

Explaining language change: A three step process

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1 Introduction

The aim of this paper is to present diachronic changes in general in terms of the conditions of first language acquisition. We will make a clear distinction between I-language changes and E-language changes; we treat E-language changes as changes in the trigger experience, the input available to the child during language acquisition, paving the way for a possible I-language change, that is, formal change in the grammar that takes place with a new generation acquiring the language.

As recent generative theory postulates universal principles of grammar formation rather than characterizing the acquisition of language as the product of general cognitive growth, the task of approaching diachronic changes differs greatly whether we take a generative point of view or not. Within generative linguistics, the general view is that linguistic changes take place between two generations, that is with a new generation acquiring the language on the basis of the parents' output. Hence, in search for an understanding of diachronic changes, it is important to try to understand how children acquire their native language.

There are three basic questions involved in the generative approach that all focus on the connection between language and mind:

- (1)
 - a. what are the units of human languages?
 - b. what is it about human minds that gives us this special ability to master languages?
 - c. how do children learn languages?

We can rephrase these questions with regard to the learnability issue in particular, as shown in (2) (cf. Chomsky 1986:3, 1988:3 and 133).

- (2)
 - a. what is language competence?
 - b. how do children acquire language competence?
 - c. how do children use their language competence?

As noted by Guðmundsdóttir (2000), the answer to the first question is based on language description. We must have a description of the surface phenomena of the language in order to be able to predict anything about the language knowledge (language competence) it is based upon. The second question is the famous *Plato's problem*: How do children acquire so much, so fast, on the basis of limited evidence? (Chomsky 1986:xxv-xxvii). The Principles and Parameters approach provides us with the following solution of *Plato's problem*:

- (3)
 - a. Universal principles need not be learned
 - b. The child needs to learn the setting of the parameters which vary across languages
 - c. In cases where a single parameter has effects on a variety of different properties of the language, hard-to-observe properties of the language could be learned by based on easy-to-observe properties

Understanding and performance is the answer to the third question: we must know what process takes place in the human mind when we speak and when we interpret what other people say (Chomsky 1986:4, 1988:93ff, 135-136, 147-152). Since we only have an indirect access to language competence, we must look for answers to the questions in (2a-c) through language performance.

The central question that we have to ask is whether there is a reason to use generative grammar as a model when approaching diachronic change. Diachronic linguists should ask the same questions as those put forward by Chomsky in (2a-c) in addition to questions related to the diachronic perspective. We will see that studies on diachronic change can help us to explain and thereby understand the language faculty: if we fail to understand how and why innovations take place in languages, then we fail to understand both language changes and language competence, or at least how it is acquired.

Diachronic linguists can describe language structure with the *same methods* and the *same ideas* as generative synchronic linguists: we can describe the grammar as it was before and after a certain change. Historical syntax is very much like comparative synchronic syntax: Different I-languages are analyzed and compared. Thus, historical syntax is really a kind of comparative syntax, executed along the *time*-dimension. Of course, this is not the whole story. We certainly need some additional tools to describe and not least understand how and explain why the change took place. We need to locate diachronic changes while taking language competence into consideration, that is, explain the change on the basis of this competence, how we use it and how we acquire it.

The main task here is to compare different systems (grammars) and explain the difference. Hence, we need to have knowledge of two (or more) synchronic stages. In order to know what changed between stage I and stage II, we need to know what these two stages were as synchronic stages. We can divide the task of diachronic linguists into three parts:

- (4) a. describe a series of synchronic stages
- b. compare a series of synchronic stages
- c. explain the difference

It now becomes important to make a distinction between the two notions grammar and language, hence we take GRAMMAR to be a system in people's mind/brain (language competence; I-language), but we take LANGUAGE to be an organized system that people use in their communication (language performance; E-language). We can describe the different approaches as treating diachronic changes as a) a change in language competence (grammar change), or b) a change in language performance. In the latter case, we would take the language to be a historical phenomenon (E-language), focusing on the history of the language: *what* happened, *where* and *when*. Unlike grammar change, a change in language is dependent on *time*. Change in language is a process that takes place between two different times. The change has its beginning, course of development, and end. It is the journey of a change in time and space through the language community. In the former case, on the other hand, we focus on *how* language competence changed and *why*. Grammar change means that in the mind/brain of some language user, the language competence took a different form than it has in the mind/brain of other

language users (cf. Hale 1996:9-15). We may also view the distinction, as for example Lightfoot (1999) does, between the two types of change as one between abrupt (grammar change) and gradual (language change), both types dependent on time, but of course in two different ways.

