Den nye upersonlige/passive konstruktion i islandsk: Oprindelse og udbredelse

The New Impersonal/Passive in Icelandic: Origin and Diffusion

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Outline of the talk

• **Introduction**
  - What is the “The New (Impersonal) Passive” like?
  - Why – and to whom – is it interesting?

• **Some ideas about the origin (and nature) of the NIP**
  - foreign influence
  - a reanalysis of impersonal active/passive constructions

• **Review of previous research on the NIP (mainly diffusion)**
  - Sigríður Sigurjónsdóttir and Joan Maling
  - Finnur Friðriksson
  - IceDiaSyn

• **Predictions for the future – and development in real time**
  - Anton Karl Ingason, Legate and Yang
  - RAUN

• **Concluding remarks**
What is “The New (Impersonal) Passive” (NIP) like?

The Canonical Passive (CanP) in Icelandic:

(1) a. Löggan handtók stúdentana.
  the-cop(N.sg.) arrested(sg.) the-students(A.m.pl.)

b. Stúdentarnir voru handteknir (af löggunni) (CanP A)
  the-students(N.m.pl.) were(pl.) arrested(m.pl.) (by the cop)

Standard (relatively informal) description of the formation of CanP A:
1. patient undergoes “movement” to subject position
2. case conversion: Acc-to-Nom, and (hence)
3. Nom. subject triggers agreement of finite aux. and participle

(2) a. Löggan sleppti stúdentunum.
  the-cops(N.sg.) released(sg.) the-students(D.m.pl.)

b. Stúdentunum var sleppt (af löggunnni) (CanP B)
  the-students(D.m.pl.) was(sg.) released(n.sg.) (by the cop)

Standard (relatively informal) description of CanP B:
1. patient undergoes movement to subject position
2. no case conversion (Dat (and Gen) preserved) and (hence)
3. no agreement
What is the NIP like, 2?

The Expletive Canonical Passive A (ExplCanP A):

(1) a. Það voru einhverjir stúdentar handteknir. (ExplCanP A1)
   there were(pl.) some students(N.m.pl.) arrested(m.pl.)

b. Það voru handteknir einhverjir stúdentar. (ExplCanP A2)
   there were(pl.) arrested(m.pl.) some students(N.m.pl.)

c. *Það voru stúdentarnir handteknir. (cf. a)
   there were(pl.) the-students(N.m.pl.def.) arrested(m.pl.)

d. ?*Það voru handteknir stúdentarnir. (cf. b)
   there were(pl.) arrested(m.pl.) the-students(N.m.pl.def.)

Standard (relatively informal) description of ExplCanP A:

1. patient can undergo “short movement” (cf. a) but does not have to (cf. b).
2. case conversion Acc-to-Nom and (hence)
3. agreement of the finite aux. and the participle (as in CanP A)
4. Definiteness Effect (cf. c and d, typical of expletive constructions)
A digression on Danish

A similarity between Icelandic and Danish:

• Expletive constructions show the Definiteness Effect:
  (i)  a. Der er en mus/*musen/*den i badekarret.
       b. Der blev arresteret en student/*studenten/*han/*ham.

Some differences between Icelandic and Danish:

• There is no agreement in Danish passives:
  (ii) Studenten/Studenterne blev arresteret.

• Danish (like Norwegian, Swedish, English) typically only has one subject position in expletive constructions whereas Icelandic has two (cf. (1a,b) on the preceding slide):
  (iii) a. Der blev arresteret en student.
       b. *Der blev en student arresteret.

(For more on expletive constructions in Icelandic and Scandinavian see e.g. Höskuldur Thráinsson 2007, chapter 6, with references.)
What is the NIP like, 3?

The Expletive Canonical Passive B (ExplCanP B):

(1) a. Það var einhverjum stúdentum sleppt.  (ExplCanP B1)
   there was(sg.) some students(D.m.pl.) released(n.sg.)

b. Það var sleppt einhverjum stúdentum.  (ExplCanP B2)
   there was(sg.) released(n.sg.) some students(D.m.pl.)

c. *Það var stúdentunum sleppt.  (cf. a)
   there was(sg.) the-students(D.m.pl.def.) released(n.sg.)

d. ?*Það var sleppt stúdentunum.  (cf. b)
   there was(sg.) released(n.sg.) the-students(N.m.pl.def.)

