

6 Icelandic

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6.1 Introduction

Iceland was mainly settled in the late ninth and early tenth century and the majority of the settlers came from Norway. They spoke the language commonly referred to as Old Norse or Old Scandinavian. There probably were some dialectal differences in the Nordic language of the settlers. It is likely, however, that certain dialectal levelling took place after the settlement since it does not appear that the settlers speaking the same dialect formed any kind of dialectal colonies within Iceland. Yet it could be argued that West Nordic dialectal traits have prevailed in Iceland since Modern Icelandic is closest to Faroese and to the Norwegian dialects spoken in southwestern Norway.

It is customary to divide the history of the Icelandic language roughly into the Old Icelandic period (before 1540) and Modern Icelandic (after 1540), the dividing line being drawn at the year the first Icelandic translation of the New Testament was published. This is obviously a very coarse division, but we need not worry about it here. When Modern Icelandic is compared with the other modern Nordic languages on one hand and with Old Norse on the other, it is evident that it has changed less than the other Modern Scandinavian languages, at least with respect to morphology and syntax.

There are some dialectal differences in Modern Icelandic, but very minor ones compared with the situation in most Germanic languages. The best-known differences have to do with phonological variation (see p. 151). Since these differences are so minimal, it has not been necessary to define a particular standard or 'received pronunciation' or anything similar. Hence the announcers on radio and television, teachers in schools, etc. can, by and large, use their own dialect and they do.

6.2 Phonology

Since we will be using Icelandic spelling when giving examples below, we will begin by listing the Modern Icelandic alphabet. The symbols in parentheses have their place in the Icelandic alphabet but they are only used in words of foreign origin (c, q, w) and/or older versions of Icelandic spelling (z):

Table 6.1 Distinctive feature structure of Old Icelandic vowels

	Front		Back		Unrounded		Rounded	
	Unrounded	Rounded	Unrounded	Rounded	Unrounded	Rounded	Unrounded	Rounded
	short	long	short	long	short	long	short	long
High	i	i:	y	y:			u	u:
Mid	e	e:	ø	ø:			o	o:
Low	(ɛ)	ɛ:			a	a:	ɔ	ɔ:
Diphthongs	au, eɪ, eɣ ¹							

Note: 1 The first part of this diphthong may have been rounded like the second.

a á b (c) d ð e é f g h i í j k l m n o ó p (q) r s t u ú v (w) x y ý (z) þ æ ö

The phonological system of Modern Icelandic has probably changed more, compared with Old Norse, than any other component of the language. This is especially true of the vowel system. We have an excellent description of the Old Icelandic sound system in the twelfth century, the so-called *First Grammatical Treatise*. This description indicates that twelfth-century Icelandic had 'nine qualitatively distinct vocalic units' (if we do not count nasality in vowels as 'quality') as shown in Table 6.1. The First Grammarian (FG, the author of the *First Grammatical Treatise*) shows by producing distinctive pairs that the *quantity distinction* was systematic throughout the Old Icelandic vowel system. In addition, it appears that the diphthongs corresponded to long vowels metrically. But the FG also shows, by giving pairs of oral vs nasal vowels for each of the nine different qualities, that the vowels could either be *oral* or *nasal*.

If one takes into account the fact that there does not seem to have been a distinction between short /e/ and /ẽ/ any more in the twelfth century, one could say that Old Icelandic had 26 different vowel phonemes (monophthongs) when the FG wrote his treatise. In Modern Icelandic, on the other hand, the corresponding number is 8, as we shall see in the next section, the main difference being that neither vowel quantity nor nasality are distinctive in Modern Icelandic.

The Vowel System

The vowel system of Modern Icelandic can be diagrammed as shown in Table 6.2. In addition to the five diphthongs shown in the table, it is frequently assumed that Modern Icelandic also has the diphthongs /ɣj/ and /ɔj/ in words like *hugi* 'thought' and *bogi* 'bow'. The vowels in these words are interpreted differently here.

The development that led to the present situation was quite complex. Since a good understanding of the modern vowel system and its relation to the older

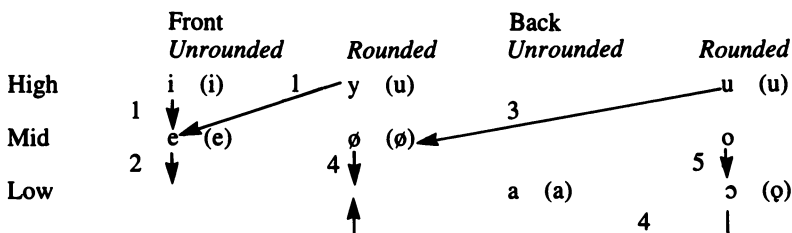
stages is essential for anyone who wants to study Icelandic, an attempt to sketch this relationship is made in Figures 6.1 and 6.2.

Table 6.2 Distinctive feature structure of Modern Icelandic vowels

	Front <i>Unrounded</i>	<i>Rounded</i>	Back <i>Unrounded</i>	<i>Rounded</i>
High	i (i)			u (ú)
Mid	ɪ (i)	ʏ (u)		
Low	ɛ (e)	œ (ö)	a (a)	ɔ (o)
Diphthongs	eɪ (ei, ey), œɪ (au), aɪ (æ), ou (ó), au (á)			

Note: The phonetic quality of the vowels is indicated by phonetic transcription symbols, but their most common representation in the orthography is given in parentheses.

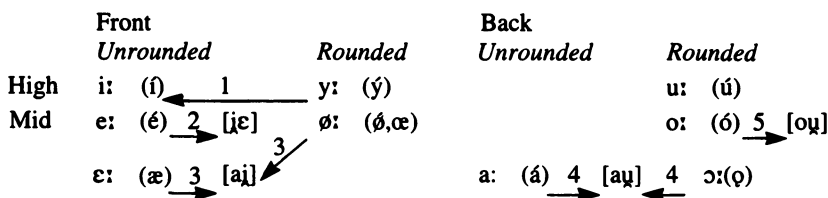
Figure 6.1 Development of the Old Icelandic short vowels



Key: 1 /y/ (y) merged with /i/ (i) which was lowered to [ɪ]. 2 /e/ (e) was lowered to [ɛ]. 3 /u/ (u) was fronted and lowered to [ɔ]. 4 /ɔ/ (o) merged with /ø/ (ø) which was lowered to [œ]. 5 /o/ (o) was lowered to [ɔ].

Note: Symbols within parentheses indicate standard orthographic representations. The arrows indicate the qualitative changes that have occurred since Old Icelandic, i.e. lowering, fronting, loss of rounding etc.

Figure 6.2 Development of the Old Icelandic long vowels



Key: 1 /y:/ (ý) merged with /i:/ (í). 2 /e:/ (é) was diphthongized to [je]. 3 /ɛ:/ (æ, ê) and /ø:/ (ø, œ) merged and were diphthongized to [æj]. 4 /a:/ (á) and /ɔ:/ (ó) merged and were diphthongized to [aɥ]. 5 /o:/ (ó) was diphthongized to [oɥ].

Notes: Most of the long Icelandic vowels have been diphthongized. Symbols within parentheses indicate standard orthographic representations. The arrows indicate the qualitative changes that have occurred since Old Icelandic, i.e. lowering, fronting, loss of rounding, etc.

Table 6.3 Old and Modern Icelandic vowel correspondences

Old Icelandic			Modern Icelandic		
<i>Vowel</i>	<i>Example</i>	<i>Phonetic transcription</i>	<i>Vowel</i>	<i>Example</i>	<i>Phonetic transcription</i>
i (i)	sinn 'his (refl.)'	[sin:]	ɪ (i)	sinn 'his (refl.)' sin 'sinew'	[sɪn:] [sɪ:n]
i: (í)	síma 'thread'	[si:ma]	i (í)	sími 'phone' ríms 'rhyme (gen.)'	[si:mi] [rim]
e (e)	eða 'or'	[eða]	ɛ (e)	eða 'or' enn 'still'	[ɛ:ða] [ɛ:n]
e: (é)	él 'snow shower'	[e:l]	jɛ/jɛ (é)	él 'snow shower' éls 'snow shower (gen.)'	[jɛ:l] [jɛls]
ɛ: (æ)	ær 'ewe'	[ɛ:r]	aɪ (æ)	ær 'ewe' æfri 'mad (dat. f.)'	[aɪ:r] [aɪvrɪ]
y (y)	flyt 'move (1 sg.)'	[flyt]	ɪ (y)	flyt 'move (1 sg.)' þynnri 'thinner (comp.)'	[flɪ:t] [θɪnrɪ]
y: (ý)	flýt 'float (1 sg.)'	[fly:t]	i (ý)	flýt 'float (1 sg.)' lýst 'described (pp.)'	[fli:t] [list]
ø (ø)	mølva 'break'	[mølvə]	œ (ö)	mölva 'break' kjör 'election'	[mœlvə] [c ^h œ:r]
ø: (ø, œ)	þði 'madness'	[ø:ði]	aɪ (æ)	æði 'madness' æðri 'of higher rank'	[aɪ:ði] [aɪðrɪ]
a (a)	far 'ship'	[far]	a (a)	far 'ship' fars 'ship (gen.)'	[fa:r] [faɾs]
a: (á)	fár 'damage'	[fa:r]	aʊ (á)	fár 'damage' fárs 'damage (gen.)'	[faʊ:r] [faʊɾs]

Table 6.3 *continued*

Old Icelandic			Modern Icelandic		
Vowel	Example	Phonetic transcription	Vowel	Example	Phonetic transcription
u (u)	þula 'long poem'	[θula]	ɣ (u)	þula 'long poem'	[θɣ:la]
				þuls 'announcer (gen.)'	[θɣls]
u: (ú)	súla 'pillar'	[su:la]	u (ú)	súla 'pillar'	[su:la]
				fúls 'sulky (gen.)'	[fuls]
o (o)	hol 'cavity'	[hol]	ɔ (o)	hol 'cavity'	[hɔ:l]
				hols 'cavity (gen.)'	[hɔls]
o: (ó)	hól 'praise'	[ho:l]	ou (ó)	hól 'praise'	[hoʊ:l]
				hóls 'praise (gen.)'	[hoʊls]
ɔ (o)	or 'arrow'	[ɔr]	œ (ö)	ör 'arrow'	[œ:r]
				örk 'ark'	[œrk]
ɔ: (ó)	óss '(heathen) god'	[ɔ:s:]	au (á)	ás '(heathen) god'	[aʊ:s]
				áss 'god (gen.)'	[aʊs:]

Note: Long nasal /ɔ:/ merged with long oral /o/ and not with long oral /a/ as its non-nasal counterpart.

The result of the development sketched in Figures 6.1 and 6.2 is illustrated in Table 6.3 (with the examples given in normalized Old Icelandic orthography vs Modern Icelandic orthography). Note in particular that an accent over a vowel indicates quantity in Old Icelandic orthography but a separate quality in the modern one (usually diphthongization). The quantity differences will be dealt with below. The phonetic transcription is slightly simplified. In the column 'vowel' we give a phonetic symbol for the vowel followed by the usual orthographic symbol (letter) in parentheses. It should be noted that the spelling has for the most part remained the same although the phonetic quality of the phonemes has changed in many cases. Note also that for each vowel there is only one Old Icelandic example whereas there are two for Modern Icelandic since all vowels can be either long or short in Modern Icelandic but vowel length was distinctive in Old Icelandic.

It should be fairly clear from this that there have been rather drastic changes in the vowel system from Old to Modern Icelandic. Loss of distinctive vowel length, distinctive nasality and the diphthongization of most of the Old Icelandic long vowels are the most important ones. (Although we have not classified /i/ and /u/ as diphthongs here, it is possible that they should be so classified. Similarly, the combination /je/, which developed from Old Icelandic /e:/, is possibly a rising diphthong, namely [jɛ], indicated as a possibility in Table 6.3.)

The Consonant System

The Modern Icelandic consonant system is diagrammed in Table 6.4. The system represented here is not strictly phonemic in the classical sense nor is it the system of underlying segments in the generative sense since it contains a number of segments that are predictable (for the most part at least) in terms of their environment. This is true for the alternation between palatal and velar stops, on the one hand, and voiced and voiceless sonorants, on the other. We will return to these alternations in the section on consonantal processes below. The voiced fricatives are in general very 'weak' and hence possibly better classified as approximants. The /j/ may even be better classified as a glide, as /h/ is also sometimes classified. The short /r/ is also frequently a single flap rather than a trill. The palatal and velar nasals only occur before the palatal and velar stops, respectively.

Table 6.4 might suggest that the difference between the spelling and the phonetic/phonological representation of words is greater than it in fact is. There are a number of regular correspondences that are not evident from the

Table 6.4 The Modern Icelandic consonant system

	<i>Bilabial/ labiodental</i>	<i>Dental/ alveolar</i>	<i>Palatal</i>	<i>Velar</i>	<i>Glottal</i>
Aspirated stops	p ^h (p)	t ^h (t)	c ^h (k)	k ^h (k)	
Unaspirated stops	p (b)	t (d)	c (g)	k (g)	
Voiceless fricatives	f (f)	θ (þ)	ç (hj)	x (k, g)	h (h)
Voiced fricatives/ approximants	v (v)	ð (ð)	j (j)	ɣ (g)	
Voiceless sibilant		s (s)			
Voiceless nasals	ɱ (m)	ɲ (n)	ɲi (n)	ŋ (n)	
Voiced nasals	m (m)	n (n)	ɲ (n)	ŋ (n)	
Voiceless lateral		ɭ (l)			
Voiced lateral		l (l)			
Voiceless trill/flap		ʀ/ʀ̥ (r)			
Voiced trill/flap		r/ʀ (r)			

Note: Symbols in parentheses give the most common orthographic representations.

Table 6.5 A list of correspondences between spelling and sound

<i>Letter</i>	<i>Phonetic realization</i>	<i>Example</i>
p	[p ^h] in initial position [p] after a voiceless sound	<i>par</i> 'pair' <i>spara</i> 'save'
b	[p]	<i>bar</i> 'bar'
t	[t ^h] in initial position [t] after a voiceless sound	<i>tala</i> 'talk' <i>stela</i> 'steal'
d	[t]	<i>dalur</i> 'valley'
k	[k ^h] in initial position before a front unrounded vowel or /j/ [c] between a voiceless sound and a front unrounded vowel or /j/ [k ^h] in initial position before other vowels and consonants [k] between a voiceless sound and a vowel that is not front and unrounded or between a voiceless sound and a consonant	<i>kerfi</i> 'system', <i>kjöt</i> 'meat' <i>skel</i> 'shell', <i>skjól</i> 'shelter' <i>kalla</i> 'call', <i>króna</i> 'crown' <i>skafa</i> 'scrape', <i>skrapa</i> 'scrape'
g	[x] before /t/ [c] in initial position before a front unrounded vowel or /j/ [k] in initial position before other vowels and consonants [k] in medial position before /l, n/ [j] between a vowel and /i/ [ɣ] in medial position before vowels (other than /i/) and /ð, r/ [x] before /t, s/	<i>rakt</i> 'damp (n.)' <i>gefa</i> 'give', <i>gjöf</i> 'gift' <i>gata</i> 'street', <i>grafa</i> 'dig' <i>sigla</i> 'sail', <i>signa</i> 'bless' <i>segi</i> 'say (1 sg.)' <i>saga</i> 'saga', <i>sagði</i> 'said', <i>sigra</i> 'win' <i>sagt</i> 'said', <i>lags</i> 'tune (gen.)'
f	[f] in initial position and before /t/ [v] in medial position between vowels and between a vowel and /ð, r, j/ [p] in medial position between a vowel and /l, n/	<i>fara</i> 'go', <i>saft</i> 'juice' <i>hafa</i> 'have', <i>hafði</i> 'had', <i>haftrar</i> 'oats', <i>hefja</i> 'begin' <i>efta</i> 'strengthen', <i>hefna</i> 'revenge'

table. Some of the less obvious ones are listed in Table 6.5. This list is by no means complete but it will be useful for reference in the following sections.