It is usually assumed that the grammar is fixed (the parameters have been set) before the speaker's adulthood. It is thus necessary to emphasize that a language change does not occur by a child (speaker) changing its grammar; the change in *grammar* takes place from one generation to another. However, it is necessary to assume either some changes in *language* during one generation, or simply a language change in the linguistic community, for instance a gradual change in usage, which then leads to the 'new' input for the next generation. Otherwise the input of the next generation will be the same as that of the previous one, resulting in identical grammars.

We argue that it is natural to expect grammar changes to take place where there is no obvious connection between interpretation of the output (the E-language) and the grammar. Grammatical phenomena cannot be acquired correctly unless they are clearly reflected by language performance. When a certain phenomenon has survived through many generations, it must have been reflected clearly in the output. Then, if we note that it has changed, something in the language performance of the previous generation must have changed, and thereby paved the way for a new interpretation. We assume that innovation leading to linguistic variation in the Primary Linguistic Data (PLD) and gradual changes in PLD play a central role in the explanation here. Hence, questions about acquisition are important for any approach to an understanding of the causes of linguistic change. It is clear that the immediate cause of a

parameter change must lie in some alternation in the PLD. Change in PLD may itself be the result of some antecedent change, such as the loss or weakening of overt morphologically motivated alternations in frequency, or perhaps simply arising as a chance fluctuation in frequency.

Finally, we can ask whether gradual changes within the E-language really can pave the way for an acquisition-based I-language (grammar) change or whether changes in usage may also be regarded as changes of I-language. Chomsky (2000: 32) claims that “changes in usage ... may in fact be marginal changes of I-language, or changes in belief systems, here construed as (narrowly described) C[omputational]-R[epresentational] systems of the mind, which enrich the perspectives and standpoints for thought, interpretation, language use and other actions ...”. That is, can we assume substantial changes in the E-language, without there being any changes in the I-language? The traditional view here is namely that changes in the E-language reflect changes in the I-language (thus, such concepts as grammar competition, cf. Kroch 1989a,b). This leads us to the question of what exactly the E-language then is, or whether it is indeed real. Our answer is that the E-language must be something real as it contains the *cues* of the language. This in turn leads, for instance, to questions like: Is what constitutes a cue dependent on statistical properties of the E-language? Is there a universal set of cues (like there is a universal set of categories), the child is scanning the input for? Or are cues relational properties of input data, such that what counts as a cue in one language, is not a cue for the same phenomena in another language? What is the relationship between what counts as a cue and maturation? Which principles influence what constitutes a potential, a relevant, or actual cue?

How complex can cues be, etc.? (Hinterhölzl, p.c.). We will not attempt to answer these questions here, but note that Lightfoot (1999) does not make the crucial distinction between the notion of cues and the notion of parameters, which weakens his point. Cues are fragments of the trigger experience a learner is exposed to, whereas parameters are something different: they are abstract properties of grammars. Lightfoot never says explicitly that there is a difference between the two concepts.

2 Explaining grammar change

2.1 Introduction

In this section, we will approach the causality of change; that is, *why* linguistic change occurs in the first place and *why* one change takes place instead of another. Furthermore, we will focus on the distinction between grammar (parameter) change, and the changes in the linguistic environment (PLD) that precede a parameter change.

It is a well-known assumption that a child does not inherit a certain parameter setting from its parents, nor does it have a direct access to the *grammar* of the older generation. Instead, the child generates its grammar on the basis of the language the older generation produces, that is, their output. Consider the model in (5) (cf. e.g. Andersen 1973:767; Lightfoot 1979:148).