Standard (relatively informal) description of ExplCanP B:
1. patient can undergo short movement (cf. a) but does not have to (cf. b).
2. no case conversion and (hence)
3. no agreement
4. Definiteness Effect (cf. c and d)
What is the NIP like, 4?

The NIP corresponding to ExplCanP A:

(1) a. það var handtekið einhverja stúdenta. (NIP A)
there was(sg.) arrested(n.sg.) some students(A.m.pl.)

b. það var( sg.) handtekið stúdentana. (NIP A)
there was(sg.) arrested(n.sg.) the-students(A.m.pl.def.)

c. *það var stúdentana handtekið.
there was(sg.) the-students(A.m.pl.def.) arrested(n.sg.)

Standard (relatively informal) description of NIP A (red = different from ExplCanP A):

1. no case conversion (Acc-to-Nom) and (hence)
2. no agreement of the finite aux. nor the participle
3. also no Definiteness Effect (cf. b)
4. patient cannot undergo (short) movement (cf. c), i.e. not occur in the “higher” subject position.

Ergo: NIP A seems very different from Expletive Canonical Passive A
What is the NIP like, 5?

The NIP corresponding to ExplCanP B (green = OK, red = not OK):

1. There was released some students (D.m.pl.)
2. There was released the students (N.m.pl.def.)
3. *There was released the students (D.m.pl.def.)

Standard (rather informal) description of NIP B (blue = different from ExplP)

1. Patient cannot undergo short movement (cf. c).
2. No case conversion and (hence)
3. No agreement
4. No Definiteness Effect (cf. b)

Note that example a is ambiguous and example b can (for most speakers at least) only be the NIP (cf. below).
What is the NIP like, 6?

Like any other “expletive construction” in Icelandic, the NIP need not begin with the expletive element það. If some element is fronted, the expletive does not show up (this is different from Danish expletive der/det):

(1) a. það var dansað alla nóttina. (impers. pass.)
   there was danced all the-night

   b. Alla nóttina var (*það) dansað.

(2) a. það var barið mig í gær. (NIP)
   there was hit me(A) yesterday

   b. Í gær var (*það) barið mig.
Why is it interesting to study the NIP?

• It appears to be a spontaneous structural change in the syntax (reanalysis or reinterpretation of existing structures) — no obvious source in other languages. Hence it may shed light on the nature of such changes.

• It is apparently quite new (first noticed in late 20th century) and (probably) still “in progress”. It will be interesting for linguists of different persuasions to follow its development. Of particular interest to many is how structural and social forces will interact (cf. below).
The Origin (and Nature) of the NIP

Foreign influence?

• Maling and Sigríður Sigurjónsdóttir (2002, 2012, etc.) argue that the NIP is an active rather than a passive construction and thus more like the Polish -no/to construction, cf. their table (2012:255):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Syntactic property</th>
<th>Pol/Ukr passive</th>
<th>Polish -no/to</th>
<th>Ukrainian -no/to</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>agentive <em>by</em>-phrase</td>
<td>ok</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>ok</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bound anaphors in object position</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>ok</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>control of subject-oriented adjuncts</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>ok</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nonagentive (&quot;unaccusative&quot;) verbs</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>ok</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

S&J argue that the NIP is more similar to the active Polish -no/to construction than to its Ukrainian passive counterpart. **Poles are the largest national minority in Iceland.** So could Polish in Iceland be the source for the NIP? What would historical linguists say if they discovered this in 2115?
The Origin ..., 2

Triggered by the existence of impersonal or expletive active constructions where there appears to be no Definiteness Effect:


(1) a. Bjórinn er búinn.
    the-beer(N.m.sg.def.) is finished(m.sg.)

b. Það er búinn bjórinn.
    there is finished(m.sg.) the-beer(N.m.sg.def.)

(2) a. Tærnar á henni eru svo litlar.
    the-toes(N.pl.f.def.) on her are(pl.) so small(f.pl.)