Stress and Intonation

The major stress in Icelandic falls on the first syllable. This holds for loanwords too. There is also a tendency to put weak secondary stress on every second syllable after the stressed initial one. This can be seen in the following examples where ' before a syllable indicates the primary stress and , the weak secondary one: '*hestur* 'horse', '*lektor* 'lecturer, assistant professor', '*hestu,rinn* 'the horse', '*lekto,rarnir* 'the lecturers', '*alma,nakið*, 'the almanac'. In trisyllabic words this secondary stress is normally not noticeable on the third syllable if it is

an inflectional ending but it becomes clearer if a fourth syllable is added (cf. 'lektorar 'lecturers' vs 'lekto,rarnir 'the lecturers'). Note also that this 'strong–weak–strong–weak' pattern can be broken up in compound words since there is also a tendency for compound words to carry weak secondary stress on their second part. Hence we get the following, for instance (where the * indicates an unacceptable stress pattern and # shows the word boundary in the compound): 'höfðingja#,vald/*'höfðin,gja#vald 'power of chiefs'.

Finally, it should be noted that, unlike Norwegian or Swedish, Icelandic does not have lexical tones. Icelandic sentence intonation has not been studied carefully enough to yield any interesting results yet.

Quantity and Syllable Structure

The basic facts about vowel length in Modern Icelandic can be informally stated as follows:

Stressed vowels are long if no more than one consonant follows

The exception to this simple rule is that stressed vowels are also long before two consonants if the first one is a member of the set /p, t, k, s/ and the second of /j, v, r/. Hence the stressed (first) vowels in (a) in the following list are all long and so are the stressed vowels in (b) whereas the stressed vowels in (c) are short, as indicated:

- a *búa* ['pu:a] 'live', *tala* ['t^ha:la] 'talk', *lesa* ['lɛ:sa] 'read'
- b *neþja* ['nɛ:p^hja] 'coldness', *kátra* ['k^haʊ:t^hra] 'happy (gen. pl.)', *flýsja* ['flɪ:sja] 'peel'
- c *elda* ['ɛlta] 'cook', *andi* ['anɪ] 'spirit', *belja* ['pɛlja] 'bellow', *inni* ['in:i] 'inside'

It is assumed here that long consonants are in fact geminates, or at least equivalent to double consonants phonologically, and that consonant length is basic or underlying in Icelandic and vowel length derived. It should also be noted here that the only vowels that occur in completely unstressed syllables in native Icelandic words are /i, a, u/. (Note that this does not hold for syllables that carry secondary stress, such as in words like 'asna,legur (see the section on stress above, pp. 148–9).)

The consonant sets mentioned in the exception to the vowel quantity rule stated above (and exemplified in the (b) (vs (c)) examples in the list) suggest that syllable boundaries may play a role in vowel quantity since the members of the first and second sets are probably at the opposite ends of the sonority hierarchy for Icelandic consonants. The question is how to build this into the quantity rule.

It is a well-known fact for many languages that have positionally determined vowel length that vowels tend to be long in open syllables, i.e.

syllables that are not closed by consonants. Hence it would seem natural to assume that the syllable boundary in the words in the list is as follows: (a) *bú.a, ta.la, le.sa*; (b) *ne.pja, ká.tra, fly.sja*; (c) *el.da, an.di, bel.ja, in.ni*. As the reader may have noticed we have in fact been assuming a syllabification along similar lines above. This would mean that one intervocalic consonant always forms part of the second syllable, and given two intervocalic consonants the boundary varies depending on the sonority of the consonants (this would have to be spelled out in more detail). This would give open syllables in (a) and (b) but closed in (c). If this were correct, we could simply say that stressed vowels are long in open syllables in Icelandic.

The problem with this is the quantity in monosyllabic words that end in one consonant and hence would seem to be closed syllables. There the vowel is long too. Examples include words like *tal* ['tʰa:l] 'speech', *les* ['lɛ:s] '(I) read', *fit* ['fɪ:tʰ] 'web'. There are various ways to solve this problem. One is to say that there is something special going on in monosyllables. Another is to say that the syllabification we have been assuming is wrong and should be like this: (a) *bú.a, tal.a, les.a*; (b) *nep.ja, kát.ra, flys.ja*; (c) *eld.a, and.i, bel.j.a, inn.i*. This could be called 'the final-maximalistic' syllabification, meaning that you let 'as many consonants as you can' follow the preceding vowel. Then you could say that the vowel in stressed syllables is long if at most one consonant follows.

The main motivation for this last analysis is the fact that it seems to allow us to have one rule for vowel quantity in monosyllables and polysyllables. That is desirable, of course. Unfortunately, it is not obvious that this works, however. The test case would be monosyllables that end in consonant clusters of the sort /p, t, k, s/ + /v, j, r/. These are very rare in the language but the few that can be formed certainly contain long vowels. In that respect the words in (a) differ from the ones in (b): (a) *snupr* ['sʰnʏ:pʁ] 'scolding', *flysj* ['flɪ:sç] 'peeling', *pukr* ['pʰʏ:kʁ] 'secretiveness', *sötr* ['sœ:tʁ] 'slurping'; (b) *kumr* ['kʰʏmr] 'bleating', *emj* ['ɛmj] 'wailing', *bölv* ['pœlv] 'cursing'. So either we need a more sophisticated theory of syllables, namely one that does not consider final consonants and certain final consonant clusters part of the preceding syllable in some sense, or the length of stressed vowels in Modern Icelandic does not depend on syllable boundaries.

Some Consonantal Processes

Whereas aspirated stops are very common in the world's languages, *pre-aspirated* ones seem to be rather rare, although they occur in some Scandinavian dialects. Icelandic pre-aspiration is illustrated in the following examples: (a) *tappi* [tʰahpɪ] 'cork', *kátt* [kʰaʊht] 'happy (n.)', *pakkar* [pʰahkar] 'parcels'; (b) *epli* [ɛhplɪ] 'apple', *rytmi* [rɪhtmi] 'rhythm', *vakna* [vahkna] 'wake up'. The stops /p, t, k/ are aspirated in initial position, for instance. Double (or geminate) consonants are normally long in Icelandic, as explained in the preceding section, but where we would expect long /pp, tt, kk/ on historical or synchronic grounds we get pre-aspirated stops instead.

This is illustrated in the (a) examples above (the example *kátt* involves synchronic alternation since it is the neuter form of the adjective *kátur* where the stem is *kát-* but the neuter is formed as usual, by adding a #*-t#*, see p. 155). In addition, /p, t, k/ are pre-aspirated when they precede /l, m, n/. This is illustrated in the (b) examples.

Devoicing of sonorants is also not very common in the world's languages, but it occurs in Icelandic (and in certain Scandinavian dialects too). The sonorants are not all equally susceptible to devoicing and there are some dialectal differences. In short, /r/ is devoiced before /p, t, k, s/ and in the most common dialect /l, m, n/ are also devoiced before /p, t, k/. This can be illustrated by the following examples: (a) nom. *far* [fa:r] 'fare', gen. *fars* [fa:rs]; (b) f. *fúl* [fu:l] 'sour', n. *fúllt* [fu:lʰt]; f. *fím* [fi:m] 'nimble', n. *fímt* [fi:mʰt]; f. *fín* [fi:n] 'fine', n. *fínt* [fi:nʰt]. Sonorants are also devoiced word-finally (or rather phrase-finally) after voiceless consonants (and optionally after voiced segments in phrase-final position): *vatn* [vahtʰ] 'water', *rusl* [rystʰ] 'garbage'. In addition, most speakers of the devoicing dialect also devoice /ð/ before /k/ (it does not occur before /p, t/). Note also that devoicing of sonorants before /p, t, k/ leads to *de-aspiration* of the stops. In general, Icelandic stops are not aspirated after voiceless consonants (see Table 6.5).

There are various types of alternations between stops and fricatives in Icelandic. Thus we have *fricativization* of /p, k/ between a vowel and /t/ as in f. adj. *tæp* [tʰai:pʰ], n. *tæpt* [tʰai:ft] 'uncertain'; f. adj. *rík* [ri:kʰ], n. *ríkt* [rixt] 'rich'. Similarly, /p, t, k/ are sometimes realized as their homorganic fricatives between vowels and /s/, but this does not hold for all words and is usually only optional when it can apply: nom. *skip* [sci:pʰ], gen. *skips* [sci:fs] 'ship'; acc. *bát* [paʉ:tʰ], gen. *báts* [paʉ:s] 'boat'; nom. *þak* [θa:kʰ], gen. *þaks* [θaxs] 'roof'. On the other hand, the fricatives /v, ʝ/ show up as [p, k] before /l, n/. This 'stopping' occurs for instance when the appropriate environment is created by an ellipsis of unstressed vowels (actually, intervocalic [v] could either be analysed as /f/ or /v/ since there is no contrast between the two in that position): fem. sg. *grafin* [kra:vm], pl. *grafnar* [krapnar] 'buried'; nom. sg. *saga* [sa:ʝa], gen. pl. *sagna* [sakna] 'saga'; acc. sg. *hefil* [hæi:vil], nom. pl. *heflar* [hæplar] 'grader'; f. sg. *þögnul* [θœ:ʝyl], pl. *þöglar* [θœklar] 'silent'. This process does not apply to /ð/ before /l, n/, however.

Homorganic (dental or alveolar) unaspirated stops are inserted between /r/l/, /r/n/, /s/l/, /s/n/. The proper environment can again be created by ellipsis of unstressed vowels: f. sg. *farin* [fa:rm], pl. *farnar* [fartnar] 'gone'; f. sg. *lasin* [la:sm], pl. *lasnar* [lastnar] 'sick'; acc. sg. *feril* [fæ:ril], dat. sg. *ferli* [fertli] 'career'; acc. sg. *drýsil* [tri:sil], dat. sg. *drýsli* [tristli] 'devil'.

Vocalic Processes

The so-called *u*-umlaut is probably among the best known phonological rules of Modern Icelandic, although there has been considerable discussion as to whether it really is phonologically rather than morphologically conditioned.

Omitting all details one can say that it turns /a/ into /ö/ [œ] if there is an /u/ in the following syllable. These a/ö alternations are very common in the inflectional system: nom. *saga* [sa:ɣa], acc. *sögu* [sœ:ɣɣ] ‘saga’; nom. pl. *dalir* [ta:lɪr], dat. pl. *döllum* [tœ:lɣm] ‘valley’; 1 sg. *tala* [tʰa:la], 1 pl. *töllum* [tʰœ:lɣm]. That this rule is alive and well can be seen from the fact that it applies in new words, (inflected) loanwords and even foreign names that are inflected, such as nom. *Randa*, acc. *Röndu*, etc. The picture is complicated by the fact, however, that we do have instances of /u/ that does not cause *u*-umlaut and we also appear to have *u*-umlaut in certain instances where there is no /u/ to condition it. Thus the nominative singular of ‘valley’ is *dalur* with no umlaut (the /u/ is arguably inserted during the derivation) and the nominative plural of *barn* ‘child’ is *börn* with umlaut but no /u/ (although there was one in Proto-Nordic times). Note also that the umlaut rule does not apply in loanwords where the /u/ is part of the same morpheme as the /a/, cf. *kaktus* (not **köktus*) ‘cactus’.

The *u*-umlaut rule interacts with a ‘weakening’ rule that (optionally) turns /ö/ into [ɣ] in unstressed syllables in certain words: nom. sg. *banani*, dat. pl. #*banan+um*# ‘banana’, *u*-umlaut → #*banön+um*#, weakening → #*banun+um*#, *u*-umlaut → #*bönun+um*#, result = *bönunum* [pœ:nɣnɣm]. There are lexical restrictions on the weakening rule and if it does not apply in words of this sort and the [œ] remains in the syllable following the /a/ in the initial syllable, the first /a/ will not be umlauted and we get *banönum* rather than *bönunum*. But if the /ö/ is weakened to /u/ then *u*-umlaut is obligatory in the initial syllable, i.e. **banunum* is not an acceptable form.

6.3 Morphology

The changes of the morphological system from Old to Modern Icelandic have been relatively minor. Modern Icelandic still has four distinct cases, three genders, rich person, number, tense and mood distinctions in the verbal morphology, etc.

Nominal and Adjectival Inflection

The Inflection of Nouns

All Icelandic nouns have *inherent gender*, i.e. they belong to one of the three gender classes: masculine, feminine or neuter. There is some semantic relationship between this grammatical gender classification and the sex of the individuals referred to by the noun, much as in German, for example. Words denoting things, concepts, etc., can be either masculine, feminine or neuter and this shows up in the form of the definite (suffixed) article, the form of adjectives agreeing with the nouns and in the selection of pronominal forms that refer to them. Thus we have for instance *penninn er fallegur ... hann er hér* (lit.) ‘pen-the(m.) is beautiful ... he is here’; *bókin er falleg ... hún er hér* (lit.) ‘book-the(f.) is beautiful ... she is here’; *bláðið er fallegt ...*

Table 6.6 Icelandic nouns

	Strong inflection						Weak inflection					
	Genitive singular ends in a consonant						All singular cases end in a vowel					
	Masculine		Feminine		Neuter		Masculine		Feminine		Neuter	
	Gen.	Nom.	Gen.	Nom.	Gen.	Nom.	Gen.	Nom.	Gen.	Nom.	Gen.	Nom.
	Sg.	Pl.	Sg.	Pl.	Sg.	Pl.	Sg.	Pl.	Sg.	Pl.	Sg.	Pl.
I	-s,	-ar	-ar,	-ar	-s,	-	-a,	-ar	-u,	-ur	-a,	-u
II	-ar,	-ar	-ar,	-ir			-a,	-ir	-i,	-ar		
III	-s,	-ir	-ar,	-ur			-a,	-ur	-i,	-ir		
IV	-ar,	-ir	-ur,	-ur								
V	irregular		irregular									

Table 6.7 Inflectional paradigms of Icelandic nouns

	Masculine		Feminine		Neuter	
	Strong I	Weak I	Strong I	Weak I	Strong	Weak
	'horse'	'time'	'needle'	'tongue'	'table'	'eye'
Singular						
Nom.	hest-ur	tím-i	nál	tung-a	borð	aug-a
Acc.	hest	tím-a	nál	tung-u	borð	aug-a
Dat.	hest-i	tím-a	nál	tung-u	borð-i	aug-a
Gen.	hest-s	tím-a	nál-ar	tung-u	borð-s	aug-a
Plural						
Nom.	hest-ar	tím-ar	nál-ar	tung-ur	borð	aug-u
Acc.	hest-a	tím-a	nál-ar	tung-ur	borð	aug-u
Dat.	hest-um	tím-um	nál-um	tung-um	borð-um	aug-um
Gen.	hest-a	tím-a	nál-a	tung-na	borð-a	aug-na

Note: The ordering of cases differs from that in most British texts for linguistic reasons – one reason being that accusative and dative are frequently identical in Icelandic, and this similarity is obscured by inserting the genitive case between them.

Það er hér (lit.) 'newspaper-the(n.) is beautiful . . . it is here'. This would seem largely arbitrary from a semantic point of view. But in addition to determining the gender of agreeing adjectives and pronouns, the gender classification plays a crucial role in the inflection of nouns.

It is a well-established tradition to divide Modern Icelandic nouns into a number of inflectional classes. The classification is based on the ending of the genitive singular (the first ending given in Table 6.6, e.g. #-s# in strong masculine class I), the gender of the noun and the ending of the nominative plural (the second ending given in the table, e.g. #-ar# in strong masculine class I). The classification would also seem to suggest that there are 16 different inflectional classes of Icelandic nouns, in addition to the irregular

strong masculine and feminine nouns. But this misses a number of generalizations, as strict classifications of this kind tend to do. Some of these should be evident from the paradigms given in Table 6.7.

As already pointed out, the traditional classification exemplified in Table 6.7 is misleading in certain ways. First, the major division between the so-called strong and weak nouns is not arbitrary, as it were, but *predictable* on the basis of gender and the form of the nominative singular. Thus if a noun is masculine and ends in /i/ in the nominative singular we know that it has the weak declension and we do not have to learn that separately. Similarly, all feminine and neuter nouns that end in a vowel (/a,i/) in the nominative singular have the weak declension. As far as the different declension classes of the weak masculine nouns are concerned, the first one (*tími*) is the default class and the others are quite limited. The weak feminine nouns ending in /i/ in the nominative singular are also very few.

The division according to gender is clearly a more important one from a synchronic point of view. But a strict division into paradigms as in the preceding tables obscures the similarities between certain cases across the gender classes. Thus the dative plural marker is always #-um# and the genitive plural always ends in #-a# (with an extra /n/ before the genitive plural ending in weak neuter nouns and certain weak feminine ones).