(5)	Older generation	Younger generation
	Grammar 1	Grammar 2
	↓	↓
	Output 1	Output 2

As indicated in (5), there is no direct connection between the two grammars; the grammar itself can thus not be transferred directly. How then is a grammar change possible? Grammar 1 (the parent's I-language) generates Output 1 (the parent's E-language) and the younger generation generates Grammar 2 (their I-language) on the basis of Output 1, and Grammar 2 further generates Output 2 (the child's E-language). However, the question of why there should be any difference between Grammar 1 and Grammar 2 and between Output 1 and Output 2 is still unanswered.

According to Lightfoot's (1979, 1991) theory of language change, a change in syntax consists of an abrupt grammatical reanalysis within the new generation acquiring the language.¹ This approach assumes a rich, highly structured Universal Grammar, consisting of principles and parameters that are set by triggers in the language learner's linguistic environment. More importantly for our purpose, the approach assumes language change and language acquisition to be intimately connected: The child, due to some specific properties of the input at a given historical period, acquires a grammar which differs in at least one parameter value from that characterizing the linguistic competence of the previous generation. Lightfoot assumes the learning stage to be the place where grammar change occurs. Two different grammars may have a very similar underlying form, but different motivation and different transformations to derive their surface forms. The transparency principle restricts what a grammar can look like; if the grammar

¹ A resetting of parameters in an individual's grammar is necessarily abrupt, whereas innovation in a speech community is gradual (innovations gradually spread in a language community). Hence, *language* change is gradual whereas *grammar* change is abrupt.

becomes too complicated, it is no longer learnable. The position that language change takes place during the process of language acquisition is also clearly expressed by Clark and Roberts (1993:300): “the logical problem of language change cannot be separated from the logical problem of language acquisition; one of the claims of this article is that the former problem is a subcase of the latter”.

Although there seems to be a general agreement that language acquisition and language change are closely related, it has not been shown explicitly how this works. There are still some fundamental questions that have not been answered. Of course, some attempts have been made to explain the connection between language acquisition and change. Lightfoot (1979, 1991, 1999) develops several different approaches and Clark and Roberts (1993) is another attempt. One solution to the relationship has to do with markedness and the idea that children have a tendency to analyze the language in as simple a way as possible, although, of course there does not seem to be a global move towards simplicity.

Contra this view, Lightfoot (1999) outlines a cue-based acquisition and its link with language change. A fundamental point is that we cannot expect to find internal explanations for change, that is, tendencies for languages to simplify or to grammaticalize, despite the fact that historical linguists have persisted in those notions from the nineteenth century right up until the present day. Rather, change can only happen when there is a shift in primary linguistic data; that is, a given child will acquire a different grammar from its mother if and only if it is exposed to different input.

Another related task is to investigate the connection between language acquisition and change, within the current generative

framework. It is generally assumed that it is possible to use the generative framework to analyze the grammar not only of one language but also the differences between the grammars of two or more (comparable) languages. Furthermore, language change is also simply analyzed as a consequence of a new setting of a given parameter. However, we will show that the generative framework can only provide us with tools for the descriptive part, and that it does not give us an answer to the question of *why* the change really took place. Of course, this leads to the question of whether changes are necessary directly for system-internal reasons, or whether some external (social) factors must always trigger the change. If so, how does language acquisition come into the picture? (Kroch 1989b: 201) claims that “When a language changes, it simply acquires a different grammar. The change from one grammar to another is necessarily instantaneous and its causes are necessarily external”. Weerman (1989) also emphasizes that visible changes in the language are necessarily caused by factors outside the grammar. Even in the case of external factors, acquisition is arguably very important for change. In the spirit of Longobardi (2001) we will argue that syntactic change is not primitive. In other words, syntactic change should not arise unless it can be shown to be *caused*, either as a consequence of other types of change (phonological/morphological), or other syntactic changes. Furthermore, we will argue that external factors may cause small changes in the E-language (PLD), and that this may lead to a major change (grammar change) in the next generation’s I-language.