   ‘Her toes are so small.’

b. Það eru svo litlar á henni tærnar.
   there are(pl.) so small(f.pl.) on her the-toes(N.pl.f.def.)

(1) A Hvað kom fyrir?
   what came for
   ‘What happened?’

B  a. Bíllinn bilaði.
   the-car(N.def.) broke-down

    b. Það bilaði bíllinn.
   there broke-down the-car(N.def.)
   ‘Það bilaði bíllinn.’
Triggered by the existence of impersonal or expletive active constructions where the (indef.) argument (i.e. the subject) can be Acc (so there is no agreement):

- **Psych-verb and fate-verb constructions** (cf. Halldór 2011:166)

  (1) a. það langaði marga íbúa heim.
      there longed(sg.) many residents(A.m.pl.) home
      ‘Many (of the) residents wanted to go home.’

  b. það rak marga íbúa að landi.
      there drove(sg.) many residents(A.m.pl.) to land
      ‘Many (of the) residents drifted ashore.’

  (cf. also the quite common variant:

  (2) %Margir íbúar ráku að landi.
      many residents(N.pl.) drifted(pl.) ashore)
The Origin..., 5

Triggered by the existence of Impersonal/Expletive **Passive** constructions with intransitive verbs:


  (1) a. Það var dansað alla nóttina.
      there was danced all night(A)
      ‘People danced all night/There was dancing all night.’
  
  Cf. also Danish: Der blev danset hele natten.

  b. Það var talað við strákana í gær.
      there was(sg.) talked to the-boys(A.m.pl.def.) yesterday
      ‘People talked to the boys yesterday.’
  
  Cf. also Danish: Der blev snakket med ...

  c. Það var talað um að fara
      there was talked about to go
      ‘People talked about going.’
  
  Cf. also Danish: Der blev snakket om at ...

(1) a. Það var skammað eiththvert barn.  
there was(sg.) scolded(n.sg.) little child( N./A. n.sg.)  
‘A little child was scolded.’

b. Það var hrint einhverjum strák.  
there was(sg.) pushed(n.sg.) little boy(D.m.sg.indef.)  
‘A little boy was pushed.’

**Note:**

There is never any distinction between Nom and Acc in neuter nouns (cf. the a-example) and no difference between “lack of agreement” and “agreement with a neuter singular noun”.
The Origin..., 7

Preliminary conclusion:

- Icelandic has a number of “impersonal” (or expletive) constructions, active and passive, that may very well have served as *structural sources* for the NIP. Some of them are even ambiguous in a relevant sense.
- But the *actuation problem* remains: Why did the NIP not really emerge clearly until late in the 20th century (cf. below)?

Possible solutions to the actuation problem:

- Increased frequency of relevant impersonal constructions serving as sources for the reanalysis (some of them ambiguous) or some other difference in the input?
- Sociolinguistic explanations?
Earliest mentions of the NIP

It was noted in prescriptive columns in Icelandic newspapers around 1980:

Gísli Jónsson in a newspaper column on language preservation 1979: Calls the following example “impoverished child language”:

(1) Það var barið mig í bakið.
    there was hit(n.sg.) me(A m./f.) in the-back

Helgi Hálfdanarson 1982 in a newsp. column on lg. preservation:

(2) Það var sagt honum að fara.
    there was told(n.sg.) him(D.m.sg.) to go
Earliest mentions, 2

*It was noted by scholars around the same time:*

Helgi Bernódusson (1982) in an MA-thesis on impersonal verbs:
(1) a. Það var **hjálpað mér** í skólanum.
     there was helped(n.sg.) me(D m./f.sg.) in the-school
 b. Það var **skilið mig** aftir.
     there was left(n.sg.) me(A m./f. sg) behind

Jón G. Friðjónsson (1989), monograph on verbal constructions:
(2) a. ?Það var **fleygt bókunum**.
     there was thrown-out(n.sg.) the-books(D f.pl. def.)
 b. ?Það var saknað stráksins.
     there was missed(n.sg.) the-boy(G m.sg. def.)
Earliest mentions, 3

Noted by scholars, late 20th century, contd.