In addition, other regularities can be predicted on the basis of the nominative singular form (the *basic form*) and/or the gender. Some are presented informally in the list below. Needless to say, these regularities may not hold for the irregular nouns and there are certain lexical or morphologically conditioned exceptions to them:

- 1 All nouns that have a consonantal nominative singular ending or have no ending in the nominative singular, are without ending in the accusative singular.
- 2 Masculine and neuter nouns that end in an #-r# or have no ending in the nominative singular get #-i# in the dative singular. (Actually, this depends on the phonological properties of the stem in the case of the masculine nouns (basically, the -i is deleted unless the stem ends in two consonants) but this is the general rule for neuter nouns.)
- 3 Neuter nouns that have no ending in nominative singular have #-s# in the genitive singular.
- 4 All neuter nouns have identical nominative and accusative in the singular and plural.
- 5 All feminine (regularly inflected) nouns that end in a consonant in the nominative singular have identical nominative, accusative and dative in the singular. (This does not hold for proper names, however.)
- 6 All feminine nouns have identical nominative and accusative in the plural.
- 7 For all regularly inflected masculine nouns (except the third weak class) the accusative plural is identical to the nominative plural minus the final /r/.

In addition, it turns out that some of the genitive singular and nominative plural endings in strong masculine and feminine nouns are less marked than others and are thus more likely to be generalized by children acquiring the language, for instance, but we cannot go into this here.

The Inflection of Adjectives and the Article

Icelandic adjectives have *gender* inflection. In addition, most adjectives can both have the so-called *strong* and the *weak* inflection (or indefinite vs definite). Finally, most adjectives are inflected for *comparison*, i.e. they can occur in the so-called positive, comparative and superlative form.

We do not, however, have as many different forms for each adjective as this might suggest (3 genders \times 2 numbers \times 4 cases \times 3 degrees \times 2 (strong and weak) would give 144 forms if all were different). First, the comparative only has weak inflection (to the extent that it has any inflection at all. Actually, it has one form for all cases in the neuter singular (e.g. *gulara* 'yellower') and another for all cases in the masculine and feminine singular and all plural forms (e.g. *gulari* 'yellower') so this 'weak' inflection is different from the weak inflection in the positive degree). In addition, the inflectional endings for the superlative are the same as for the positive degree. Thus we will get a pretty good idea of the most regular adjectival inflection by looking at the weak and strong inflection in the positive degree. This is shown in Table 6.8 for the adjective *gulur* 'yellow' where the basic schema is given. The strong form of the adjectives is used when they are modifying indefinite nouns or used predicatively but the weak form is used when the adjective is modifying a definite noun: *gulur hestur* 'a yellow horse', *þessi hestur er gulur* 'this horse is yellow', *guli hesturinn* 'the yellow horse'.

Table 6.8 Icelandic adjectival inflection

	Strong inflection			Weak inflection		
	Masculine	Feminine	Neuter	Masculine	Feminine	Neuter
Singular						
Nom.	gul-ur	gul	gul-t	gul-i	gul-a	gul-a
Acc.	gul-an	gul-a	gul-t	gul-a	gul-u	gul-a
Dat.	gul-um	gul-ri	gul-u	gul-a	gul-u	gul-a
Gen.	gul-s	gul-rar	gul-s	gul-a	gul-u	gul-a
Plural						
Nom.	gul-ir	gul-ar	gul	gul-u	gul-u	gul-u
Acc.	gul-a	gul-ar	gul	gul-u	gul-u	gul-u
Dat	gul-um	gul-um	gul-um	gul-u	gul-u	gul-u
Gen.	gul-ra	gul-ra	gul-ra	gul-u	gul-u	gul-u

Table 6.9 Comparison of adjectives

	Strong inflection			Weak inflection		
	Masculine	Feminine	Neuter	Masculine	Feminine	Neuter
1 The regular (default) pattern						
Positive	gul-ur	gul	gul-t	gul-i	gul-a	gul-a
Comparative				gular-i	gular-i	gular-a
Superlative	gulast-ur	gulust	gulast	gulast-i	gulast-a	gulast-a
2 The <i>i</i>-umlaut pattern						
Positive	ung-ur	ung	ung-t	ung-i	ung-a	ung-a
Comparative				yngr-i	yngr-i	yngr-a
Superlative	yngst-ur	yngst	yngst	yngst-i	yngst-a	yngst-a

Table 6.10 Inflection of the definite article

	The free article			The suffixed article		
	Masculine	Feminine	Neuter	Masculine	Feminine	Neuter
Singular						
Nom.	hin-n	hin	hi-ð	hestur-inn	nál-in	borð-ið
Acc.	hin-n	hin-a	hi-ð	hest-inn	nál-ina	borð-ið
Dat.	hin-um	hin-ni	hin-u	hesti-num	nál-inni	borði-nu
Gen.	hin-s	hin-nar	hin-s	hests-ins	nálar-innar	borðs-ins
Plural						
Nom.	hin-ir	hin-ar	hin	hestar-nir	nálar-nar	borð-in
Acc.	hin-a	hin-ar	hin	hesta-na	nálar-nar	borð-in
Dat.	hin-um	hin-um	hin-um	hestu-num	nálu-num	borðu-num
Gen.	hin-na	hin-na	hin-na	hesta-nna	nála-nna	borða-nna

The formation of *comparative forms* is shown in Table 6.9. Most adjectives form the comparative and superlative by adding #*-ar*-# and #*-ast*-# to the stem as shown in pattern 1. There are only a few adjectives that use the shorter suffixes #*-r*-# and #*-st*-# for this purpose as shown in pattern 2 and here we usually find the *i*-umlaut whenever it is possible and lengthening of the /t/ after (tense) vowels: *hár* (stem *há*) – *hærri* – *hæstur* ‘high’, *þunnur* – *þynnri* – *þynnstur* ‘thin’. Adjectives with the suffixes #*-leg*-# and #*-ug*-# and a few others form the comparative with the short form #*-r*-# but the superlative with the long form #*-ast*-#, e.g. *fallegur* – *fallegri* – *fallegastur* ‘beautiful’. There are also familiar instances of irregular comparison (*gamall* – *eldri* – *elstur* ‘old’). Indeclinable adjectives do not have comparative forms but the meaning can be conveyed by using *meira* ‘more’ and *mest* ‘most’: *ég var hugsi, hann meira hugsi og hún mest hugsi* ‘I was pensive, he more pensive and she most pensive’. Certain adverbs also show comparison, usually with #*-ar*-# and

#-ast-#: *fallega* – *fallegar* – *fallegast* ‘beautifully – more beautifully – most beautifully’.

There is *no indefinite article* in Icelandic and the inflection of the *definite article* is in many ways rather similar to that of the adjectives. As can be seen from Table 6.10, the main principle is that the noun and the suffixed article both inflect. In addition, certain alternations in the forms of the nouns and the articles show up when they are combined and these depend to some extent on their phonological make-up.

The Inflection of Pronouns and Numerals

The Icelandic personal pronouns exist in three different persons. In the third person there is the familiar three-way gender distinction. First- and second-person pronouns are unmarked for gender. The pronouns also inflect for case and we have the four cases and singular and plural of the personal pronouns in the modern language. In Old Icelandic there was a distinction between dual and plural in the first and second person. What has happened is that the old dual now serves as the unmarked plural whereas the original plural forms are only used as honorific forms. The first-person honorific form *vér* ‘we’ is only used with a plural meaning (to the extent it is used at all) but the second-person honorific form *þér* ‘you’ can be used to refer to an individual or a group of two or more but it always controls plural agreement on the verb (but not necessarily on predicative adjectives). The use of the honorific forms decreased rapidly around 1970 and these forms are now hardly used at all in spoken Icelandic (except by some individuals of the oldest generations). They can however still be found in the written language, for example in translations.

The inflection of the personal pronouns is quite irregular, as is common in the Germanic (and other) languages. There is no special reflexive pronoun for first and second person and the third-person reflexive pronoun is unmarked for number and gender. It only exists in the accusative, dative and genitive (there is no nominative form): acc. *sig*, dat. *sér*, gen. *sín* ‘himself, herself, itself, themselves’. As will be noted in section 6.4, the form *sjálfur* ‘self’ is used in combination with the reflexive *sig* and the first- and second-person pronouns in certain contexts. It has gender distinctions and inflects like an adjective.

Words of other traditional pronominal classes also inflect for gender, number and case. These include demonstrative, possessive, indefinite and interrogative pronouns. There are no relative pronouns in Modern Icelandic, only the indeclinable relative particles (or complementizers) *sem* and *er*, the latter being restricted to the written language. As we will see in section 6.4, there is a reflexive possessive pronoun *sinn* ‘his/her/its/their’. There is no separate non-reflexive possessive pronoun for third person. Instead, the genitive forms of the third-person personal pronouns are used: *bókin hans/hennar/þess* ‘his/her/its book’.

The first four *numerals* (cardinals) are inflected for case and gender, and the

number *einn* 'one' is also inflected for number(!). The plural forms of *einn* are used with *pluralia tantum* and in the sense 'a pair of'. Thus we have *einir hanskar* 'one pair of gloves' vs *einn hanski* 'one glove', and also *einir buxur* 'one (pair of) pants' (plural only, as in English), etc. The *ordinal numbers* inflect like adjectives. The word for 'first' has both strong and weak inflection, 'second' only strong but other ordinal numbers have only weak inflection.

Verbal Inflection

The Inflectional Categories and the Basic Classification

The categories *tense*, *person*, *number* and *mood* are all reflected in the Icelandic verbal inflection. In addition there are systematic ways to express distinctions that are usually associated with *voice* and *aspect*, mainly through special syntactic constructions. In this section we will show how all these distinctions are expressed, beginning with the clearly inflectional (or morphological) ones.

There are *two morphologically distinct* tenses: present and past (or preterite). There are *three persons* (first, second, third), *two numbers* (singular and plural) and *three moods*: indicative, subjunctive and imperative (the imperative only existing as a special form for second-person singular). In addition there are special verbal forms for the *infinitive*, *past participle* and *present participle* and these are used in various verbal constructions. Some linguists have also maintained that it is necessary to distinguish the *supine* form (formally identical to the neuter form of the past participle) from the past participle and we will occasionally do so here.

The so-called *weak verbs* form the past tense by adding a *dental suffix* to the stem whereas the *strong verbs* do not have a special inflectional suffix for the past tense but exhibit the so-called vowel shift (or ablaut). As in other Germanic languages, the class of weak verbs is large and open but the strong verbs form a closed class. There seem to be only about 100–150 strong verbs that are commonly used in the modern language but some of these are very common.

The Basic Inflectional Patterns

Modern Icelandic weak verbs are traditionally divided into four conjugational classes. In the paradigms in Table 6.11 we give one example from each weak class and one strong verb. The material in the parentheses in the imperatives (/ðu/, /du/ or /tu/) is in fact the second-person singular pronoun *þú* which has been cliticized in a weakened form on to the imperative. The simple imperative forms are more formal.

In historical grammars the classes corresponding to weak I–IV are called *ja*-verbs, *ija*-verbs, *e*-verbs and *o*-verbs, based on phonological properties of their stems in Germanic. In synchronic grammars, the definitions of the classes typically are as follows:

Table 6.11 Inflectional paradigms of some verbs

	Weak 1	Weak 2	Weak 3	Weak 4	Strong
Infinitive	telj-a 'believe'	dæm-a 'judge'	dug-a 'suffice'	kalla 'call'	bíta 'bite'
Present					
Indicative	1 sg. tel	dæm-i	dug-i	kalla	bít
	2 sg. tel-ur	dæm-ir	dug-ir	kalla-r	bít-ur
	3 sg. tel-ur	dæm-ir	dug-ir	kalla-r	bít-ur
	1 pl. telj-um	dæm-um	dug-um	köll-um	bít-um
	2 pl. telj-ið	dæm-ið	dug-ið	kall-ið	bít-ið
	3 pl. telj-a	dæm-a	dug-a	kall-a	bít-a
Subjunctive	1 sg. telj-i	dæm-i	dug-i	kall-i	bít-i
	2 sg. telj-ir	dæm-ir	dug-ir	kall-ir	bít-ir
	3 sg. telj-i	dæm-i	dug-i	kall-i	bít-i
	1 pl. telj-um	dæm-um	dug-um	köll-um	bít-um
	2 pl. telj-ið	dæm-ið	dug-ið	kall-ið	bít-ið
	3 pl. telj-i	dæm-i	dug-i	kall-i	bít-i
Preterite					
Indicative	1 sg. tal-di	dæm-di	dug-ði	kalla-ði	beit
	2 sg. tal-dir	dæm-dir	dug-ðir	kalla-ðir	bei-st
	3 sg. tal-di	dæm-di	dug-ði	kalla-ði	beit
	1 pl. töl-dum	dæm-dum	dug-ðum	köllu-ðum	bit-um
	2 pl. töl-duð	dæm-duð	dug-ðuð	köllu-ðuð	bit-uð
	3 pl. töl-du	dæm-du	dug-ðu	köllu-ðu	bit-u
Subjunctive	1 sg. tel-di	dæm-di	dyg-ði	kalla-ði	bit-i
	2 sg. tel-dir	dæm-dir	dyg-ðir	kalla-ðir	bit-ir
	3 sg. tel-di	dæm-di	dyg-ði	kalla-ði	bit-i
	1 pl. tel-dum	dæm-dum	dyg-ðum	köllu-ðum	bit-um
	2 pl. tel-duð	dæm-duð	dyg-ðuð	köllu-ðuð	bit-uð
	3 pl. tel-du	dæm-du	dyg-ðu	köllu-ðu	bit-u
Imperative	2 sg. tel(du)	dæm(du)	dug(ðu)	kalla(ðu)	bít(tu)
Past participle	talinn	dæmdur		kallaður	bitinn
Supine	talið	dæmt	dugað	kallað	bitið
Present participle	teljandi	dæmandi	dugandi	kallandi	bítandi

- 1 The first-person present indicative singular is monosyllabic and shows *i*-umlaut in certain forms (but there is no *i*-umlaut in the preterite indicative). For most of these verbs the past participle ends in *-inn*.
- 2 The first-person present indicative singular is disyllabic with /i/ as the second vowel and the root vowel is *i*-umlauted if possible. The umlaut also shows up in the past tense.
- 3 The first-person present indicative singular is disyllabic with /i/ as the second vowel but the root is normally without *i*-umlaut.
- 4 The first-person present indicative singular is disyllabic with /a/ as the second vowel.

These 'definitions' are obviously descriptive generalizations that can then be used to predict the inflectional differences between the classes. This is usually expressed by saying that one has to know three basic forms (or principal parts) in order to know how a given weak verb inflects, namely the infinitive, the preterite indicative singular first person and the supine. But the differences between the classes are actually largely predictable. As in the case of the nominal inflection, we could express this by assuming that each inflected verb has a *basic* (or lexical look-up or default) form. The verb stems can be found by comparing the infinitive to (the short form of) the imperative, for instance. That way we see that the final /a/ in the infinitive of class IV verbs like *kalla* 'call' is a part of the stem. Assume that the basic forms of the verbs are roughly identical to the infinitives, i.e. #telj-a#, #dæm-a#, #dug-a# and #kalla# (the notation indicating that the final /a/ in *kalla* is a part of the stem and not an inflectional ending). We can then say, for instance, that verbs that have the basic form #X-a# where X is a stem that does not end in /j/ (i.e. verbs like *dæma* and *duga*) have an extra /i/ in the present indicative singular (cf. *ég tel/dæmi/dugi/kalla* 'I believe/judge/suffice/call', *þú telur/dæmir/dugir/kallar* 'you believe/judge/suffice/call', etc). That way we can account for some of the observed differences.

There are different types (or sequences) of vowel shift in strong verbs. The main types are usually said to be at least six, in addition to some additional irregular ones. According to the tradition, there are four basic forms (principal parts) for each strong verb (vs three for the weak ones, see above). This is illustrated in the following chart:

	<i>Preterite indicative</i>				
	inf.	1 sg.	1 pl.	sup.	
1	bíta	beit	bitum	bitið	'bite'
2	bjóða	bauð	buðum	boðið	'invite'
3	bresta	brast	brustum	brostið	'burst'
4	stela	stal	stálum	stolið	'steal'
5	gefa	gaf	gáfum	gefið	'give'
6	fara	fór	fórum	farið	'go'

In addition to these types there is a group of verbs that originally formed their past tense with reduplication (e.g. *gráta* 'cry' (pret. *grét*)), which show quite varied stem alternations.

