

P-incorporation in the history of Icelandic

The topic of this paper is leftward movement of prepositions across lexical verbs, participles and adjectives in the history of Icelandic. We will analyze this phenomenon as preposition incorporation (P-incorporation) by head movement in the spirit of Baker's (1988) classical analysis of incorporation. The IcePaHC Corpus of Icelandic Texts contains various examples of P-incorporation in Icelandic from the 12th century until the early 20th century. P-incorporation has disappeared as a productive process in contemporary Icelandic and is now restricted to some fixed expressions.

P-incorporation in Icelandic is often purely syntactic, in which case the host of the incorporated preposition may excorporate. P-incorporation can also result in the formation of a morphological word (as indicated in the spelling). Morphological incorporation enables e.g. a verb to raise out of the VP along with the prefixed preposition. With P-incorporation of both types, the prepositions always assign the same case (i.e. accusative, dative, or genitive) to their DP objects as they would in other contexts.

Our analysis has some important theoretical ramifications. It can be shown e.g. that P-incorporation provides strong evidence that Old Icelandic was uniformly VO, despite various OV-orders on the surface (see Hróarsdóttir 2000 and 2008 for additional arguments). Examples from the IcePaHC Corpus show that P-incorporation is only possible from a VO-base where the PP follows the host. While there are many examples of the type [[**P**_i+X] [PP t_i **DP**]] examples of the kind [[PP t_i **DP**] [**P**_i+X]] are not attested (where X = lexical verb, participle or an adjective). Assuming a uniform VO-base for Old Icelandic, this latter order cannot be derived because the PP would have to move to a higher specifier position prior to P-incorporation but incorporation from there would be excluded since the preposition would fail to c-command its trace.

Some examples of P-incorporation are shown below. Note the excorporation of the finite verb in (2), leaving behind the incorporated preposition, whereas in (3) the morphologically incorporated preposition is moved along with the finite verb to T. As shown by Jónsson (2008), incorporated prepositions can also be reduplicated.

- (1) og hversu hann er **frá** rekinn **sínu** **ríki** að saklausu
and how he is from driven REFL.DAT state.DAT by innocence
'and how he is wrongfully driven from his state'
(Morkinskinna, 1882) (late 13th century)
- (2) og hefir Oddur **af** virðing **málunum**
and has Oddur from respect the.affairs.DAT
'and Oddur gains respect from the affairs'
(Bandamanna saga yngri, 555) (mid 15th century)
- (3) Ég áhlýddist **það** **hans** **boð**
I to.listened that.ACC his.ACC command.ACC
'I obeyed that command of his'
(Píslarsaga séra Jóns Magnússonar, 188) (mid 17th century)

In contrast to P-incorporation, which is already attested in manuscripts from the 12th century, uncontroversial examples of P-stranding in Old Icelandic are hard to find (Haugan 2001 and Jónsson 2008). Thus, it looks like PPs were islands in Icelandic until the 16th century. Still, Faarlund (2004:233) cites (4) as an example of P-stranding in Old Icelandic, and (5) is an example from the IcePaHC Corpus of P-stranding in Old Icelandic due to Heavy NP Shift:

- (4) **Þess** máttu Gautar illa **án** vera
 this.GEN could Gauts badly without be (Heimskringla.II.95.2)
 ‘The Gauts could hardly be without it’
- (5) himintunglin benda **fyrir** með ógn og hryggleik **þau**
 the.planets point to with threat and sadness those.ACC
stórtíðendi, er eftir munu koma
 big.news.ACC that later will come
 (Alexanders saga, 1118) (around 1300)

These examples can be analyzed as involving P-incorporation into the verbs *vera* ‘be’ and *benda* ‘point’, followed by excorporation of the latter verb to T. Assume further that Bošković (2011:16) is right in claiming that “a phrase that is normally a barrier to movement ceases to be a barrier if headed by a trace” (see also Stepanov 2012). The result is that the islandhood of the relevant PPs in (4) and (5) is voided as islands cannot be headed by traces. Thus, the incorporation analysis proposed here can be used to make the interesting prediction that objects of prepositions in Old Icelandic cannot undergo movement unless the preposition is incorporated. As far as we know, that prediction is correct.

References

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