Halldór Ármann Sigurðsson (1989) in his dissertation:
(1) Það var kosið hana í gær.
    there was elected(n.sg.) her(A f.sg.) yesterday

(2) a. Það var platað mig.
    there was tricked(n.sg.) me(A m./f. sg.)
 b. Það var hrint mér.
    there was pushed(n.sg.) me(A m./f. sg.)
 c. Það var saknað mín.
    there was missed(n.sg.) me(A m./f. sg.)
Earliest attested examples of the NIP

Sigríður Sigurjónsdóttir and Joan Maling (2001:146) give (1a,b) as the earliest examples they know of:

(1) a. það var bólusett okkur.  (Northern Icel. 1959)
   there was vaccinated(n.sg.) us (A. pl.)

   b. það var gefið mér nammi.  (Western Icel. 1968)
   there was given(n.sg.) me(D.m./f. sg.) candy

Sporadic examples can be found from at least the

(2) a. Hér var tekið þátt í minningarathöfninni.  (1925)
   here was taken(n.sg.) part(A.m.sg.) in the-memorial service

   b. það var gert grein fyrir þessu.
   there was done(n.sg.) account(A.f.sg.) for this
   ‘This was accounted for.’

   (many examples in newspapers from 1920s onward)
The first extensive survey was done by Sigríður Sigurjónsdóttir and Joan Maling (S&J) 1999–2000 (cf. Sigga and Joan 2001, Joan and Sigga 2002, Sigríður S. 2015):

**Method and subjects:**

- Judgment task
- Written questionnaire, two possibilities (cf. next slide)
- Almost 1700 teenagers (15 year olds) from different parts of the country.
- 200 adult controls (mostly 40–80 years old).
An illustration of the tasks in S&J’s study:

**Leiðbeininger:** Settu X í viðeigandi dálk.
Já = Svona getur maður sagt!
Nei = Svona getur maður **ekki** sagt!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Já</th>
<th>Nei</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Það var rekið Ólaf úr skólanum.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Instructions:** Put an X in the appropriate column:

**Yes** = This is something one can say!
**No** = This is something one **cannot** say!
Some reasons to think that S&J’s methodology worked reasonably well:

• their fillers included “obviously grammatical” and “obviously ungrammatical” examples and they weeded out those (actually very few) subjects that gave incoherent answers to examples of this sort

• their results were systematic

• their results have to large extent been replicated by later studies using similar methodology — but also to some extent different methodology (cf. below)
The most striking result obtained by S&J:
• **Up to 70%** of the NIP examples were **accepted by the teenagers** (depending somewhat on sentence type and with some geographical variation, cf. below)
• **Almost all the adults rejected it** (typically only 4–5% of the examples were accepted in each location, cf. below).

**S&J’s interpretation:**
• We have here an instance of “**linguistic change in apparent time**”, i.e. A linguistic change in progress. Also assumed by Anton Karl Ingason, Legate and Yang 2012 and by Höskuldur Þráinsson et al. 2013.

**An important question:**
• Could this be an instance of “**age grading**”? 
**S&J on the geographical distribution:**

Acceptance (% of the examples) of the NIP (adapted from Sigríður Sigurjónsdóttir 2015): (Inner) Reykjavík stands out:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Teenagers</th>
<th>Adults</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inner Reykjavik</td>
<td>26,5</td>
<td>41,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outer Reykjavik</td>
<td>56,5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southwestern Iceland</td>
<td>71,5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Iceland</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Iceland</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northeastern Iceland</td>
<td></td>
<td>57,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northwestern Iceland</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northwestern Fjords</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Iceland</td>
<td>70,5</td>
<td>4,5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
S&J on correlation with parents’ education:

Acceptance of NIP examples (% accepted) and mother’s education (adapted from S&J 2001:142–143, averages for the whole country; high school ≈ ‘gymnasium’ in Danish):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>% Accepted</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>ANOVA F(2, 1541)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>59.9</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>12.997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>55.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>46.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For father’s education the figures are

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>% Accepted</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>ANOVA F(2, 1545)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>59.9</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>6.775</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>55.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>46.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Not entirely clear from S&J 2001 to what extent this accounts for the differences within Reykjavík: Mother’s education alone does not tell the whole story.
S&J on gender differences:

