As Syntax Interfaces with Information Structure: Old Icelandic Non-Canonical Scrambled Orders

This talk reports some findings from my research on word order types, derived by Scrambling and found with double object constructions with one non-finite verb in the corpus of Íslendinga Sögur (1998). The account of Scrambling is launched in an integrated Minimalist syntactic framework (Eythórsson 1995; Haugan 2001; Thráinsson 2001; Epstein & Seely 2006; Wallenberg 2009; Cheng & Corver 2013; Engels & Vikner 2014) and provides convergent support to the claim that Scrambling is an optional displacement operation raising internal Arguments and Adjuncts out of their source positions into phrasally-adjoined targets in the left periphery of vP. Remarkably, while Conservation of C-Command (Wallenberg 2009: 132) bans movement of constituents across c-commanding functional heads, information-structural and semantic factors step in to instigate movement out of the VP domain. The given-before-new-information packaging strategy is the default option with canonical scrambled orders (Lambrecht 1994; Choi 1999; Hinterhölzl & Petrova 2009; Meurman-Solin, Lopez-Couso & Los 2012; Bech & Eide 2014; Biberauer & Walkden 2015), whereby the main findings can be boiled down to the following: pronouns scramble almost obligatorily; definite objects scramble quite freely; indefinite objects scramble only rarely; heavier objects usually remain in the unscrambled position.

Scrambled orders attested in non-canonical V_{fin}-IO(Dat)-$V_{non-fin}$-DO(Acc), V_{fin}-DO(Acc)-$V_{non-fin}$-IO(Dat), V_{fin}-IO(Dat)-DO(Acc)-$V_{non-fin}$ and V_{fin}-DO(Acc)-IO(Dat)-$V_{non-fin}$ constructions are in focus here, with "non-canonical" being reserved for scrambled orders that exhibit some syntactic structure deviations or information structure ambiguities, are of low frequency, and seem to be 'non-optimal' in terms of violating a syntactic constraint or overriding a principle of information structure, cf:

1) ... að hann mun *þeim manni* gefa *dóttur sína*, hvat manna sem hann er, ef að bana yrði orminum, (Ragn 819)
'... that he will give his daughter in marriage to that man, whatever kind of man that be, if he would slay the dragon,'
2) ... ef þeir hefðu hlaupið frá manninum en þeir mættu *grið* gefa *honum*, (Heið 1387)
'... if they had run away from the man so they might give him mercy,'
3) Nú skal veita svör þínu máli, að eg vil *öllum yður grið* gefa *skipverjum*. (Laxd 1564)
'Now I shall give answers to your request that I will give mercy to all of you, shipmen.'
4) Vil eg *það ráð þér* gefa *sem hverjum öðrum* að hann leiti sér þess ráðuneytis ... (Fljót 723)
'I'll give that counsel to you as to anyone else that he should seek for himself this solution …'

In 1) the in-situ DO *dóttur sína* escapes the definiteness effect while the scrambled IO *þeim manni* obeys definiteness but is arguably focussed. In 2) the ex-situ bare nominal DO *grið* is indefinite and the in-situ IO *honum* is an anaphoric pronoun that fails to obey the anti-focality effect. In 3) the non-constituent string *öllum yður* is scrambled along with the indefinite DO *grið*, as the nominal element of the IO *skipverjum* stays in-situ. Left-dislocation of the DO *það ráð* and the non-constituent pronominal element of the IO *þér* in 4) is sensitive to definiteness and anti-focality but the second element of the coordinate IO *sem hverjum öðrum* stays in situ.

I will argue that Scrambling in O(ld) Ice(landic) occurs on the Syntax-Information Structure Interface, and, by corollary that it can be thought of as a type of information packaging syntactic device. The studied interactions of word order and information structure can be explained as interface interactions that license scrambled orders on the basis of their syntactic, information-structural, and semantic properties. Base-generated word order and Scrambling of pronouns favour unmarked interpretation, Scrambling definite phrases is a less marked option than Scrambling indefinite phrases, Scrambling focussed phrases is more marked than Scrambling unfocussed phrases.

Among the conclusions are the following: Non-constituents may also be targeted by Scrambling in OIce; OIce Scrambling may evoke non-canonical information-structural effects: ex-situ XPs (and non-constituents) may be construed in terms of contrastive, non-presupposed, emphatic, focussed interpretations; A possible mismatch between the locus of default sentence focus and the position of the allegedly focalized expression can trigger Scrambling in OIce.

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