The most obvious differences in weak and strong verbal paradigms are:

- 1 Strong verbs have no inflectional ending in the first-person singular preterite indicative but the weak verbs do. The whole preterite indicative singular is monosyllabic in strong verbs (except in prefixed or compound ones) but disyllabic (or more) in weak verbs.
- 2 Strong verbs end in #-st# in the second-person singular preterite

indicative whereas corresponding weak forms end in #-ðir# (or #-dir#, #-tir#).

The so-called *preterite-present verbs* have monosyllabic present singular forms that are similar to the corresponding preterite forms of strong verbs (hence the name). On the other hand, the preterite of these verbs is more similar to that of weak verbs. This class includes certain common modal verbs such as *mega* 'may' (pres. *má*, pret. *mátti*, supine *mátt*) and the (defective) auxiliary *munu* 'will' (pres. *mun*). It should be noted that there do not seem to be any inflectable past participle forms of the preterite-present verbs and the verbs *munu* 'will' and *skulu* 'shall' do not even seem to have any supine forms. They are also reported to have had special preterite forms of the infinitive, together with the verb *vilja* 'want', namely *mundu*, *skyldu* and *vildu*, respectively. This is probably still true of *munu*, as indicated by the following contrasts: *hann telur þá munu koma þá* 'he believes them to be coming then' (lit. 'he believes them (acc.) will (pres.inf.) come then') vs *hann taldi þá mundu koma þá* 'he believed them to be coming then' (lit. 'he believed them would (pret.inf.) come then'). Here it seems natural to have the present form of the infinitive after the present form of *telja* 'believe' in the first example but the preterite form after the preterite form of 'believe' in the second (see the discussion of the rule of 'sequence of tenses' in section 6.4). It is more difficult to construct examples of this sort with the verbs *vilja* and *skulu*.

Finally, the inflection of the verb *vera* 'be' is highly irregular in Icelandic as in many other Germanic languages.

The So-called Middle Forms

Many traditional Icelandic grammars maintain that *middle voice* is a special inflectional category in Icelandic. It is said to be characterized by adding #-st# to the relevant form of the active voice. It turns out, however, that the verb forms so constructed have a variety of functions, so it is very difficult to maintain that they all represent a particular inflectional category. In most cases it seems more promising to look at the formation of -st-verbs as a special word-formation process. It does, however, have the special status of adding the suffix #-st# after the inflectional endings and that creates certain stem alternations. Some of these can be seen in Table 6.12. As indicated, the paradigm is partially defective. Part of the reason is probably semantic: since many -st-verbs have a passive-like reading (as indicated in the glosses, Table 6.12) they cannot occur in the imperative. (This is a general property of passives in Icelandic although not obviously so in English.) The imperative form *bjóðstu* is in fact only possible in the context *bjóðast til* 'offer to do something', not in the passive (or middle) sense 'be offered'. In general, the possibility of having imperative forms of -st-verbs seems to depend on their semantic properties. Thus there is nothing wrong with the imperative forms

Table 6.12 Some typical middle forms

Infinitive		telja-st 'be believed'	dæma-st 'be judged'	kalla-st 'be called'	bíta-st 'bite each other'	bjóða-st 'be offered'
Present						
Indicative	1 sg.	tel-st	dæmi-st	kalla-st	bí-st	býð-st
	2 sg.	tel-st	dæmi-st	kalla-st	bí-st	býð-st
	3 sg.	tel-st	dæmi-st	kalla-st	bí-st	býð-st
	1 pl.	teljum-st	dæmum-st	köllum-st	bítum-st	bjóðum-st
	2 pl.	telji-st	dæmi-st	kalli-st	bíti-st	bjóði-st
	3 pl.	telja-st	dæma-st	kalla-st	bíta-st	bjóða-st
Subjunctive	1 sg.	telji-st	dæmi-st	kalli-st	bíti-st	bjóði-st
	2 sg.	telji-st	dæmi-st	kalli-st	bíti-st	bjóði-st
	3 sg.	telji-st	dæmi-st	kalli-st	bíti-st	bjóði-st
	1 pl.	teljum-st	dæmum-st	köllum-st	bítum-st	bjóðum-st
	2 pl.	telji-st	dæmi-st	kalli-st	bíti-st	bjóði-st
	3 pl.	telji-st	dæmi-st	kalli-st	bíti-st	bjóði-st
Preterite						
Indicative	1 sg.	taldi-st	dæmdi-st	kallaði-st	bei-st	bauð-st
	2 sg.	taldi-st	dæmdi-st	kallaði-st	bei-st	bauð-st
	3 sg.	taldi-st	dæmdi-st	kallaði-st	bei-st	bauð-st
	1 pl.	töldum-st	dæmdum-st	kölluðum-st	bitum-st	buðum-st
	2 pl.	töldu-st	dæmdu-st	kölluðu-st	bitu-st	buðu-st
	3 pl.	töldu-st	dæmdu-st	kölluðu-st	bitu-st	buðu-st
Subjunctive	1 sg.	teldi-st	dæmdi-st	kallaði-st	biti-st	byði-st
	2 sg.	teldi-st	dæmdi-st	kallaði-st	biti-st	byði-st
	3 sg.	teldi-st	dæmdi-st	kallaði-st	biti-st	byði-st
	1 pl.	teldum-st	dæmdum-st	kölluðum-st	bitum-st	byðum-st
	2 pl.	teldu-st	dæmdu-st	kölluðu-st	bitu-st	byðu-st
	3 pl.	teldu-st	dæmdu-st	kölluðu-st	bitu-st	byðu-st
Imperative	2 sg.					bjóð-st(u)
Past participle						
Supine		tali-st	dæm-st	kalla-st	biti-st	boði-st
Present participle						

sestu 'sit down' or *klæðstu* 'dress' of the verbs *setjast* 'sit (oneself) down', *klæðast* 'dress (oneself)'. Note here that the enclitic form of the second-person personal pronoun follows the 'middle' #-st# whereas all inflectional endings precede it.

Auxiliaries and Verbal Complexes

There is no morphologically distinct class of auxiliaries in Icelandic, although some of the preterite present (or modal) verbs can be used in auxiliary constructions and these have certain inflectional peculiarities, as we have

seen. The class of auxiliaries can be argued to have certain syntactic characteristics, however (see section 6.4).

The most important complex verbal constructions are listed in the chart below.

Some complex verbal constructions

Perfect aux. <i>hafa</i> 'have' + supine	ég hef farið	'I have gone'
Future aux. <i>munu</i> 'will' + bare inf.	hann mun fara	'he will go'
Progressive aux. <i>vera</i> 'be' + inf. with <i>að</i>	hún er að borða	'she is eating'
Inchoative aux. <i>fara</i> 'go' + inf. with <i>að</i>	hún fer að borða	'she's going to eat'
Completed action <i>vera búinn að</i> + inf.	hún er búin að borða	'she has finished eating'
Passive aux. <i>vera</i> 'be' + pp.	hann var bitinn	'he was bitten'

In traditional grammars the perfect and the future are usually considered parts of the tense system although that is debatable. Note, for instance, that sentences with *munu* have partially a modal meaning. This can be seen if they are compared with simple sentences with verbs in the present tense: *skipið kemur á morgun* 'the ship comes tomorrow' vs *skipið mun koma á morgun* 'the ship will [apparently] come tomorrow'. Note also that the verb *vera* 'be' can be used with the inflected past participle of intransitive verbs of motion with a sort of a perfective meaning. There is a subtle distinction between it and the normal perfective, however, in that the forms with *vera* are more stative or adjectival: *hann er kominn* 'he has arrived (and he is here)' vs *hann hefur komið* 'he has come (and he has left again)'. Not surprisingly the construction with *vera* takes purely adjectival participles, e.g. prefixed with *ó-* 'un-', whereas there is no such construction with *hafa*: *hann er ókominn* 'he hasn't arrived yet' (lit. 'he is uncome') vs **hann hefur ókomið*. What we have labelled here as progressive, inchoative and completed action are more closely related to aspectual systems, however.

Table 6.13 Examples of word formation by derivation

<i>Basic word</i>	<i>Suffix</i>	<i>Derived word</i>	
<i>Formation of nouns</i>			
From nouns			
Ísland 'Iceland'	-ing-	Ísland+ing-ur	'Icelander'
hass 'pot'	-ist-	hass+ist-i	'pot smoker'
strætisvagn 'bus'	-ó-	stræt+ó	'bus'
dóni 'boor'	-skap-	dóna+skap-ur	'rudeness'
trumba 'drum'	-il-	trymb+il-l	'drummer'
strákur 'boy'	-ling-	strák+ling-ur	'small boy'
From verbs			
nema 'study'	-and-	nem+and-i	'student'
kenna 'teach'	-ar-	kenn+ar-i	'teacher'
frysta 'freeze'	-i-	frysti+i-r	'freezer'
kynna 'introduce'	-ing-	kynn+ing	'introduction'
hanna 'design'	-un-	hönn+un	'design'
From adjectives			
sniðugur 'clever'	-heit-	sniðug+heit	'cleverness'
heilagur 'holy'	-leik-	heilag+leik-i	'holiness'
virkur 'active'	-ni-	virk+ni	'activity'
<i>Formation of adjectives</i>			
From nouns			
tröll 'giant'	-leg-	trölls+leg-ur	'gigantic'
Ísland 'Iceland'	-sk-	íslen+sk-ur	'Icelandic'
skítur 'dirt'	-ug-	skít+ug-ur	'dirty'
From verbs			
spyrja 'ask'	-ul-	spur+ul-l	'inquisitive'
bíla 'break down'	-ð-	bíla+ð-ur	'out of order'
hrífa 'enchant'	-and-	hríf+and-i	'enchanting'
ýta 'push'	-in-	ýt+in-n	'pushy'
From adjectives			
púkalegur 'tacky, dowdy'	-ó-	púkó	'tacky, dowdy'
<i>Formation of verbs</i>			
From nouns			
flipp 'foolish act'	-a-	flipp+a	'flip (out)'
sjarmi 'charm'	-era-	sjarm+era	'charm'
From adjectives			
blár 'blue'	-na-	blá+na	'become blue'

Some Productive Word-formation Processes

Derivation by Suffixes

Some word-formation suffixes are listed in Table 6.13. The list does not exclusively contain suffixes that are common in spontaneous word formation but also several suffixes that have been frequently used in 'learned' word

formation (see section 6.5). The suffixes are divided into classes according to the type of basic word they can be attached to for the purposes of new word formation. In the new words the boundary between the basic word and the suffix is indicated by a plus (+) but the inflectional ending that sometimes follows is separated from the suffix by a hyphen (-).

The suffix *#+ist#* is one of the few borrowed suffixes in the language, together with *#+heit#* and the verbal suffix *#+era#*. The difference is, however, that *#+ist#* and *#+heit#* are obviously productive in the language whereas most of the verbs that end in *#+era#* may have been borrowed as a whole. Sometimes the sequence /fs/ (probably from Danish *-is-ere*, cf. also Eng. *-ize*), is part of such verbs, cf. *skandalísera* 'scandalize'.

When a suffix is added to a basic word, there are frequently minor adjustments of the vocalism or consonantism of the basic stem. Note, however, that the highly productive suffix *-legur* is added to the genitive form rather than to the stem of nouns to form adjectives, cf. *tröllslegur* 'gigantic'. Note also that word formation with (the slangy) *#+ó#* frequently involves a lot of truncation of the basic word, as should be evident from the pairs *strætisvagn/strætó* 'bus' and *púkalegur/púko* 'tacky, dowdy' (Table 6.13).

Some Prefixes

A number of prefixes are found in Icelandic nouns, some of which can also be attached to verbs and adjectives. Icelandic prefixes include *einka-* 'private': *einkatölva* 'personal computer'; *endur-* 're-': *endurvinnsla* 'recycling'; *far-* 'remote': *farstýring* 'remote control'; *for-* 'pre': *forhita* 'prewarm'; *ó-* 'un-': *ólokinn* 'unfinished'; *ör-* 'micro-': *örgjörvi* 'microchip'. However, these are not all productive in the language. The prefix *#ó+#* is probably the most productive and transparent one, although it is also possible to find pairs where the semantic relationship is somewhat unpredictable. Consider *léttur* 'light' and *óléttur* 'pregnant', for instance.

Compounding

It is customary to speak of three types of compounding: *stem compounding* (or close compounding) where the first part of the compound is a stem; *genitive compounding* (or loose compounding) where the first part of a compound is in the genitive case; and *connective compounding* where a special connective sound (usually a vowel) that cannot be interpreted as a case ending connects the two parts. The difference can be seen in the following examples: (a) *snjóhús* 'snow house', *sólskin* 'sunshine'; (b) *barnaskóli* 'children's school', *barnslegur* 'childlike'; (c) *ráðunautur* 'adviser', *leikfímishús* 'gymnasium'.

It is difficult to formulate rules that predict when each of these types is used. Genitive compounding is often required when the first part of a compound is itself a compound. Thus we get pairs like *borðplata* 'table top' (stem compound) and *skrifborðsplata* 'writing desk top' (genitive compound).

Most compound words are nouns and noun+noun-compounding is the most common type by far although adjective+noun compounds are also quite common. Examples include words like *stórhýsi* 'a large house' (stem compounding) and *sjúkrahús* 'hospital' (genitive compounding). Compound adjectives can also be found, such as *nautsterkur* 'ox-strong, strong as an ox' and *rauðhærður* 'red-haired', whereas compound verbs are quite rare.

Inflection normally only affects the last part of a compound word (its head). Some compound place-names where the first part is a weak form of an adjective are exceptional in this respect. Thus the name of a street or a farm may be *Langahlíð* (lit. '(the) long slope') and it will be *Lönguhlíð* in the accusative and dative, and *Lönguhlíðar* in the genitive.

The elements of Icelandic compound words are not separated in writing. The stress pattern is also typical of single words (i.e. word-initial stress) rather than sequences of words (where each major class word carries some stress). Note also that whereas there are many noun+noun compounds in Icelandic where the first part has the genitive form, genitive complements of nouns normally follow their heads in Icelandic. Compare, for example, the compound word *læknishús* 'doctor's house' with the phrase *hús læknis* 'the house of a doctor'.

6.4 Syntax

Types of Noun Phrases

Modifiers of Nouns

Indefinite pronouns (including quantifiers), demonstrative pronouns, numerals and adjectives precede the nouns they modify, and in this order: *allir þessir fjórir frægu málfræðingar hafa borðað hákarl* 'all these four famous linguists have eaten shark'. Demonstrative pronouns, as well as the definite article, trigger the *weak inflection* of adjectives. This can be seen if the previous example is compared with the following two: *frægu málfræðingarnir hafa borðað hákarl* 'the famous linguists have eaten shark' (lit. 'famous linguists-the have eaten shark'); *frægir málfræðingar hafa borðað hákarl* 'famous linguists have eaten shark'. But although the selection of the weak vs the strong form of adjectives in noun phrases is thus normally totally dependent on the presence vs absence of definite determiners, it is possible to get near-minimal pairs: *þau horfðu lengi á blátt fjallið í fjarska* 'they looked for a long time at the blue mountain in the distance' vs *þau horfðu lengi á bláa fjallið* 'they looked for a long time at the blue mountain'. The difference between these two examples lies in the fact that in the second example the noun phrase containing the weak (or definite) form of the adjective is restrictive, whereas in the first example, the noun phrase is non-restrictive, i.e. implying 'the mountain in the distance happened to be blue'.

Pre-nominal modifiers agree with the noun in gender, number and case: *falleg stúlka sá ljótan hund* 'a beautiful (nom. sg. f.) girl saw an ugly (acc. sg. m.) dog'; *fallegt barn klappaði ljótum hundi* 'a beautiful (nom. sg. n.) child petted an ugly (dat. sg. m.) dog'; etc. Here the verbs *sjá* 'see' and *klappa* 'pet' govern accusative and dative, respectively, so we get different cases on the object. This affects the form of the modifying adjective, as does the gender and number of the noun in each sentence.