No difference between boys and girls on the average (average acceptance 60.2% for boys, 60.3% for girls)
Finnur Friðriksson


**Method and subjects:**

- A total of 108 subjects from 9 locations (cf. below), divided into three age groups: 16–20, 21–65, 66+ (4 from each in each location)
- Recordings of **spontaneous speech** (44 sessions, approx. 30 hours in all – this was the main source)
- **Written material** from 52 of the participants
- **Some interviews** after the recordings were made.
The locations visited by Finnur (cf. FF 2011:29):

The lines and labels show a common division into 8 areas.
Occurrence of the NIP in FF’s material:

Written material:
• 908 passives in all, only 0.4% of these are the NIP (4 expls.)

Spontaneous speech material:
• 494 passives in all, 2.6% of these are the NIP (13 examples)

Distribution of the spoken NIP examples by age groups:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>16–20</th>
<th>21–65</th>
<th>66+</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% NIP out of all passive examples</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.6% (13 out of 494)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of speakers producing some NIP</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FF’s conclusion on the NIP:
The NIP hadn’t really gained any foothold in the (stable) Icelandic language community at the beginning of the 21st century.

Question:
Does this mean that the acceptance of the NIP by the teenagers in the S&J study was an indication of age grading (i.e. adolescent language) and not of linguistic change in apparent time?
Method and subjects:

- Main method: Written questionnaires: mostly judgments ... but also forced choice between alternatives, fill-ins.
- Structured interviews with some of the subjects a few months later.
- Comparison with corpora in some instances (cf. Ásta Svavarðsdóttir 2013).
- 3x720+ subjects, four age groups (15, 20–25, 40–45, 65–70), aiming for 8 from each group, approx. 25 locations each time. NIP included in the first survey (N = 772).
**Typical format of the written questionnaire:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>já</th>
<th>?</th>
<th>nei</th>
<th>Athugasemdir</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Settu X í viðeigandi dálk: ‘Put an X in the appropriate column.’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>já = ‘yes’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>? =</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nei = ‘No’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eðlileg setning. Svona get ég vel sagt. ‘Natural sentence. I could easily say this.’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vafasöm setning. Ég myndi varla segja svona. ‘Doubtful sentence. I could hardly say this.’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ótæk setning. Svona get ég ekki sagt. ‘Impossible sentence. I could not say this.’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>V76</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>‘Comments’</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ég get ekki komið í kvöld. ‘I cannot come tonight.’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>það var beðið mig að passa krakkana. ‘There was asked me to look-after the children’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Changes from the S&J format:**  
**Context sentences.**  
Three alternatives. Short passage read explaining purpose.
Locations visited in IceDiaSyn:
Generational differences in the acceptance of NIP (average for all the examples tested):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>IceDiaSyn.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>48.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20–15</td>
<td>19.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40–45</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65–70</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Very clear generational differences again (youngest and the two oldest age groups correspond to the age groups in S&J’s study): The acceptance figures for the youngest generation are somewhat lower than those obtained by S&J, but note that the figures are not exactly comparable:

- The subjects in IceDiaSyn had **three choices** (yes, doubtful, no), those in S&J’s study had two (yes, no). More on this below.
Generational differences, 2: “mean grade”

Mean: 3 = accept all examples, 1 = reject all examples.

\[ p = 0.000 \ (r = 0.614, \ F(3,738) = 187.072) \]
Geographical distribution of NIP (teenagers only):

**Inner Reykjavík** still lowest acceptance rate in % ...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Teenagers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inner Reykjavík</td>
<td>25.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outer Reykjavík</td>
<td>61.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southwestern Iceland</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Iceland</td>
<td>49.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Iceland</td>
<td>44.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northeastern Iceland</td>
<td>41.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northwestern Iceland</td>
<td>55.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northwestern Fjords</td>
<td>34.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Iceland</td>
<td>42.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Geographical distribution, teenagers only, 2:
Mean grade (3 = accept all, 1 = reject all)

Significant difference ($p = 0.001, F_{(7, 734)} = 3.542$)
Acceptance of the NIP by teens in Inner and Outer Rvk:

Significant difference: $r = 0.500$, $p = 0.013$ (N 32)
Correlation with *mother’s education* (teenagers only):

Weakly significant: \( p = 0.034 \) (\( F_{2, 185} = 3.441 \))

(Not within Reykjavík: \( p = 0.107 \) (\( F_{2, 19} = 2.524 \)); too few subj.)
Correlation with father’s education (teenagers only):

Not significant: $p = 0.144 \ (F(2, 178) = 1.957)$
Educational levels within Reykjavík:

• There is **no significant difference in the education level of adult subjects** from Inner Reykjavík and elsewhere in the Reykjavík area or in outer regions of Reykjavík proper.