There is also a fundamental question about linguistic change that does not get posed very often; namely: How accurate is language learning in the ideal case of a monolingual community without outside contact? If it is very accurate, then all change

must come from outside the grammatical system. If it is imperfect, there is room for internally generated change. The notion “outside the system” is, of course, complex. For example, phonetic pressures could be thought of as external to the phonology, and phonology and morphology are external to the syntax.

In order to understand grammar changes we have to try to find answers to three basic questions:

- (6) a. what can change?
- b. how does it change?
- c. why does the change take place?

In this paper, we will mainly focus on the last question here, namely, why do grammar changes take place? The answer is, at least partly, to be found in the misparsing of information between generations. However, we also have to answer why this misparsing took place and how we might be able to explain the fact that a certain grammar that has survived for many centuries (many generations) suddenly starts to change. In our search for an answer, we will look at the interpretation process concealed in first language acquisition, along with children’s ability to select from and reject information they receive through the language performance (output) of adults and the possible relationship of this selection with grammar changes.

If we assume that language competence is partly innate (language faculty) and partly build up during language acquisition, then grammar change must be a change of parameter values in the language competence (I-language). Grammar change takes place when a new phenomenon arises, disappears or transforms into a different form. This

phenomenon is a part of the language competence of a certain language user (an individual). Hence, we must ask why the change took place in the language competence of this person acquiring the language on the basis of the output of the previous generation.

Various explanations that have been put forward in recent years about diachronic changes do not strictly speaking explain the *source* of the innovation but rather its *spreading*. A possible reason for this is that diachronic linguists don't have a long tradition for searching for answers to their questions in the spirit of generative grammar. The most important factor here is the generative assumption that language structure is knowledge (competence) in the brain/mind of individual speakers: If language structure is within our brain, then diachronic changes must be connected to it and the spreading of changes, perhaps taking place through many generations, must therefore be something different. We must therefore seek to cut off the connection between an innovation in the language system, on the one hand, and the spreading of this change through the language community, on the other hand. More exactly, diachronic change must involve a three step process:

- Innovation of variation (E-language change)
- Diffusion
- Acquisition based grammar change (I-language change)

In the spirit of Longobardi (2001), we take the first process to involve *historical* (or *genetic*) explanation, typical for evolutionary phenomena and often exemplified by the results of the historical-comparative method in linguistics, and the third

process to involve a *theoretical* explanation, typical for current generative grammatical research.

Explanations based on people's social position, for example, must be connected to spreading rather than the source of the change. A confusion of this view can be seen in Aitchison (1991:173), where she claims that children have little of importance to contribute to language change because babies do not form influential social groups.² Explanations for language changes based on topographical information, transportation, geographical isolation, etc. must also take to the prerequisite for the spreading of changes that already have arisen. Note, however, that the changes that have arisen need not be changes in anyone's I-language. It can be innovative language use, borrowed forms, etc.; that is, changes in the E-language. We will get back to this point.

2.2 *Simplicity*

Let us now turn back to the question of why grammar changes take place. A child acquiring her first language gets information about the language competence through the language performance of the previous generation. But why does the child draw the conclusion that the language performance is based on a different I-language than it really is? If we would assume, as many linguists have done, that grammar changes occur because children seek to simplify their language, we would have an answer to our question. Then we would claim that children seek to change their grammar on purpose, that is, they are able to see

² However, this may still be correct with regard to the *initial* change in the PLD, depending on which age group is the most important source of the PLD. If we assume this to be the *parents'* E-language, then Aitchison is presumably right. Older children, e.g. siblings, can play an important role in shaping the trigger experience.

the ‘right’ solution but they choose another one that is simpler. However, it might be possible to also assume that the children actually *think* that they are acquiring the language ‘in the right way’ (given that they think that what is simplest is also ‘right’): They do not intend to seek a different solution from their parents but they draw wrong conclusions about what is right. See also the discussion in Guðmundsdóttir (2000).