Genitive complements of nouns (including expressions of possession) normally follow their head but they can frequently be preposed for emphasis, although this depends to some extent on their nature. Thus it is virtually impossible to prepose a noun with modifiers, in contrast to a proper name: *hús Haraldar* vs *Haraldar hús* (*en ekki Jóns*) 'Harold's house' (lit. 'house Harold's') vs 'Harold's house (but not John's)' – but *dúkkur litlu stelpnanna* vs *?*litlu stelpnanna dúkkur* lit. 'the little girls' dolls (lit. 'dolls the little girls') vs *?*'the little girls' dolls'*.

Personal pronouns can be used as modifiers with nouns. They then have a special stylistic function, somewhat similar to that of demonstrative pronouns in German in such contexts: *hann Haraldur gerir það ekki* 'Harold doesn't do that' (lit. 'he Harold does that not' – cf. Ger. *Der Harald tut das nicht*). Note, however, that the following type of construction is the most normal or neutral expression of possession in Icelandic: *húsið hans Haraldar* (vs **hús hans Haraldar*) 'Harold's house' (lit. 'house-the his (gen.) Harold's' (* without the def. art.)). In this construction the noun (what is possessed) must have the definite article as indicated. This is also the unmarked option if possession is indicated by a possessive pronoun (or the genitive of a personal pronoun) rather than the genitive of a noun, although it is also possible to use the indefinite form of the noun: *húsið mitt er þarna* vs *hús mitt er þarna* 'my house is there' (lit. 'house-the my is there' vs 'house my is there'). Using the indefinite form of the noun is the marked option and lends a certain formal flavour to the construction in most cases. With nouns of family relationship, however, the article can normally not be used: **bróðirinn minn* vs *bróðir minn* 'my brother' (lit. '*brother-the my' vs 'brother my'). The possessive pronoun follows the noun in these constructions. It may be preposed for the purpose of emphasis, but then it is impossible to use the definite form of the noun: *mitt hús* (*en ekki Jóns*) vs **mitt húsið . . .* 'my house (but not John's)' (lit. 'my house (but not John's)' vs **my house-the . . .*).

Recall that there is no possessive pronoun for the third person. Instead the genitive of the relevant personal pronoun is used. The regular possessive pronouns agree in gender, number and case with the noun, just like other modifiers, but the genitive pronouns do not, of course: *þetta eru pennarnir þínir/hans*, *bókin þín/hans* og *borðið þitt/hans* 'these are your/his pens, your/his book and your/his table' (lit. 'these are pens-the your (nom. pl. m.)/his (gen. sg. m.), book-the your (nom. sg. f.)/his (gen. sg. m.) and table-the your (nom. sg. n.)/his (gen. sg. m.)').

Inalienable possession can be expressed by the dative within prepositional phrases of certain types but not otherwise. Observe the following: *hún stakk þessu í munn honum/hans* 'she put this in his mouth' (lit. 'she put this in mouth him (dat.)/his (gen.)') vs *þetta er munnur *honum/hans* 'this is his mouth' (lit. 'this is mouth *him (dat.)/his (gen.)'). But both of these constructions are quite formal in this context and the normal way to express inalienable possession of body parts the spoken language would be *í munninn á honum* (lit. 'in the mouth on him') and *munnurinn á honum* (lit. 'the mouth on him').

Relative clauses follow their heads. They are introduced by the relative particles *sem* and *er* (more formal), there being no relative pronouns in the modern language: *konan sem þú spurðir um býr ekki lengur hér* 'the woman that you asked about no longer lives here' (lit. '... lives no longer here').

Pronouns and Anaphora

Icelandic exhibits the following pattern of referential possibilities for personal pronouns: (a) *María, greiddi henni_{i,j}* 'Mary combed her hair' (lit. '... combed her (dat.)') (co-reference impossible); (b) *María, skipaði mér að hjálpa henni_{i,j}* 'Mary ordered me to help her' (co-reference impossible); (c) *María, heldur að ég elski hana_{i,j}* 'Mary believes that I love (subj.) her' (co-reference possible); (d) *þegar hún_{i,j} kom heim var María, þreytt* 'when she came home Mary was tired' (co-reference almost impossible). Note that co-reference is impossible between the object in an infinitival clause and the matrix subject in (b). It should also be pointed out that for most speakers it seems virtually impossible to get co-reference between a pronoun in a preposed adverbial clause and the matrix subject in sentences like (d).

Unlike in Romance languages such as Spanish or Italian, in Modern Icelandic we do not find the free occurrence of referential null subjects. In the following examples [e] indicates an empty noun phrase-slot, without any theoretical claims about its nature implied: (a) **[e] er dauður* '(he) is dead (nom. sg. m.)'; (b) **María heldur að [e] hafi séð Harald* 'Mary believes that (she) has seen Harold'. By contrast, in the case of coordinated sentences, on the other hand, the subject of the second conjunct can be left out. In some cases it may seem plausible to analyse such constructions as instances of verbphrase-coordination, or V'-coordination, or something of that sort. But there is no straightforward analysis of that type for sentences like the following, for reasons of agreement: (a) *þeir, sáu stúlkuna einir/*einum og [e] fannst/*fundust hún álitleg* 'they (nom. pl. m.) saw (3 pl.) the girl (acc. sg. f.) alone (nom./dat. pl. m.) and (they) found (3 sg./pl.) her attractive' vs (b) *þeim, líkar maturinn og [e] kaupa/*kaupir hann einir/*einum* 'they (dat. pl.) like (3 sg.) the food and (they) buy (3 pl./sg.) it alone (nom./dat. pl. m.)'. In (a) we have a nominative subject in the first conjunct and the verb of that conjunct is agreeing with it in person and number and the indefinite pronoun *einir* agrees with it in case and number. In the second conjunct, on the other hand,

the verb is in the default third-person singular form as if it had a non-nominative subject (cf. the section on marking of grammatical relations below, pp. 175–6). This is not what we would expect under a verb-phrase-conjunction analysis since then the nominative subject of the first conjunct would be serving as the subject for the second conjunct too. This is, however, compatible with a null-subject analysis, provided that the null subject has (dative) case. Conversely, in (b) we have a dative subject in the first conjunct and a non-agreeing (third-person singular) verb but agreement facts in the second conjunct point to the presence of a (null) nominative subject there (third person plural of the verb and nominative plural masculine of the indefinite pronoun *einir*).

As stated above, the referential null subjects need a linguistic antecedent in Modern Icelandic, and it has to be a subject: **ég sá myndina_i og [e_i] gerði mig reiðan* 'I saw the movie and (it) made me angry'. This is different from Old Icelandic where it was possible to get referential null subjects with non-subject antecedents or even with no linguistic antecedents at all. Note also that it is not possible in Modern Icelandic to have a null subject in the second conjunct if something is topicalized there. Observe that it is normally possible to topicalize constituents in the second conjunct: (a) *Pétur_i elskar Maríu og hann_i dái_r Önnu* 'Peter loves Mary and he adores Ann' vs (b) *Pétur_i elskar Maríu og Önnu dái_r hann_i*, 'Peter loves Mary and Ann he adores' (lit. ... 'and Ann he adores'). Here we could leave the subject out of the second conjunct in the (a) version (the non-topicalized version) but not in the (b) version: (a) *Pétur_i elskar Maríu og [e_i] dái_r Önnu* 'Peter loves Mary and (he) adores Ann' vs (b) **Pétur_i elskar Maríu og Önnu dái_r [e_i]* 'Peter loves Mary and Ann (he) adores'. This would seem to suggest that these zero subjects in Modern Icelandic are really zero topics. This does not seem to have been the case in Old Icelandic. In general it seems that the restrictions on leaving out noun phrases are much stricter in Modern Icelandic than in Old Icelandic. It is quite easy to find instances of null objects and prepositional objects in older Icelandic texts. The examples with null prepositional objects all seem to be bad in Modern Icelandic. It is, however, possible to find acceptable instances of null objects, although they are rather heavily restricted: *Jón_i tók bók_j ú_r hillunni og [e_i] gaf mér [e_j]* 'John took a book from the shelf and (he) gave me (it)'. These null objects can serve as antecedents for reflexive pronouns, as can be seen from the following comparison: (a) **ég hjálpaði honum_i á fætur og fylgdi þér heim til sín_i*, 'I helped him to his feet and followed you to his home' (lit. 'I helped him on feet and followed you home to him (refl.)') vs (b) *ég hjálpaði honum_i á fætur og fylgdi [e_i] heim til sín_i*, 'I helped him to his feet and followed (him) to his (refl.) home'. Note, however, that it is not possible to have a null object in a second conjunct if there is an overt subject in it: **Jón brenndi bókina_i en Haraldur las [e_i]* 'John burned the book but Harold read (it)'. This apparently holds for Swedish and Norwegian too. Old Icelandic seems to have been less strict in this respect since there it is possible

to find sentences with overt subjects and null objects.

With respect to non-referential or expletive NPs, Icelandic differs from its mainland Scandinavian relatives, as can be seen from the following examples: (a) *það rigndi í gær* 'it rained yesterday' vs *í gær rigndi* (*það) 'yesterday rained (*it)'; (b) *það eru mýs í baðkerinu* 'there are mice in the bathtub' vs *eru* (*það) *mýs í baðkerinu?* 'are (*there) mice in the bathtub?'; (c) *það hefur einhver étid hákarlinn* (lit. 'there has somebody eaten the shark' vs *hákarlinn hefur* (*það) *einhver étid* (lit. 'the shark has (*there) somebody eaten'; (d) *hann segir að það hafi verið dansað á skipinu* (lit. 'he says that there was danced on the ship' vs *hann segir að á skipinu hafi* (*það) *verið dansað* (lit. 'he says that on the ship (*there) was danced'. As these examples indicate, the expletive *það* 'it' is used with weather verbs, in existential sentences (also with transitive verbs) and in impersonal passives. But it can only occur in clause-initial position. As soon as something is preposed in the clause, or if the verb occurs clause-initially as in direct question (cf. (b)), the expletive *það* disappears.

Reflexives and Reciprocals

First, observe the following examples of Icelandic reflexives: (a) *Haraldur rakaði sig/sjálfan sig* 'Harold shaved REFL./self REFL. (complex emphatic)'; (b) *Haraldur mismælti sig/*sjálfan sig* 'Harold misspoke REFL./self REFL. (complex impossible)'; (c) *Haraldur talar við *sig/sjálfan sig* 'Harold talks to *REFL./self REFL. (simplex impossible)'. For each sentence two possibilities are indicated. Before the slash we have the morphologically simple reflexive *sig* and after the slash the *sig* is preceded by *sjálfan* which (in these cases) is accusative singular masculine of the word *sjálfur* which literally means 'self' (and it agrees in gender and number with the antecedent and in case with the following reflexive which is invariant for gender and number; see p. 157).

As the (a) example indicates, the simplex reflexive is the normal non-emphatic choice with verbs like *raka* 'shave' and the complex reflexive would be interpreted as emphatic. In (b) we see that with reflexive idioms like *mismæla sig* 'make a slip of the tongue' (where the reflexive object is not really a semantic argument of the verb), the complex reflexive is completely ungrammatical. The same is true of inherently reflexive verbs which describe actions that can only affect, or states that can only be true of, the subject, such as *haga sér* 'behave', *skammast sín* 'be ashamed'. Verbs like *tala við* 'talk to', on the other hand, describe actions that normally involve somebody other than just the subject. With verbs of this sort, the complex reflexive has to be used, the simplex reflexive being totally out as shown in the (c) example.

Now let us look in somewhat greater detail at the distribution of the simplex reflexive:

- (a) *María_i greiddi sér_{i/*j}*
Mary combed REFL. (coref. necessary)
- (b) **María_i talaði við sig_{i/j}*
Mary talked to REFL. (simplex impossible, cf. above)
- (c) *Ég skilaði Maríu_i bókinni sinni_{i/*j}*
I returned Mary REFL.'s new book (coref. necessary)
- (d) **Ég talaði við Maríu_i um bókina sína_{i/j}*
I talked to Mary about REFL.'s book (impossible)
- (e) *María_i skipaði mér að hjálpa sér_{i/*j}*
Mary ordered me to help REFL. (coref. necessary)
- (f) *María_i heldur að ég elski sig_{i/*j}*
Mary believes that I love (subj.) REFL. (coref. necessary)
- (g) **María_i veit að ég elska sig_{i/j}*
Mary knows that I love (ind.) REFL. (sentence impossible for most speakers)
- (h) **María_i var þreytt þegar bókin sín_{i/j} kom út*
Mary was tired when REFL.'s book came out (sentence impossible)
- (i) *María_i segir að bókin sín_{i/*j} komi út á morgun*
Mary says that book REFL.'s come (subj.) out tomorrow (coref. necessary)
- (j) *Bókin sín_i segir María_i að komi út á morgun*
Book REFL.'s Mary says that come (subj.) out tomorrow (sentence possible)
- (k) *María_i heldur að sig_{i/*j} vanti peninga*
Mary believes that REFL. (acc.) need (subj.) money (coref. necessary)
- (l) **Sig vantar peninga*
REFL. (acc.) wants money (sentence impossible)
- (m) **Ég sagði Maríu_i að þú elskaðir sig_{i/j}*
I told Mary that you loved REFL. (sentence impossible)
- (n) *Skoðun Maríu_i er að sig_{i/*j} vanti hæfileika*
Opinion Mary's is that REFL. lack (subj.) talent (coref. necessary)
- (o) *Skoðun Maríu_i kom *sér/henni_i í vandræði*
Opinion Mary's caused REFL./her trouble (refl. impossible)

The facts just illustrated can be summarized as follows:

- 1 In simple sentences the reflexive must have an antecedent. It is normally the subject but it is possible to find sentences where the object is an acceptable antecedent (c). Prepositional object is not an appropriate antecedent, however (d).
- 2 The antecedent of the simplex reflexive need not be within the same clause. Thus it is possible to have the reflexive within an infinitival clause or a subjunctive clause with the matrix subject as the antecedent (e)–(f). For most speakers, however, this does not hold for indicative clauses (g).

- 3 As (h) shows, a reflexive pronoun in an adverbial clause normally can not have an antecedent outside this clause (for exceptions see below). That the ungrammaticality of (h) is not due to the nominative of the reflexive is shown in (i) where we have a reflexive in subject position (the possessive reflexive having a nominative form although the non-possessive reflexive does not, as pointed out above, p. 157).
- 4 Reflexives normally follow their antecedents but they can be preposed under certain conditions, as shown in (j).
- 5 The non-possessive reflexive can occur in subject position of embedded clauses if the verb is in the subjunctive mood and is one that takes a non-nominative subject (k). But it cannot, of course, occur as the accusative subject of such verbs in simple sentences since then the antecedent would be missing (l).
- 6 The matrix object cannot serve as the antecedent of the so-called long-distance reflexive in Icelandic (m). But it is possible to find sentences where the antecedent is the genitive complement of a noun meaning 'opinion' or the like and the reflexive is in a subjunctive predicative clause describing the opinion, as in (n). In simple sentences a genitive complement cannot serve as the antecedent of a reflexive, as shown in (o).

The preceding examples contain a number of instances of the so-called long-distance reflexive in Modern Icelandic. There seem to be very few instances of this type of reflexive in Old Icelandic texts and some of the few that exist have the reflexive in an indicative clause. Note in addition that although all of the long-distance reflexives above have (and need) an antecedent in a preceding matrix clause (and this antecedent cannot be an object, for instance), it is possible to find examples of long-distance reflexives where no antecedent is explicitly mentioned in the preceding matrix clause: *hann_i lá andvaka í rúminu sínu_i og hugsaði. Það var merkilegt hvað María_i var alltaf andstyggileg. Þegar stelpurnar kæmu segði hún_i sér_i áreiðanlega að fara* (lit.) 'he lay awake in his (refl.) bed thinking. It was strange how nasty Mary always was (ind.). When the girls would (subj.) come, she would certainly tell him (refl.) to leave'. This long-distance reflexive has a clear semantic antecedent although it is syntactically very distant and a part of another sentence. It can only be the individual whose thoughts are being represented in the narration.

The complex reflexive, on the other hand, is clause-bounded in the sense that it must find its antecedent in its own clause. This is illustrated in the following examples: (a) *María_i talar alltaf við sjálfa sig_i* 'Mary talks always to self REFL.'; (b) **María_i skipaði mér að tala við sjálfa sig_i* 'Mary ordered me to talk to self REFL.'; (c) **María_i segir að ég tali aldrei við sjálfa sig_i* 'Mary says that I talk never to self REFL.'

