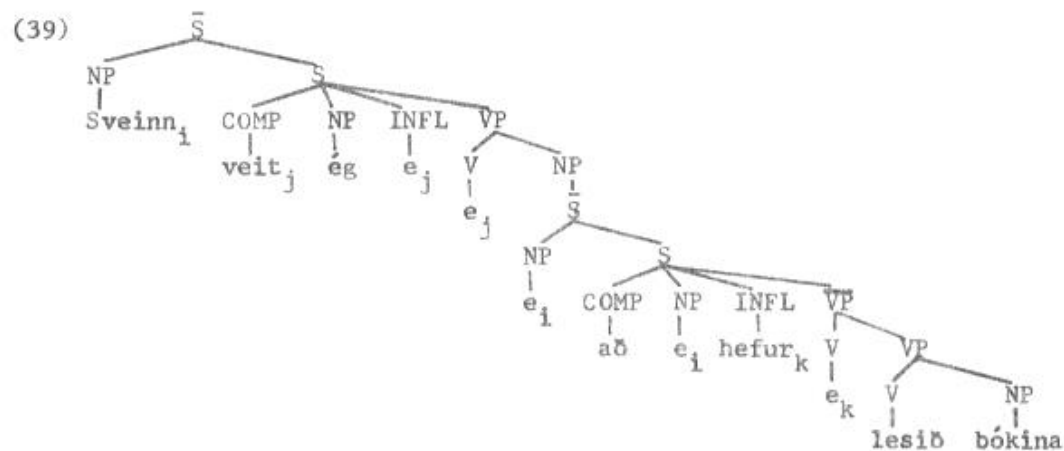
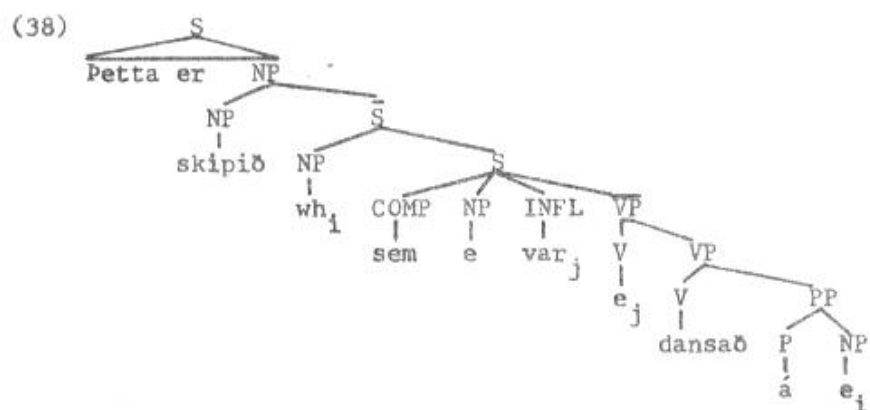
My analysis predicts that (36) should be good with það, because there we have a base generated empty subject position:

(36) Ég vissi ekki hvar $\left\{ \begin{matrix} *það \\ \emptyset \end{matrix} \right\}$ hefði verið dansað

The það-less version of (37) presents similar problems for Platzack's analysis:

(37) Þetta er skipið sem $\left\{ \begin{matrix} ?það \\ \emptyset \end{matrix} \right\}$ var dansað á ___ í gær

This is the ship which there was danced on yesterday



2.4 The obligatoriness of það-insertion

(40) Mér leiðist alltaf þegar $\left\{ \begin{matrix} það \\ \emptyset \end{matrix} \right\}$ rignir

I am bored always when rains

(41) Ég vissi að $\left\{ \begin{matrix} það \\ ?\emptyset \end{matrix} \right\}$ væri ekið vinstra megin í Ástralíu

I knew that there were driven on the left side in Australia

Assertion may be involved:

(42) Veistu að {pað} er rigning úti?
 {??ø}

Know you that there is rain outside?

(43) Ég vissi ekki að {pað} væri rigning úti
 {ø}

I knew not that were rain outside

Another case where assertion seems to matter:

(44) ?Þetta er saga sem pað er einhver að lesa í útvarpinu núna

This is a story which there is someone reading on the radio now

(45) ??Pað er mjög góð saga sem pað er einhver að lesa í útvarpinu núna

It is a very good story which there is someone reading on the radio now

Differences between relativized objects of verbs and objects of prepositions:

(46) ?*Þetta er stelpa sem pað elska margir

This is a girl who there love many

(47) ??Þetta er stelpa sem pað eru margir skotnir í

This is a girl who there are many in love with

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