It is quite possible that we cannot discuss the nature of grammar changes without using words like *simple* and *easy* but we have to be careful in using these terms. There is, for example, a great difference between claiming that *children seek to simplify the grammar* and claiming that they seek to find the *simplest solution* to produce the same output as their parents. In other words, we reject the possibility that children seek to simplify the E-language, and instead argue that they may seek to simplify the algorithm/parsing process. The main reason for this is that, if we assume that grammar changes take place because something in the grammar had been too complex or difficult, then, naturally, we have to ask the question of how this complexity was established in the language in the first place and how it survived in the language, perhaps for many centuries, without anyone complaining. At the same time, we have to ask why we find all this complexity in our language if it would be a real option for children acquiring their language to simplify whatever they find difficult. Hence, the question is: why didn’t we already arrive at the maximally simple grammar millennia ago?

Of course, it isn’t always easy to see what a simplification is and what isn’t. It is also quite possible that a grammar change that looks like a simplification can lead to increased complexity elsewhere in the grammar and thereby even cause a change

there. A complex rule in phonology might for example be able to simplify the inflection and a simplification of the inflection might lead to increased complexity of both the phonological system and the syntax.

By looking at human language in general, we see that children acquiring their first language are capable of learning unbelievably complex phenomena. Why should we assume that sometimes they give up? It is probably more correct, as Guðmundsdóttir (2000) notes, to assume that they never give up and that they don't stop to try until they are certain that they have reached their goal. However, then we also have to ask what this means in the context of P&P theory. It can only mean that a parameter system has a built-in notion of stability, and once stability is attained, it no longer changes. One obvious notion of stability is the setting of all parameters; another might be pure maturational. And it is also natural to assume that this goal is to be able to produce the same output as their parents, not a simpler one.

Although we reject here the hypothesis that a certain grammatical phenomenon can be too complex and that some kind of an intention to simplify the grammar is involved in grammar changes, it might not be right to reject the terms *simple* and *complex*. If the phenomena of the grammar can differ with respect to complexity, it is indeed a very interesting research topic to investigate whether there is a connection between grammar changes and some levels of complexity of the phenomena of the grammar. For instance, “complex constructions” might involve too many interactions between parameter settings to be useful as “cues”. Also, we cannot disregard the fact that children sometimes seem to make mistakes, and it is natural to assume that grammar changes do

take place because of some misinterpretation of the information the children receive during their language acquisition. It is our headache as linguists to figure out both how and why this can happen. The question is when can we assume that an interpretation is in some way *natural*? The children misinterpret the information, and they assume that their interpretation is right and do not change it, but why is that? The answer to this question might be concealed in the ‘small changes’ of the language (see Guðmundsdóttir 2000): A sound change, a change in word inflection or a syntactical change may appear to reflect great mistakes because of the great difference between the old and the new forms. However, the change is perhaps not so great if we take a closer look, perhaps it was only one sound feature that disappeared or a syntactical rule that got expanded, etc. Then, it becomes easier to understand the so-called mistakes, but at the same time we still have to look for an explanation for the reason why this happened. There must have been something in the information (output) the children received that led to their misinterpretation. Our search for the explanation is at least twofold: it takes to the child itself and its language environment, that is, the language that the children hear during their language acquisition.

One important factor in this process is the assumption that languages are structure dependent (Chomsky 1972). This means that knowledge of language depends on the structural relationship in the sentence rather than on the sequence of items. This fact has a number of implications for language acquisition: Children must be able to find the units in their particular language and detect which units are structurally dependent on what other units in that language. This in turn involves recognizing the hierarchical structure of the language

and learning what grammatical devices (e.g., word order, inflectional markings, or tones) the language uses to create various types of syntactic units. Hence, the children do not have to learn all the individual items in the language, each inflectional paradigm, each syntactical pattern, sound patterns, etc, for individual words, but they can interpret the information into a comprehensive system.