The reciprocal *hver/hver annan* 'each other' is also clause bounded: (a)

strákarnir_i tala aldrei hvor við annan_i ‘the boys never talk to each other’ (lit. ‘the boys talk never each to (the) other’); (b) **strákarnir_i skipuðu mér að tala hvor við annan_i* ‘the boys ordered me to talk to each other’ (lit. ‘the boys ordered me to talk each to (the) other’); (c) **strákarnir_i segja að ég tali aldrei hvor við annan_i* ‘the boys say that I never talk to each other’ (lit. ‘the boys say that I talk never each to (the) other’). Here we have used the version with *hvor* rather than *hver*, the difference being that the former means ‘each of two’, the latter ‘each’ in general, although this distinction may be on its way out with the plural *hver* taking over. Note also that the ‘each’-part (*hvor/hver*) of the reciprocal agrees here with the subject (and is outside the prepositional phrase) but many (perhaps most) speakers would say something like *þeir töluðu við hvorn annan* ‘they talked to each (acc.) other (acc.)’ or *þær hjálpuðu hverri annarri* ‘they helped each (dat.) other (dat.)’ with the ‘each’-part agreeing with the ‘other’-part (the object of the preposition or the verb).

Quantifiers and Moving Modifiers

Quantifiers like *allir* ‘all’ modifying the subject can show up in various places in the sentence: (a) *allir Íslendingar munu kyssa Annie* ‘all (nom. pl. m.) Icelanders (nom. pl. m.) will kiss Annie’; (b) *Íslendingar munu allir kyssa Annie* ‘Icelanders will all kiss Annie’; (c) *?*Íslendingar munu kyssa allir Annie* ‘Icelanders will kiss all Annie’; (d) *Íslendingar munu kyssa Annie allir* ‘Icelanders will kiss Annie all’. As this shows, quantifiers can float around in the sentence but not occur between the non-finite main verb and its object. If there is no auxiliary verb, on the other hand, the floating quantifier can show up between the (finite) main verb and its object: (a) *allir Íslendingar kysstu Annie* ‘all Icelanders kissed Annie’; (b) *Íslendingar kysstu allir Annie* ‘Icelanders kissed all Annie’.

Auxiliaries and Main Verbs

Auxiliaries and Auxiliary-like Verbs

Most traditional Icelandic grammars and handbooks give a list of auxiliaries. These lists vary slightly from one book to another but will include some or all of the following:

- 1 With supine or past participle: *hafa* ‘have’, *vera* ‘be’, *geta* ‘be able, may’;
- 2 With the bare infinitive: *munu* ‘will’, *skulu* ‘shall’, *vilja* ‘want’, *mega* ‘may’;
- 3 With *að* plus the infinitive: *eiga* ‘ought’, *kunna* ‘know, may’, *þurfa* ‘need’, *verða* ‘be, become, have to’, *hljóta* ‘must’, *ætla* ‘intend’, *fara* ‘go, be going’, *vera* ‘be’, *byrja* ‘begin’, *hætta* ‘stop’.

This is obviously a very heterogenous list from a semantic point of view and nobody has claimed that all these verbs are used to represent special grammatical categories although some of them are (cf. chart 'Some complex verbal constructions', p. 163 above). But they do have important syntactic characteristics in common. This can be seen by comparing the (putative) auxiliaries *hafa* 'have', *munu* 'will', and *kunna* 'may' with the verb *reyna* 'try' which takes an infinitival complement superficially similar to that of *kunna*. First, note the difference in behaviour with respect to the expletive *það*: (a) *það rignir í nótt* 'it rains tonight'; (b) *það hefur rignit í nótt* 'it has rained (sup.) tonight'; (c) *það mun rigna í nótt* 'it will rain (inf.) tonight'; (d) *það kann að rigna í nótt* 'it may rain tonight' (lit. 'it may to rain (inf.) tonight'); (e) **það reynir að rigna í nótt* (lit. 'it tries to rain tonight'). All these examples involve the weather verb *rigna* 'rain' which takes no thematic subject and can occur with the semantically empty expletive *það* 'it'. As shown in (b)–(d), it is also possible to have this semantically empty *það* in constructions with the putative auxiliaries *hafa*, *munu* and *kunna* preceding the main verb *rigna* but this is not possible if we put the verb *reyna* 'try' in the same position as in (e). Second, observe that we get a similar pattern with non-nominative subjects: (a) *mig langar í ís* 'I want ice cream' (lit. 'me (acc.) longs for ice'); (b) *mig hefur langað í ís* 'I have wanted ice cream' (lit. 'me (acc.) has longed for ice'); (c) *mig mun langa í ís* 'I will want ice cream' (lit. 'me (acc.) will long for ice'); (d) *mig kann að langa í ís* 'I may want ice cream' (lit. 'me (acc.) may to long for ice'); (e) **mig reynir að langa í ís* (lit. 'me (acc.) tries to long for ice'). Here we have the verb *langa* (*í*) 'long for want' which is one of the verbs taking a non-nominative subject (here accusative). The putative auxiliaries can have non-nominative subjects of this sort if the main verb requires one, as we see in (b)–(d), but this does not hold for non-auxiliary verbs like *reyna* as shown in (e). This does not hold either for modal verbs in the so-called root sense but only in the epistemic sense. Hence we may get minimal pairs like the following: (a) *ég kann að syngja* 'I know how to sing' or 'I may sing' vs (b) *mig kann að vanta peninga* 'I may lack money' (lit. 'me (acc.) may to lack money'). With the accusative subject in (b) we can only get the epistemic reading of *kunna*. The reason for this is presumably that epistemic modals are comparable to (other) auxiliaries in that they do not assign an independent thematic role to their subject and are thus 'transparent' to the thematic role of the 'main' (infinitive) verb.

Normally one does not get more than three auxiliary-like verbs in each clause. With multiple auxiliaries the order is quite fixed: *Haraldur mun hafa verið að borða* 'Harold has apparently been eating' (lit. 'Harold will (3 sg.) have (inf.) been (sup.) to eat (inf.)'). The auxiliary verbs *munu* and *skulu* never follow any other auxiliary verbs. No supine or participle form of these verbs exists (see p. 161), so one would not expect them to follow the auxiliary *hafa* which requires the supine form of the following verb. But since they have a special infinitival form, it is clear that there cannot be a morphological reason for their

non-occurrence after infinitive-taking auxiliaries. After all, they are found in the so-called accusative-with-infinitive construction (see p. 161).

Phrasal Verbs

In Icelandic we find a familiar contrast between verbal particles and prepositions. First, observe the word-order possibilities in sentences with the particle verb *taka fram* 'take out': (a) *fföldi manns tók fram bækurnar* 'a lot of people took out the books'; (b) **fram bækurnar tók fföldi manns* 'out the books took a lot of people'; (c) *fföldi manns tók bækurnar fram* 'a lot of people took the books out'; (d) *fföldi manns tók þær fram/*fram þær* 'a lot of people took them out/*out them'. These sentences can be compared with sentences with the verb *horfa á* 'look at': (e) *fföldi manns horfði á stúlkuna* 'a lot of people looked at the girl'; (f) *á stúlkuna horfði fföldi manns* 'at the girl looked a lot of people'; (g) **fföldi manns horfði stúlkuna á* 'a lot of people looked the girl at'; (h) *fföldi manns horfði *hana á/á hana* 'a lot of people looked her at/at her'. In the first set of sentences (a–d) we see that the particle *fram* cannot move to the front of the clause with the object of the verb (b) but it can follow the object (c) and it must in fact do so if the object is a pronoun (d). In the second set (e–h), on the other hand, *á* has the properties of a preposition rather than a particle. Hence it can move to the front of the clause together with its object (f) but it cannot follow its object (g), not even if it is a pronoun (h).

Grammatical Relations and Agreement

Some Properties of Subjects and Objects

Recent research has established a set of typical subject properties, as opposed to objects and other noun phrases, and led to the conclusion that certain non-nominative noun phrases share most of the subject properties with the regular nominative subjects. The typical subject properties include the following: (i) the subject precedes the finite verb in neutral declarative word order; (ii) the subject immediately follows the finite verb in direct questions; (iii) in existential sentences it is possible to have the subject in initial position or the sentence can begin with the expletive *það* 'it, there' with the logical subject immediately following the finite verb or the sentential adverb if there is one; (iv) the subject can immediately precede the infinitival verb in the 'accusative-with-infinitive' construction (or 'exceptional case marking' construction); (v) subjects cannot serve as antecedents for personal pronouns in simple clauses, only for reflexives; (vi) subjects can serve as antecedents for non-clause bounded (or long-distance) reflexives whereas objects cannot; (vii) it is possible to have null subjects in the second conjunct in coordinated sentences if it has a co-referential subject antecedent.

Keeping these subject properties in mind, we can show the similarity between regular nominative subjects and non-nominative ones by looking at direct questions (a); clause bounded reflexives vs pronouns (b); non-clause

bounded reflexives (c); and omission of subject in the second conjunct of coordinated structures (d): (a) *hefur strákurinn aldrei séð peninga?* ‘has the boy (nom.) never seen money?’ vs *hefur strákinn aldrei vantað peninga?* ‘has the boy (acc.) never lacked money?’; (b) *strákurinn_i þarf pelann *hans/sinn_i*; ‘the boy (nom.) needs his (*non-refl./refl.) bottle’ vs *strákinn_i vantar pelann *hans/sinn_i*; ‘the boy (acc.) lacks his (*non-refl./refl.) bottle’ vs *ég rétti stráknum_i pelann hans/sinn_i*; ‘I handed the boy his (non-refl./refl.) bottle’; (c) *María_i er leið yfir því að þú skulir aldrei heilsa sér_i*; ‘Mary finds it depressing that you never greet her (refl.)’ (lit. ‘Mary (nom.) is depressed over it that you shall (subj.) never greet her (refl.)’) vs *Maríu_i leiðist að þú skulir aldrei heilsa sér_i*; ‘it bothers Mary that you never greet her’ (lit. ‘Mary (dat.) it-bothers that you shall (subj.) never greet her (refl.)’) vs **ég sagði Maríu_i að þú hefðir aldrei heilsað sér_i*; ‘I told Mary that you had (subj.) never greeted her (refl.)’; (d) *Haraldur_i gaf Maríu_j hamstur og [e_i] bauð henni_i svo í bíó* ‘Harold gave Mary a hamster and (he) took her then to the cinema’ vs *Haraldi_i geðjast vel að Maríu og [e_i] býður henni oft í bíó* ‘Harold (dat.) has a liking for Mary and takes her frequently to the cinema’ vs **Haraldur_i gaf Maríu_j hamstur og [e_j] bauð honum_i svo í bíó* ‘Harold gave Mary a hamster and (she) took him then to the cinema’. As these examples show, the non-nominative subjects pattern with the nominative ones except with respect to subject-verb agreement. There is thus no one-to-one relationship between morphological case marking and grammatical function. Subjects can have any of the four morphological cases and so can objects. This can be illustrated further for subjects (a) and for objects (b): (a) *stelpan þarf peninga* ‘the girl (nom.) needs money’ vs *stelpuna vantar peninga* ‘the girl (acc.) lacks money’ vs *stelpunni leiðist hér* ‘the girl (dat.) is bored here’ vs *vindsins gætir ekki mikið hér* ‘the wind isn’t very noticeable here’ (lit. ‘the wind (gen.) is-noticeable not much here’); and (b) *stelpunni ?líkar/líka hestarnir vel* ‘the girl (dat.) likes (sg./pl.) the horses (nom.) fine’ vs *stelpan sá strákinn* ‘the girl saw the boy (acc.)’ vs *stelpan hjálpaði stráknum* ‘the girl helped the boy (dat.)’ vs *stelpan saknar stráksins mikið* ‘the girl misses the boy (gen.) much’. The unmarked option is that verbs take nominative subjects. Dative subjects are quite common too (at least 120 verbs take these) and accusative subjects not uncommon (about 70 verbs) whereas there are probably only about 2 verbs that take genitive subjects. All the non-nominative subjects are non-agentive. Accusative objects are the unmarked or default case whereas dative and genitive objects are more marked. Nominative objects only occur with verbs that take dative subjects and there the verb usually agrees with the nominative object rather than occurring in the non-agreeing third-person singular form.

In addition, we have the traditionally well-known examples of (adverbial) accusatives of time and duration and instrumental datives: (a) *hún beið hans þar allan daginn* ‘she waited (for) him there all day’ (lit. ‘she waited him (gen.) there all day (acc.)’); (b) *hún tók honum opnum örmum* ‘she greeted him (dat.) (with) open arms (dat.)’.

A number of verbs take two objects in Icelandic. The following case marking patterns seem to occur. The numbers in parentheses are supposed to be approximate numbers of existing verbs of each type:

- 1 nom. – dat. – acc. (75+): *Ég sagði honum söguna* ‘I (nom.) told him (dat.) the story (acc.)’
- 2 nom. – acc. – dat. (25): *hún leyndi mig því* ‘she concealed it from me’ (lit. ‘she (nom.) concealed me (acc.) it (dat.)’)
- 3 nom. – acc. – gen. (10): *við kröfðum þá þess* ‘we demanded it from them’ (lit. ‘we (nom.) demanded them (acc.) it (gen.)’)
- 4 nom. – dat. – dat. (10): *þær lofuðu mér því* ‘they (nom.) promised me (dat.) it (dat.)’
- 5 nom. – dat. – gen. (15): *þeir óskuðu henni gleðilegra jóla* ‘they (nom.) wished her (dat.) merry Christmas (gen.)’
- 6 nom. – acc. – acc. (2): *bíllinn kostaði mig mikla peninga* ‘the car (nom.) cost me (acc.) much money (acc.)’

Passives, Agreement and Middles

Note the following typical passives: (a) *einhver barði strákana í skólanum* ‘somebody (nom.) hit the boys (acc. pl.) in the school’ vs *strákarnir voru barðir í skólanum* ‘the boys (nom. pl. m.) were (3 pl.) hit (nom. pl. m.) in the school’; (b) *einhver hjálpaði strákunum með heimaverkefnið* ‘somebody (nom.) helped the boys (dat. pl.) with the homework’ vs *strákunum var hjálpað með heimaverkefnið* ‘the boys (dat. pl.) was (3 sg.) helped (nom. sg. n.) with the homework’. In (a) we see that the accusative object in the active sentence corresponds to the nominative subject in the passive sentence. The passive auxiliary *vera* ‘be’ agrees in person and number and the past participle *barðir* ‘hit’ in case, number and gender with the nominative subject. In (b), on the other hand, we see that the dative object in the active sentence corresponds to the dative subject in the passive sentence. Since there is a close relationship between nominative and agreement, as we have already seen, the passive auxiliary verb *vera* no longer agrees with the subject nor does the past participle. Instead we get the unmarked third-person singular of the auxiliary and the unmarked nominative singular neuter form of the participle (which is identical to the supine form). The relation between genitive objects of active verbs, genitive subjects of passive verbs and (non-) agreement in passives follows the same pattern.

The agreement/non-agreement pattern observed here for passives is found in other types of sentences too, such as in predicative constructions like the following: *stelpurnar voru mjög kaldar* ‘the girls (nom. pl. f.) were (3 pl.) very cool (nom. pl. f.)’ vs *stelpunum var mjög kalt* ‘the girls felt very cold’ (lit. ‘the girls (dat. pl. f.) was (3 sg.) very cold (nom. sg. n.)’). The generalization is this: dative and genitive objects of actives ‘stay’ dative and genitive in passives and they do not trigger any agreement and neither do

other dative or genitive subjects (nor accusative subjects for that matter), as we have seen.