• If you just look at the education level of the **mothers of the young participants** (the teenagers) in Reykjavík proper, **the education level of the mothers in Inner Reykjavík is significantly higher** ($r = -0.552$, $p = 0.008$, $N = 22$). There is less difference in the educational level of the fathers ($r = -0.382$, $p = 0.087$, $N = 21$).
Inner and Outer Reykjavík:

The encircled area is the older part of town, Inner Rvk.
More on education and acceptance of the NIP:

- There is a significant correlation between educational level of adult subjects (age groups 2, 3 and 4) and their acceptance of the NIP examples: Higher educational level, less likely to accept the NIP

Pearson's correlation (partial, controlling for age among the adults): $r = -0.286, p = 0.000$;

ANOVA $F_{(2, 246)} = 11.815, p = 0.000$
S&J, FF and IceDiaSyn

*Interim summary:*

- All studies found **clear generational differences**.
- FF found **very few examples of the NIP** in his spontaneous *speech* material and the examples of writings he collected.
- S&J and IceDiaSyn found **significant differences between Inner and Outer Reykjavík w.r.t. acceptance of the NIP by teens**.
- IceDiaSyn found **clearer regional differences** than S&J.
- S&J found significant correlations between acceptance of the NIP and the *educational level of the teenagers’ parents*. In IceDiaSyn there was a weakly significant correlation with the *mothers’ education* on the national level (although not within Reykjavík (too few subjects knew about their mother’s educ.).
- To the extent that adults accept the NIP at all, they are **more likely to do so the lower their educational level**.
Anton Karl Ingason, Legate and Yang

Anton, Legate and Yang (2012, henceforth ALY):

Their premisses:
• The NIP is spreading rapidly (cf. the generational differences found by all researchers, indicative of “linguistic change in apparent time”)
• The NIP is spreading “at the expense of the functionally equivalent CP”

Their prediction:
• The NIP will spread as predicted by a steep S-curve and will have ousted the CP by 2050. They employ a mathematical model designed by Yang (cf. e.g. Yang 2002).
Anton, Legate and Yang (ALY) further suggest (2012:93) that (my emphasis):

- “there is a reason to believe that the [NIP] change is a particularly good candidate for a type of variation that is not sensitive to social evaluation”

Base this on Labov and Harris (1986:21):

- Abstract linguistic structure has little or no social impact on members of the community. The interface of language and society is narrow, and primarily on the surface: the words and sounds of the language.

Cf. also Anton Karl, Einar Freyr and Joel Wallenberg 2012 on the OV to VO change in the history of Icelandic.
But is the NIP likely to be insensitive to social pressure?

• It was soon noticed (and maybe first and is often commented on) by “language preservers” (cf. above).

• According to Finnur Friðriksson (2011:43), his subjects were more negative in interviews towards the NIP than other innovations he studied (Dative Sickness, Extended Progressive ...).

• The NIP is fought against in schools (although the teachers cannot really explain what it is).
IceDiaSyn and S&J

**But how rapidly is the NIP really spreading?**

We can compare the results IceDiaSyn to those of S&J more carefully.

