

Word formation and the Icelandic noun phrase

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Overview: This paper provides an account of the structure of the Icelandic noun phrase within the framework of Distributed Morphology. Building on restrictions observed in compounds, a functional hierarchy is proposed which reflects both the word level structure as well as the syntactic functional domain in noun phrases. Specifically, I propose that Icelandic noun phrases involve a complex functional domain consisting of a category defining nP, an inflectional projection (φ P), a projection encoding referentiality (ω P), and, in case of definite NPs, a definiteness projection (DP). This structure is shown to derive the attested word orders in noun phrases.

The functional nominal domain—word level: Harðarson (2013) argues, based on Icelandic compounds, that a noun consists of: an acategorical root; a category creating node n ; a node φ , which is necessary for the realization of inflection; and ω , which is necessary for referentiality (drawing on e.g. Allen 1978, Vangsnes 1999, Julien 2005). This structure, (1), in turn indicates the mirror image (cf. Baker 1985) of what is traditionally labelled NP/DP as shown in (2) ((1) is derived via subsequent head movements).

(1) [[[[√ROOT] n°] φ°] ω°] (2) [ω P [ω° [φ P [φ° [n P [n° [√ROOT]]]]]]]]]]]]

Building on that, I argue that ω licenses modifiers and nominal arguments at the syntactic level, and that this layer is not present in compound modifiers.

Word order in Icelandic NPs: When it comes to linear order of elements in the Icelandic traditional noun phrase (TNP) there are five options under a non-partitive reading. Three of which are in accordance with Greenberg's Universal 20, (3) and two of which are not, (4). Note, that the proppial article has been omitted from (3-4) for the sake of presentation.

- (3) a. NUMERAL > ADJECTIVE > NOUN > GENITIVE > PP
þrjár frægar myndir Astridar af Dorian Gray
three famous pictures Astrid.gen of Dorian Gray
Astrid's three famous pictures of Dorian Gray
- b. ARTICLE > NUMERAL > ADJECTIVE > NOUN > GENITIVE > PP
hinar þrjár frægu myndir Astridar af Dorian Gray
the three famous pictures Astrid.gen of Dorian Gray
- c. GENITIVE > NUMERAL > ADJECTIVE > NOUN > PP
Astridar þrjár frægu myndir af Dorian Gray
Astrid.gen three famous pictures of Dorian Gray
- (4) a. ADJECTIVE > NOUN-ARTICLE > NUMERAL > GENITIVE > PP
frægu myndirnar þrjár Astridar af Dorian Gray
famous pictures.art three Astrid.gen of Dorian Gray
Astrid's three famous pictures of Dorian Gray
- b. NOUN-ARTICLE > NUMERAL > ADJECTIVE > GENITIVE > PP
myndirnar þrjár frægu Astridar af Dorian Gray
pictures.art three famous Astrid.gen of Dorian Gray

These patterns have been described and discussed often before (e.g. Magnússon 1984, Pfaff 2007). In case of the definite TNP, (3b, c) and (4), the order in (4a) is the unmarked one, and the orders in (3b) and (4b) are often seen as stylistic variants (for (3c) see below).

The functional nominal domain—syntactic level: As shown in (5), I propose the numerals are adjoined to ω P and adjectives are merged in Spec- ω P. Evidence for this is provided by locality effects arising within the noun phrase. Genitives (as well as pronominal possessors) are merged in Spec- φ P and finally, argument PPs are merged in Spec-nP.

(5) [ω P NUMERAL [ω P AP [ω' ω° [φ P GENITIVE [φ' φ° [nP PP [n' n $^\circ$ [$\sqrt{\text{ROOT}}$]]]]]]]]]]]

In addition to providing referentiality, ω is also assumed to license arguments. Following e.g. Marantz (2007), category creating nodes are phase heads, hence in order for an argument PP to be visible to a higher node, it must be no lower than the edge of nP. Furthermore, ω is also considered to be the source of double definiteness in Faroese, Norwegian and Swedish (drawing on Vangsnes 1999). In case of a definite TNP, ω is dominated by D. D can be free, as in (3b), cliticized to a fronted noun, as in (4), or null in case of a fronted genitive as in (3c). The cliticization of the definite article is assumed to be the result of ω -to-D movement. Following Pfaff (2007 and subsequent work), the choice between the various options in the definite TNP is not semantically neutral, but affects the availability of certain readings. This is taken as evidence that the fronting of the adjective is motivated independently and should be treated as a separate movement.

Previous approaches: The fact that N and A tend to occur together before a numeral and the markedness of other patterns have served as motivation for an analysis in which the adjective and noun undergo movement to the left periphery of the TNP in a single operation. Previous proposals generally fall into two categories: head movement approaches, yielding a complex head [[A+N]+D] (e.g. Delsing 1993; Sigurðsson 1993); and phrasal movement approaches (e.g. Vangsnes 1999; Julien 2005), in which the constituent containing N and A is moved to SpecDP. Neither fully captures the facts. The head movement analyses makes incorrect predictions regarding phonological interactions and stress assignment, i.e. A and N are predicted to form a compound in (4a). The phrasal movement approaches fail to account for the postnominal sphere — i.e. the constituent being fronted should also include the possessor and nominal complement, however, this would yield the ungrammatical order shown in (6).

(6) *NOUN-ARTICLE > ADJECTIVE > GENITIVE > PP > NUMERAL

Selected References

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