Verbs taking two objects vary with respect to passivizability. Verbs that take dative + accusative objects can sometimes have two types of passives, although the passivizability of a given object may depend to some extent on its semantic properties (human vs non-human, definite vs indefinite). Thus we have two possible passives of sentences with the verb *gefa* 'give' in cases like the following: *einhver hefur gefið konunginum þrælana* 'somebody has given the king (dat.) the slaves (acc. m.)' vs *konunginum hafa verið gefnir þrælarnir* 'the king has been given the slaves' (lit. 'the king (dat.) have (3 pl.) been given (pl. m.) the slaves (nom. pl. m.)') vs *þrælarnir hafa líklega verið gefnir konunginum* 'the slaves (nom.) have probably been given (pl. m.) (to) the king (dat.)'. In general, it is easier to passivize an object that refers to a person, for example, a Recipient, than a non-human object or concept. If the Recipient is left out, then the remaining object passivizes freely. Thus we can get the following pattern: *kennarinn hefur lengi kennt börnunum reikning* 'the teacher has long taught the kids (dat.) maths (acc.)' vs *börnunum hefur lengi verið kenndur reikningur* 'the kids (dat.) has (3 sg.) long been taught (nom. sg. m.) maths (nom. sg. m.)' vs *??reikningur hefur lengi verið kenndur börnunum* 'maths (nom. sg. m.) has long been taught (nom. sg. m.) (to) the children (dat.)' vs *reikningur hefur lengi verið kenndur í þessum skóla* 'maths (nom. sg. m.) has long been taught (nom. sg. m.) in this school'. With other types of ditransitive verbs it is apparently impossible to passivize the non-human object (Theme) if the human one (Recipient, Goal) is present but fine if it is left out: *einhver hefur leynt hana þessu* 'somebody has concealed this from her' (lit. 'somebody has concealed her (acc.) this (dat.)') vs *hún hefur verið leynd þessu* '(lit. she (nom.) has been concealed this (dat.))' vs **þessu hefur verið leynd/leynt hún/hana* (lit. 'this (dat.) has been concealed (f./sup.) she (nom./acc.)') vs *þessu hefur verið leynt* 'this (dat.) has been concealed (sup.)'.

Note that if we have a ditransitive verb taking dative and accusative objects and passivize the dative object, as in the example with *gefa* 'give' above, the (former) accusative object shows up in the nominative in the passive and we get agreement with it rather than with the dative subject. This gives rise to the same dative-nominative pattern as we saw in active sentences with the verb *líka* 'like' above (the only difference being that in the passive agreement with the nominative object is obligatory whereas non-agreement is sometimes a possibility in active dative-nominative sentences). The generalization seems to be that if the subject is idiosyncratically marked but the object is not, the object will show up in the nominative case rather than the expected accusative case.

Several types of verbs do not passivize at all. This holds for: (a) most *-st-* verbs: *margir hafa ásælt þessa peninga* 'many (nom.) have wanted this money (acc.)' vs **þessir peningar hafa verið ásæltir/ásældirst ...* 'this money has been wanted ...' (There may be a morphological reason for this, namely that no past participle exists for these verbs.); (b) inherently reflexive

verbs: *María hefur alltaf hagað sér vel* 'Mary has always behaved herself well' vs **María segir að sér hafi alltaf verið hagað vel* 'Mary says that REFL. has always been behaved well' (This can be contrasted with: *María segir að sér hafi alltaf verið hjálpað* (lit.) 'Mary says that REFL. has always been helped'); (c) various verbs that take non-agentive subjects in the active (and these usually cannot occur in the imperative either): *vagnarnir hafa alltaf tekið tuttuguogþrjá farþega* 'the buses have always taken twenty-three passengers (acc.)' vs **tuttuguogþrír farþegar hafa alltaf verið teknir ...* 'twenty-three passengers (nom.) have always been taken ...'; (d) verbs taking cognate objects: *margir sváfu værum svefni* 'many slept a sound sleep (dat.)' vs **værum svefni var sofð ...* 'a sound sleep was slept ...'

In the case of intransitive verbs, on the other hand, we get the so-called impersonal passive with the expletive *það* 'it', which has all the usual characteristics (only occurring in the position immediately preceding the finite verb): *margir hafa áreiðanlega dansað þá* 'many have certainly danced then' vs *það hefur áreiðanlega verið dansað þá* 'people have certainly danced then' (lit. 'there has certainly been danced (nom. sg. n.) then') vs *þá hefur (*það) áreiðanlega verið dansað* 'then people have certainly danced' (lit. 'then has (*there) certainly been danced'). It seems that it is typically verbs that take volitional agents as subjects that allow impersonal passivization. Thus the so-called unaccusative (or ergative) do not: *margir bátar hafa áreiðanlega sokkið þá* 'many boats have certainly sunk then' vs **það hefur áreiðanlega verið sokkið þá* 'there has certainly been sunk then'. Note also that impersonal passivization is impossible for most speakers with verbs that have any kind of NP-object whereas it is fine if the verb takes a prepositional object: (a) *einhver hefur barið hestinn* 'somebody has beaten the horse' vs **það hefur verið barið hestinn* ('lit. there/it has been beaten (sup.) horse-the') – but (b) *einhver hefur slökkt á tölvunni* 'somebody has turned off the computer' vs *það hefur verið slökkt á tölvunni* 'the computer has been turned off' (lit. 'there/it has been turned off computer-the'). It should be noted, however, that impersonal passives of transitive verbs (cf. **það hefur verið barið hestinn*) can frequently be heard in Modern Icelandic child language. It is not possible, on the other hand, to form a 'regular passive' (or pseudo-passive or prepositional passive) with verbs that take prepositional objects. Thus note the following set of sentences: *einhver hefur sofð í þessu rúmi* 'somebody has slept in this bed' vs *það hefur einhver sofð í þessu rúmi* 'there has somebody slept in this bed' vs *þessu rúmi hefur verið sofð í* 'this bed (dat.) has been slept in' vs **hefur þessu rúmi verið sofð í?* 'has this bed been slept in?' In the second example we have the type of impersonal passive we have already seen, whereas the third might look like a 'pseudo-passive' or prepositional passive where the object of a preposition has been passivized. In fact, however, it is an instance of topicalization of the prepositional object. The expletive *það* then disappears as always when something is fronted. We see that the dative *þessu rúmi* 'this bed' is a topicalized constituent rather than

a subject from the fact that it cannot immediately follow the transitive verb in a direct question like the last example. It seems that pseudo-passives of the type *this bed has been slept in* do not exist in Icelandic whereas noun phrases can easily be moved out of many types of PPs by topicalization.

In all the examples of passives above the Agent has been left out. That is typical of Icelandic passives. It is much harder in Icelandic than in English, for instance, to find natural examples of passives with the Agent in a prepositional phrase although these exist: *dyrnar voru opnaðar (af dyra-verðinum)* 'the doors (nom.) were opened (by the guard)'. The 'anti-causative middle' differs from the passive in this respect: *dyrnar opnuðust (*af dyraverðinum)* 'the door opened (*by the guard)'. In general, it seems that the difference between the passive and (this type of) the middle is that in the passive it is assumed that an Agent exists, and it can even be lexically expressed, whereas the middle implies the 'loss' or 'deletion' of the Agent role. It is, however, possible to find instances of 'middle verbs' (or *-st*-verbs) that have a real passive reading with an assumed Agent but these frequently have a marked stylistic value: (a) *fundurinn átti að haldast daginn eftir* 'the meeting was to be held the next day'; (b) *allar vörur staðgreiðist* 'all goods to-be-paid-for-by-cash'; (c) *bakist við vægan hita* 'to-be-baked at moderate temperature'.

Unaccusative or Ergative Features

Icelandic has two types of pairs of verbs where one is transitive, and the other intransitive and takes subjects that are identical to the objects of the transitive member of the pair. These can be called case-preserving and non-case-preserving. Thus in examples like (a) *María kitlaði mig* 'Mary tickled me (acc.)' vs *mig kitlar* 'me (acc.) tickles'; and (b) *þeir hvolfdu bátnum* 'they capsized the boat (dat.)' vs *bátnum hvolfdi* 'the boat (dat.) capsized', the subject of the intransitive member of the pair 'preserves' the case of the object of the transitive member. This does not hold for examples of the following type: (a) *þeir breikkuðu veginn* (lit.) 'the broadened the road (acc.)' vs *vegurinn breikkaði* 'the road (nom.) broadened' and (b) *þau sökktu bátnum* 'they sank the boat (dat.)' vs *báturinn sökk* 'the boat (nom.) sank'. It seems that when we have a non-case-preserving verb the inflection of the unaccusative (or ergative) verb is frequently strong whereas that of the transitive one is weak. This is by no means the rule, though. But we apparently never get this kind of difference in inflection if the pair is case-preserving.

The semantic relationship between active verbs and certain middle or *-st*-verbs is quite similar. The middle verbs, however, do not preserve case. Thus observe the relation between the following transitive verb and its middle (or anti-causative) counterpart: *þeir lokuðu herberginu (viljandi)* 'they closed the room (dat. (intentionally))' vs *herbergið lokaðist (*viljandi)* 'the room (nom.) closed (*intentionally)'. Note also the impossibility of having a volitional adverb with the middle form, since no agentivity is involved.

Word Order, Types of Sentences and Clauses

Word Order in Declarative Sentences

Icelandic exhibits the well-known Germanic verb-second (V2) phenomenon in declarative clauses. Thus if something is preposed or topicalized, the subject will follow the finite verb rather than precede it. Most constituents can be preposed (topicalized) in Icelandic, except the verb phrase: (a) *oft hefur María gefið Haraldi hring á jólunum* 'Mary has frequently given Harold a ring at Christmas' (lit. 'frequently has Mary given ...'); (b) *Haraldi hefur María oft gefið hring á jólunum* (lit. 'Harold (dat.) has Mary frequently given ...'); (c) *á jólunum hefur María oft gefið Haraldi hring* (lit. 'at Christmas has Mary frequently given ...'); (d) **gefið Haraldi hring hefur María ...* (lit. '*given Harold ring has Mary ...').

The discourse function of topicalization is apparently not always the same. In many instances topicalization just gives an already established discourse topic a more prominent (or thematic) position in the sentence. Hence it is frequently quite odd as an out of the blue discourse starter. It can also have a contrastive function and is then accompanied by a contrastive stress. But neither of these functions seems to explain the fact that adverbial phrases are typically very easy to topicalize.

The so-called narrative verb-initial order is an exception to the general verb-second pattern in Icelandic. It is basically a literary phenomenon not used in colloquial speech: *komu þeir þá að stórum helli* 'they came then to a big cave' (lit. 'came they then to big cave'). This type of word order has been referred to as 'narrative inversion' since it is particularly frequent in narrative style. It must be distinguished from two other types of non-interrogative verb-initial clauses, namely the one found in conditional clauses without a conjunction, and the type found in parentheticals of a certain type. These are illustrated in the following examples: (a) *ef hann kemur, fer ég* 'if he comes I go' (lit. '... go I') vs *komi hann, fer ég* (lit. 'come he, go I'); and (b) *Jón hefur, segir María, aldrei verið við kvenmann kenndur* 'John has, Mary says, never been associated with a woman' (lit. 'John has, says Mary, never been with a woman associated'). In the (a) examples we have a preposed conditional clause beginning with the conditional conjunction *ef* 'if'. The word order in the following clause is 'inverted' as always when something is preposed, as shown above. In the second version of that example the conjunction of the preposed conditional clause has been left out and the verb is clause-initial. The (b) example illustrates verb-initial order in a parenthetical clause.

Apparent verb-third order can also be found in main clauses when adverbs of a certain type occur between the subject and the finite verb rather than after the verb: (a) *ég hittí bara Harald svo sjaldan* 'I meet just Harold so infrequently' vs *ég bara hittí Harald svo sjaldan* 'I just meet Harold so infrequently'; and (b) *hann kann einfaldlega ekkert* 'he knows simply

nothing' vs *hann einfaldlega kann ekkert* 'he simply knows nothing'. Here we see that the adverbs like *bara* 'just' and *einfaldlega* 'simply' can either follow the finite verb or precede it. Icelandic adverbs have considerable freedom of occurrence although this varies from one type to another. Thus it is apparently a rather restricted class of adverbs that can occur between the subject and the finite verb as in the examples just given. One possible account would be that these adverbs are cliticized onto the finite verb and thus do not count as separate constituents in these instances.

Some Non-declarative Sentence Types

Direct (*yes/no*) questions typically have verb-initial order in Icelandic and any finite verb can be sentence-initial. The subject then immediately follows the finite verb: (a) *hefur María aldrei gefið Haraldi hring?* 'has Mary never given Harold a ring?'; (b) *borðaði María brauðið?* 'did Mary eat the bread?' (lit. 'ate Mary bread-the?'). The position of the negation in questions follows the same rules as in declarative sentences: if the negation immediately follows the finite verb in a declarative sentence, the subject will intervene between the sentence-initial verb and the negation in the corresponding direct question. If the negation follows, say, the indirect object in a declarative sentence, it normally stays there in the corresponding direct question: (a) *Jón hefur ekki séð heilagan anda* 'John has not seen (the) Holy Ghost' vs *hefur Jón ekki séð heilagan anda?* 'has John not seen (the) Holy Ghost?'; (b) *María gaf Haraldi ekki jólagjöf í fyrra* (lit. 'Mary gave Harold not a Christmas present last year') vs *gaf María Haraldi ekki jólagjöf í fyrra?* (lit. 'gave Mary Harold not a Christmas present last year?'). It is also possible to 'cliticize' the negation on to the sentence-initial finite verb in interrogative sentences: (a) *hefur ekki Jón séð heilagan anda?* 'hasn't John seen (the) Holy Ghost?'; (b) *gaf ekki María Haraldi jólagjöf í fyrra?* 'didn't Mary give Harold a Christmas present last year?' (lit. 'gaven't Mary Harold a Christmas present last year?'). The meaning of these questions is roughly 'Isn't it the case that ...?'

Constituent questions are introduced by *hv*-words like *hver* 'who', *hvernig* 'how', *hvenær* 'when', etc. The verb-second order is observed so that if the *hv*-word is not the subject, the subject will immediately follow the finite verb: (a) *hver hefur sofð í rúminu mínu?* 'who has slept in my bed?' (lit. 'who has slept in bed-the my?'); (b) *hvern kyssti María í trjágöngunum?* 'who (acc.) did Mary (nom.) kiss in the alley?' (lit. 'whom kissed Mary ...?').

Imperative sentences are verb-initial like direct questions. The second-person singular pronoun *þú* 'you' is typically cliticized in a weakened form on to the imperative, as we have seen, but the full form of the second-person singular pronoun can also follow the imperative. Thus we get alternations like the following where the first is more formal: *far ?(þú) nú og gjör (þú) skyldu þína* 'go (imp.) now and do (imp.) your duty' (lit. 'go you now and do (you) duty your') vs *farðu nú og gerðu skyldu þína* (lit. 'go-you now and do-you now duty your'). It is quite unnatural to leave out the second-person singular

pronoun in imperative sentences, except in a second conjunct in sentences like the first one. There is no special imperative verb form for the second-person plural but there it is also possible to use verb-initial sentences with the discourse function of orders or requests. The second-person plural pronoun can be left out: *reynið (þið) nú að gera þetta vel* 'try (2 pl.) now to do this well' (lit. 'try (you) now ...') vs *reyniði nú að gera þetta vel* (lit. 'try-you (pl.) now ...'). The colloquial form of the second-person plural imperative has a cliticized and reduced form of the second-person plural pronoun *þið* on the verb. We have tried to represent this in the second version of the sentence. For some reason, however, this cliticization of the plural pronoun is not represented in Modern Icelandic spelling although the comparable cliticization of the singular pronoun is.

Finite Subordinate Clauses

As illustrated in the section on reflexives, some Icelandic verbs select indicative complement clauses whereas others select subjunctive clauses. It is roughly non-factive verbs of saying, believing etc. that take subjunctive clauses whereas (semi-)factive verbs of knowing, seeing etc. require the indicative: (a) *Jón segir að tunglið sé/*er úr osti* 'John says that the moon is (subj./ind.) made of cheese' (lit. 'John says that moon-the be (subj.) of cheese') vs (b) *Jón veit að tunglið *sé/*er úr osti* 'John knows that the moon is (*subj./ind.) made of cheese'. Note also that in sentences with embedded subjunctive clauses we get the phenomenon known in traditional grammars as the 'sequence of tenses': the tense of the matrix verb determines the tense of the embedded subjunctive verb: (a) *Jón segir að tunglið sé/*væri úr osti* 'John says that the moon is (pres./pret.) made of cheese' (lit. 'John says that the moon be/*were ...') vs (b) *Jón sagði að tunglið *sé/*væri úr osti* 'John said that the moon is (*pres./pret.) made of cheese' (lit. 'John said that the moon *be/were ...'). This does not hold for subordinate indicative clauses: (a) *Jón veit að Haraldur er/var heima* 'John knows that Harold is/was at home' vs (b) *Jón vissi að Haraldur er/var heima* 'John knew that Harold is/was at home'.