IceDiaSyn was partially a “trend study” building on S&J’s findings for the NIP since IceDiaSyn included comparable age groups:

- teenagers again (15 year olds, as in S&J’s study)
- adults (over 40 as in S&J’s study)
- subjects from the same generation (now some 6 years older, included in the 20–25 year group)
IceDiaSyn and S&J, 2

Detailed comparison of IceDiaSyn and S&J:
Columns 1–4 = different age groups in IceDiaSyn
Column 5 = the teenagers in the study by S&J
• green (top of column) = % of negative judgments
• blue (bottom of column) = % of positive judgments
• red (middle of column) = % of “questionable”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% Nei</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Vafasöm</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Já</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Den sociolingvistiske studiekreds
KU, 21. april 2015
Höskuldur Práinsson
Islands Universitet
Comments on the comparison:

- The acceptance rate of the teenagers is roughly the same in the two studies (more on this below):
  - IceDiaSyn: 47% positive judgments + 18% questionable judgments
  - S&J: 57% positive judgments (their study only had ‘yes’ and ‘no’)

- The NIP has not spread to the two oldest generations.

- But: The acceptance rate by the second youngest age group in IceDiaSyn is much lower than expected (only 17% positive, 13% questionable) since this is (partially) the same generation as the one S&J tested (where we had 57% positive judgments of the NIP examples).
Three possible explanations of the observed differences:

• Teenagers are in general more likely than adults (and post-adolescents) to accept examples in studies like this. Their acceptance does not tell us much about their use.
• What S&J found was evidence for age grading, not change in apparent time, so the NIP is not really spreading (cf. also FF’s results)
• The NIP is indeed spreading but much more slowly than ALY assumed (and predicted) because what S&J found was an “adolescent peak” (more on this below)
The teens were not generally more permissive in IceDiaSyn (cf. Höskuldur Þráinsson et al. 2013).

Indefinite alienable possession
(e.g. hár mitt lit. “hair my”)

Agreement with Nom. Object
(e.g. henni líkuðu gjafirnar
“her(D sg.) liked(pl.) the gifts(N pl.)”
Confirmation of the judgments in an interview task in IceDiaSyn:

Rewording task – instructions and model sentence:

Einhver hlýtur að vera heima.
someone must be at home

“Reword this by starting with það ‘there’ or það var ‘there was’ or það voru ‘there were’ — and you can leave out the first word of the sentence.”
Rewording, contd.: Some of the examples

(1) Nokkrar flugur voru í súpunni.
   some flies were in the soup
   → Það voru nokkrar flugur í súpunni.
   there were(pl.) some flies(N.pl.) in the soup

(2) Fólkinu var bjargað úr eldsvoðanum.
   the-people(D) were saved from the-fire
   → Það var(sg.) bjargað(n.sg.) fólkinu(D.pl.) úr eldsvoðanum.
   there was saved the people from the fire

(3) Honum var hrósað fyrir góða frammistöðu.
   him(D) was praised for good performance
   → Það var hrósað(n.sg.) honum(D.sg.m.) fyrir góða frammistöðu.
   there was praised him for good performance.

Those who had rejected the NIP could not reword (2) and (3).
To find out whether the NIP is just “adolescent language” whether it is a “change in progress” we did a real time study: “Real time change in Icelandic phonology and syntax” (RAUN, 2010–2012):

- Mostly a panel study reinterviewing /retesting subjects that participated in previous projects,
- The syntactic part involved retesting 197 speakers who participated in S&J’s original study and come from different parts of the country.
- The retesting included 6 typical NIP examples tested in exactly the same way (except that context sentences were included this time). In the part reported on here, the subjects could only answer “yes” and “no” (not “?”) as in the original NIP study.
More on the questions asked in RAUN:

• Is the NIP just “adolescent language”, meaning that what S&J and IceDiaSyn found was thus just evidence for age grading, as Finnur Friðriksson (2008, 2011) implied, and not change in apparent time?

• Or can the difference between S&J and IceDiaSyn be interpreted as evidence for an “adolescent peak” (cf. e.g. Labov 2001:106, passim; Tagliamonte and D’Arcy 2009).