With a few verbs or predicates it is possible to select either subjunctive or indicative in the complement clause: *Jón las það í blaðinu að María hefði/hefði komið heim* 'John read it in the paper that Mary had (ind./subj.) come home'. The two possibilities are not synonymous, however, since the truth of the indicative clause is presupposed whereas it is not if the subjunctive is selected. Hence one can continue with *en hún kom ekki heim* 'but she didn't come home' if the subjunctive is selected, but not if the indicative is.

Indirect questions are introduced by *hv-* words. The subjunctive is typically used in the complements of verbs of asking whereas the indicative is found in the complements of knowing, understanding, etc. In the subjunctive clauses we get the same phenomenon of sequence of tenses as illustrated for the *að*-clauses above, but not in the indicative clauses: (a) *María spurði hvort*

*hákarlinn *sé/væri góður* 'Mary asked (pret.) whether the shark was (*pres./pret./subj.) good' vs (b) *María veit ekki hver hefur/hafði sett músina í baðkerið* 'Mary doesn't know who has (pres./pret. ind.) put the mouse in the bathtub' (lit. 'Mary knows not who has ...'). Note that it is not possible in indirect questions introduced by a *hv*-pronoun to add any sort of a complementizer or an extra element after the *hv*-word: *María veit ekki hver *að/*sem hefur gert þetta* (lit. 'Mary knows not who that has done this').

Relative clauses are introduced by the relative complementizers *sem* 'that' or *er* 'that', the latter being more formal and not used in colloquial speech. There is no regular relative pronoun in Modern Icelandic (see the section on the inflection of pronouns above, p. 157). Relative clauses contain a gap that normally cannot be filled with any kind of a (resumptive) pronoun: *þetta er konan sem ég talaði við (*hana) í gær* 'this is the woman that I spoke (ind.) to (*her) yesterday'. There are no special requirements as to tenses and moods in relative clauses as such. Note, however, that if the relative clause is a part of a subjunctive complement, we can get the subjunctive inside it: *Haraldur sagði að það væri María sem hefði gert þetta* 'Harold said that it was (pret. subj.) Mary that had (pret. subj.) done this'.

Finally, there are a number of adverbial clause types that can occur as adjuncts. These are customarily divided into semantically based classes such as temporal clauses, conditional clauses, etc., with each class having its typical set of conjunctions. Some of these conjunctions require a subjunctive in the adverbial clauses whereas others do not: (a) *Jón fer ekki ef þú ferð/*farir líka* 'John doesn't go if you go (ind./subj.) too' vs (b) *Jón fer ekki nema þú *ferð/farir líka* 'John doesn't go unless you go (*ind./subj.) too'.

The general rule is that the verb-second order is observed in embedded clauses in Icelandic (not counting the complementizer or the subordinating conjunction). In that respect there is no difference in word order between main clauses and subordinate clauses in Icelandic (as opposed to the mainland Scandinavian languages and German, for example): (a) *Haraldur hefur aldrei/*aldrei hefur borðað hákarl* 'Harold has never/*never has eaten shark' vs (b) *María segir að Haraldur hafi aldrei/*aldrei hafi borðað hákarl* 'Mary says that Harold has never/*never has eaten shark'. If we assume that the *hv*-word in indirect questions is 'outside' the clause itself, like a conjunction for instance, we can also say that the verb-second order holds in embedded questions in Icelandic: (a) *María spurði hvort Haraldur hefði aldrei borðað hákarl* 'Mary asked whether Harold had never eaten shark'; (b) *María spurði hvað Haraldur hefði aldrei borðað* 'Mary asked what Harold had never eaten'.

Topicalization is also possible within embedded clauses of various types. It varies from one type to another, however, being easiest in *að*-clauses and certain adverbial clauses (such as concessive clauses introduced by *þótt* 'although' and various adverbial clauses introduced by an adverb or PP + *að*) but being virtually impossible in relative clauses, temporal clauses introduced

by *þegar* 'when' and indirect questions introduced by interrogative pronouns. Consider the following, for instance: *María segir að Harald elski hún mest* 'Mary says that Harold she loves the most'; *Stína sagði að bókin í heild væri frekar leiðinleg þótt einstaka kafla gæti hún hugsað sér að lesa aftur* 'Stína said that the book as a whole was rather boring although individual chapters she could think of reading again'; **hann sagðist eiga bíl sem mér gæti hann selt* (lit. 'he said that he had a car that me he could sell'); *?*Skúli ætlar að taka sér langt frí þegar ritgerðinni verður hann búinn að skila* (lit. 'Skúli intends to take a long vacation when the thesis he has turned in'); **ég spurði Stínu hverjum þessa bók hefðum við getað gefið* 'I asked Stína whom this book we could have given'. This indicates that structural properties of clauses are not sufficient to determine whether topicalization will be acceptable within them and that semantic or pragmatic aspects must play a role.

Now note that in embedded clauses that contain a subject gap, such as relative clauses or interrogative clauses or adverbial clauses with impersonal passives or where the (indefinite) logical subject is in non-initial position, etc., it is normally possible to prepose past participles, adjectives, adverbs or particles. This phenomenon is usually referred to as *stylistic fronting* since it is largely confined to literary style. It is even acceptable in the types of clauses where regular topicalization seems impossible, as illustrated in these examples (compare attempted topicalization above): *hann spurði hver selt hefði mér bílinn* 'he asked who had sold me the car' (lit. 'he asked who sold had me the car'); *það fór að rigna þegar farið var af stað* 'it began to rain when people left' (lit. 'it began to rain when gone was from place'); *þetta er keppandinn sem líklegastur er til að vinna* 'this is the contestant who is most likely to win' (lit. 'this is contestant-the who likeliest is to win'). Stylistic fronting also occurs in main clauses, most typically in news report style: *talið hefur verið að maðurinn sé njósnari* 'it has been believed that the man is a spy' (lit. 'believed has been that...'). It has been argued that there is an accessibility hierarchy involved here of roughly the following sort: *ekki* > predicate adjective > past participle/verbal particle. This means that if the relevant clause contains more than one preposable element the negation (*ekki* 'not') is selected over the other types, if there is no negation the predicate adjective is next in rank, etc.

It is in general easy to topicalize out of *að*-complement clauses, even the subjects of these. Topicalization is also possible out of (certain types of) interrogative clauses but in general impossible out of relative clauses and adverbial clauses: (a) *Haraldur held ég að hafi aldrei komið hingað* (lit. 'Harold (nom.) think I that has never been here'); (b) *Guðmund veit ég ekki hvort María hefur nokkurn tíma hitt* 'Guðmundur (acc.) I don't know whether Mary has ever met'; (c) **hringinn er þetta maðurinn sem María gaf* (lit. 'ring-the (acc.) is this man-the that Mary gave'); (d) **Guðmund var ég þar þegar þú hittir* (lit. 'Guðmundur (acc.) was I there when you met'). Note in connection with the (a) example that it is by no means necessary to leave out

the *að*-complementizer, although the *að* can sometimes be left out in the complements of verbs, especially right after the finite matrix verb when a pronominal subject immediately follows the complementizer position: *ég held (að) þú megir fullyrða það* 'I think (that) you can claim that'; *hún veit (að) hann hefur gert þetta áður* 'she knows (that) he has done this before'.

Infinitival Constructions

Most modal verbs select infinitival complements. Some of these have the so-called infinitival marker *að*, even when they are used as auxiliaries, whereas others do not (see above, p. 173): *það mun rigna á morgun* 'it will rain tomorrow'; *það kann að rigna á morgun* 'it may rain tomorrow' (lit. 'it may to rain on morning'); *það vill oft rigna mikið í Reykjavík* 'it tends to rain a lot in Reykjavík' (lit. 'it wants frequently rain a lot . . .'); *það hlýtur að rigna mikið á Amazonsvæðinu* 'it must rain a lot in the Amazon area'. Most of the modal verbs select *að*-infinitives (*munu* 'will', *skulu* 'shall', *mega* 'may', *vilja* 'want' are the exceptions) and so do 'aspectual' verbs like *vera* 'be (progressive)', *fara* 'be going to', *byrja* 'begin', *hætta* 'stop'. All of these have auxiliary-like properties in their epistemic sense but not in the root sense (see above, p. 174).

Typical control verbs, on the other hand, like *reyna* 'try', *lofa* 'promise', *hóta* 'threaten' and *skipa* 'order' for instance, do not have the auxiliary-like properties of modal verbs. They invariably select the *að*-infinitive. Interestingly, we find the same order of verb and sentence adverbial in the infinitival complements of these verbs as we find in finite complement clauses (i.e. with the verb preceding the sentence adverbial) but not in the complements of modal verbs (the definition of modal verb assumed here being 'a verb that has root sense and epistemic sense'): *ég lofa að berja aldrei konuna mína* 'I promise never to beat my wife' (lit. 'I promise to beat never wife-the my') vs **ég ætla að berja aldrei konuna mína* (lit. 'I intend to beat never wife-the my'). Also note that it is totally impossible in Icelandic to insert the adverb between the infinitival *að* and the verb, although comparable placement of adverbs is possible in some other Scandinavian languages: **ég lofa að aldrei berja konuna mína* (lit. 'I promise to never hit wife-the my').

The so-called 'Raising' (or Accusative with Infinitive (ACI) or Exceptional Case Marking (ECM) or NP-movement) infinitives, on the other hand, never have the infinitival marker: (a) *ég tel Harald (*að) hafa kysst Maríu of harkalega* 'I believe Harold (acc.) (*to) have kissed Mary too violently'; (b) *Haraldur virðist (*að) hafa kysst Maríu of harkalega* 'Harold (nom.) seems (*to) have kissed Mary too violently'. Note that in the subject-to-object (or exceptional case marking) example in (a), the logical subject of the infinitive, namely *Harald*, has the accusative case as if it were the object of the verb *telja* 'believe'. Note further that a matrix-oriented adverbial modifier can follow *Harald* in sentences of this sort, suggesting that *Harald* is in some sense part of the matrix clause: *Haraldur taldi mig í barnskap sínum hafa étið*

hákarlinn 'Harold believed me in his foolishness to have eaten the shark'.

Að-infinitives can also be complements of prepositions, as can finite clauses. Thus we have pairs like the following: *ég vonast til þess* 'I hope for that (gen.)' vs *ég vonast til að fá peninga á morgun* 'I hope to get money tomorrow' (lit. 'I hope for to get money on morning'); *hann er gráðugur í þetta* 'he is eager for this (acc.)' vs *hann er gráðugur í að fara* 'he is eager to go' (lit. 'he is eager for to go'); *hann var að hugsa um ferðina* 'he was thinking about the trip' vs *hann var að hugsa um að hann gæti farið* (lit.) 'he was thinking about (it) that he could go' vs *hann var að hugsa um að fara* 'he was thinking about going' (lit. 'he was thinking about to go'). The infinitive in the last example corresponds to a participial or gerundial construction in English, there being no gerunds in Icelandic.

Negation

The adverbial *ekki* 'not' is the normal negation in Icelandic. As a sentence negation it typically occupies the position right after the finite verb as many sentential adverbs do. If there is no auxiliary verb in the sentence the negation can, however, follow the object of the finite verb, especially if the verb is a ditransitive one. This holds for some other sentential adverbs too: (a) *María gaf ekki Haraldü/Haraldi ekki bókina* 'Mary didn't give Harold the book' (lit. 'Mary gave not Harold/Harold not the book'); (b) *hann sá ekki bílinn/bílinn ekki* 'he didn't see the car' (lit. 'he saw not car-the/car-the not'). The first order in example (a) seems to be more marked in the sense that it would probably mainly be used with a contrastive function: not Harold but somebody else (corrective negation). It is difficult to find any such difference between the two orders in example (b).

The word *neinn* '(not) any' is restricted to negative contexts whereas *enginn* 'no (one)' and *einhver* 'some' are used in positive or neutral contexts: *ég á engan/*neinn bíl* 'I have no/* any car' vs *ég á ekki neinn bíl* 'I don't have any car' vs *ég á engan bíl* 'I do not have no car' (= 'It is not the case that I have no car'); *átt þú einhverjar/*neinar málfræðibækur?* 'do you have some/*not any linguistics books?' *nei, ég ekki *einhverjar/neinar* 'no, I do not have *some/any'.

As an affirmative answer to a negative question Icelandic uses the word *jú* whereas *nei* 'no' is a negative answer. The normal *já* 'yes' is used as an answer to positive questions. This system is rather similar to that found in German (*doch* vs *ja*) and the mainland Scandinavian languages (*jo* vs *ja*) but rather different from the Old Icelandic one.

6.5 Lexis

The Modern Icelandic lexicon is relatively free of unassimilated loanwords. Although this aspect is sometimes exaggerated in reports on Icelandic and the language contains a number of loanwords and slang expressions, it is nevertheless true that there is a strong and conscious effort to create new words from Icelandic material for new concepts, for example in science and technology. Many professional societies have their own language committees that meet regularly to discuss proposed neologisms in the field or to try to come up with new ones. These committees will then make word lists and even publish dictionaries, sometimes with the help of *Íslensk málnefnd* (The Icelandic Language Committee). Recent dictionaries of this kind include dictionaries of technical terms related to computers and data processing, psychology, medicine etc.

The methods used in coining new words include translation of the foreign word bit by bit, compounding of existing nouns, derivation by productive derivational suffixes, creation of new roots and assimilation of foreign words to the Icelandic sound and inflectional systems. Sometimes old words are also given new meanings.

Interestingly, only some of the inflectional classes accept new words. For nouns it is mainly these: (i) strong masculine nouns in #-r#, gen. sg. #-s#, nom. pl. #-ar#; (ii) weak masculine nouns in #-i#, nom. pl. #-ar# (quite common); (iii) strong feminine nouns without a nominative singular ending plural either #-ar# or #-ir# (rather infrequent); (iv) weak feminine nouns in #-a# (quite common); (v) strong neuter nouns (quite common). Almost all new verbs add /-a/ to the stem and thus join class 4 of weak verbs.

The following list will give some ideas of the kinds of new words (or new meanings to old words) introduced in the twentieth century: *sími* (m.) 'telephone' (< *síma* (n.) 'thread'); *tölva* (f.) 'computer' (< *tala* 'number'); *útvarp* (n.) 'radio' (*út-* meaning 'out', *-varp* being related to the verb *varpa* 'throw, cast'); *skjár* (m.) 'screen' (originally an old-fashioned window); *eyðni* (f.) 'AIDS' (based on the phonology of the international word but with reference to the Icelandic verb *eyða* 'deplete, destroy', hence the spelling).

The assimilation of foreign words to the Icelandic language invariably involves putting the stress on the first syllable. Thus familiar nouns like *stúdent* and *prófessor* have initial stress and plurals in #-ar#: *stúdentar*, *prófessorar*.

The colloquial language uses a lot of semantically vague 'modal' particles. They usually come immediately after the finite verb and before any sentential adverbs that might occur in the sentence. They can never be preposed or topicalized: (the position of the modal particle is indicated by X in the English translation when no obvious translation offered itself) *hann hefur nú aldrei séð Chomsky* 'he has X never seen Chomsky'; *ég ætla sko ekki að fara þangað aftur* 'I intend X never to go there again'; *þau hafa víst lengi búið saman* 'they have reportedly lived together for a long time'; *þeir verða jú áreiðanlega á*

móti þessu 'they will X certainly be against this'. The last one may be a loan from Danish and hence it is frequently frowned upon by Icelandic language purists.

Finally, observe the following distinction between *þar* and *þarna*: *ég hef aldrei verið þar áður* 'I have never been there before' vs *sérðu stólinn þarna?* 'do you see the chair over there?'. Here the form *þar* 'there' refers to a place that has been mentioned before whereas *þarna* 'there' is used deictically. The form *þar* could not be so used. Among other pairs that show the same morphological distinction one could mention *hér* – *hérna* 'here', *svo* – *svona* 'so', *nú* – *núna* 'now' but here the semantic distinction is much less clear.

Further Reading

For reasons of space, this bibliography only lists books on Icelandic and not papers. For further references the reader is referred to bibliographies in these books, especially in Maling and Zaenen (1990).

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