• Does “Inner Reykjavík” still have a special status as the place where the NIP is least accepted?
**Comparison of the judgments of 197 speakers 1999 & 2012:**

- **Mean Scores (1 = accepts all, 3 = rejects all (note the reversal!)):**
  - S&J 1999: 1.94
  - RAUN, same speakers 2010–2012: 2.58
    - Speakers who accept fewer NIP expls. 2012 than 1999: 71% (140)
    - Speakers who get the same “mean grade” 1999 and 2012: 23% (46)
    - Speakers who accept more NIP expls. 2012 than 1999: 6% (11)

- **Breaking down the numbers:**
  - Speakers who reject all relevant NIP examples 2012: 50% (99)
  - Speakers who reject all relevant NIP examples 1999 and 2012: 15% (30)
  - _ .. _ who reject all relevant NIP expls. 1999 but accept some 2012: 2.5% (5)
  - _ .. _ who reject all relevant NIP expls. 1999 but accept all 2012: 0% (0)
  - Accept all 1999 and 2012: 0.5% (1)
  - Accept all 1999 but reject some 2012: 10% (20)
  - Accept all 1999 but reject all 2012: 3% (6)
Most of the speakers accept fewer NIP examples 10 years later (when they are approx. 25 years old vs. 15 years old).

Still, relatively few of the “NIP-positive” have completely “outgrown the habit”: Only 35% (69) who accepted some NIP examples reject all of them now.

The results confirm the conclusion of IceDiaSyn that speakers typically do not acquire the NIP after the acquisition age (only 5 speakers who rejected all the examples in 1999 accept some now).

But how about age grading vs. adolescent peak?
Adolescent peak and the S-curve:

• It has often been observed that linguistic innovations are “most popular” among adolescents (age range varies somewhat), i.e. more popular than among both younger speakers and older speakers (cf. e.g. Labov 2001:169ff. and passim, Tagliamonte and D’Arcy 2009, etc.). This is commonly referred to as the adolescent peak.

• The so-called S-curve seems to be a commonly valid description of the diffusion of various kinds of innovations, including linguistic ones (cf. e.g. Kroch 2001:719ff., Blythe and Croft 2012).
Post-adolescent troughs should smooth out the S-curve:

Adolescent peaks, P1, P2, P3 ... Post-adolescent troughs ... T3, T4, T5 ...
Important points expressed by the S-curve figure:
• Even though T1 is lower than P1 and T2 is lower than P2, etc., P2 should be higher than P1, P3 should be higher than P2, etc. Similarly, T2 should be higher than T1, T3 should be higher than T2, etc. Otherwise there will be no diffusion in the linguistic community.

Important question:
• Does this (i.e. P2 > P1 ..., T2 > T1 ...) hold for the diffusion of the NIP in the Icelandic speech community? If it does, then the NIP is gaining ground, if not, then the NIP is (still) an instance of “adolescent language” and what S&J and IceDiaSyn discovered is age grading and not change in apparent time.
Comparison of “mean scores” in S&J 1999, IceDiaSyn 2006 & RAUN 2012 (where 1 = accepts everything, 3 = rejects everything and we are comparing scores for same or maximally similar examples):

Mean score for P1 (adolescents 1999): 1.94
Mean score for P2 (adolescents 2006): 1.90
Mean score for T1 (post-adolescents 2006): 2.47
Mean score for T2 (post-adolescents 2012): 2.50

Possible conclusions:
• The NIP is (still) just “adolescent language”
• We are (still) at the very bottom of the S-curve (since the NIP is a relatively recent innovation), hence very slow diffusion.
Some sociolinguistic points from RAUN:

Inner and Outer Reykjavík:
- Mean grade for those who grew up in Inner Reykjavík: 2.67
- Mean grade for those who grew up in Outer Reykjavík: 2.71
  This difference is obviously not statistically significant (p = 0.75)

Correlation with education:
- There is a medium strong and statistically significant correlation with education of the subjects now, i.e. the more educated speakers are less likely to accept the NIP now (r = 0.340, p < 0.001)
Concluding remarks

- The distribution of the NIP suggests that it is “a real linguistic innovation” (or “real change” in the sense of Hale 2007 e.g.) in that it seems to be acquired during the acquisition period and does not spread freely across generations like typical changes in frequency of usage do (e.g. the Extended Progressive also studied in IceDiaSyn).

- But there is a lot we do not really understand about its actuation and diffusion:
  - Why did the NIP suddenly gain ground in adolescent language towards the end of the last century (the actuation problem)?
  - Why is the NIP not spreading faster than it is — e.g. not as fast as ALY predict? What is the reason for the post-adolescent trough? Can negative attitude have this kind of effect on syntax?
References


References, 2


References, 3


References, 4