Lightfoot's (1999) *cue-based acquisition* is based on this hypothesis. Following Dresher and Kaye (1990), Lightfoot (1999) puts forward an independent continuation of the hypothesis about the parameters of UG and how they can be set. Children need experience – trigger – from the language in order to be able to set the parameters of UG. Although the claim about UG and parameters helps us to understand how children are able to acquire their language, that is, helps us to solve Plato's problem, the children's task is nonetheless great. Even though we only assume a very restricted amount of parameters, each with only two possible settings, the children still have to measure their information against a great number of variations, that is, all the possible constructions that the parameters offer (see Lightfoot 1999:259). Therefore it is clear that the number of parameters must be further restricted. This is where Lightfoot's *cues* come into the picture: Children know what to look for in the information they receive so instead of having to study each sentence carefully and measure it up against the different parameters, they scan their environment for designated structures or cues (Lightfoot 1999:149).

2.3 *Summary*

Psychology tells us that children's ability to acquire languages is amazing. Hence we should be careful in explaining grammar

changes by saying that children sometimes do mistakes and that they misinterpret information. This can also be seen from the fact that grammar changes not only take to complex or rare phenomena, but also those we can assume are rather simple. Hence we should claim that children must have *good reasons* for misinterpreting the information they receive, rather than saying that they have made mistakes (cf. Guðmundsdóttir 2000). There are two main factors to take into consideration when studying language acquisition in this connection:

- (7) a. Does the language competence of the parents offer another interpretation of the system?
- b. Does language performance fully reflect language competence?

These questions help us to search for *natural* explanations for the misinterpretation that can take place during language acquisition. Neither inaccuracy, laziness, nor lack of logical thinking is the reason for the so-called mistakes that the children do, leading to grammar changes, rather the mistakes reflect a very logical interpretation of the information the children receive through language use.

As discussed earlier, children do only have access to the grammar (I-language) of their parents through their language performance. Therefore it is natural to expect grammar changes to take place where there is no obvious connection between interpretation of the language performance (output) and the underlying structure. Grammatical phenomena cannot be acquired correctly unless they are clearly reflected by language performance. When a certain phenomenon has survived through many generations, it must have been reflected clearly in the

language performance. Then, if we note that it has changed, something in the language performance of the previous generation must have changed, and thereby paved the way for a new interpretation. We assume that gradual changes in PLD play a central role in the explanation here. Now, Lightfoot has argued at length, correctly in my mind, that there cannot be gradual evolution in an acquisition-based theory of change. What we are arguing here, instead, is for a gradual evolution within the E-language, paving the way for an (acquisition-based) I-language change.

If we assume that the language (E-language) can develop gradually between generations, without this causing a (major) grammar change, then we can assume that more than two generations are able to form what we can call a *chain of E-language process* (see also the discussion in Guðmundsdóttir 2000). In this way, language performance can go through a gradual development from generation 1 to generation 2, and again to generation 3. This is then a natural process of development from one generation to another. Within generation 3, then, we can assume that the language performance (PLD of the previous generation) no longer reflects the I-language completely and a grammar change (parameter change) takes place. But why would this happen? We assume that the answer has to do with innovation, leading to linguistic variation, in the PLD.

In sum, questions about acquisition are important for any approach to an understanding of the causes of linguistic change. Whatever view of acquisition is taken, it is clear that the immediate cause of a parameter change must lie in some alternation to the PLD. Change in the PLD may itself be the result of some antecedent change, such as the loss or weakening

of overt morphologically motivated alternations in frequency, or perhaps simply arising as a chance fluctuation in frequency.

3 Case example

3.1 Introduction

While Modern Icelandic exhibits a virtually uniform VO order in the VP, Older Icelandic had both VO and OV order, as well as several ‘mixed’ word order patterns. In Hróarsdóttir (1996, 2000), several generative accounts for the parameter change in the history of Icelandic are discussed; that is, the abrupt loss of the OV word order patterns in the beginning of the 19th century. All these accounts have been in terms of the universal base hypothesis, arguing that the parameter change has to do with a) the fact that overt object movement in the old language is covert in the modern language (1996), b) the loss of a PredP movement (extraction of VPs out of VPs) (2000), or c) the fact that Modern Icelandic only has incoherent complements, while Older Icelandic had coherent complements as well. After the loss of coherent complements, no long movements (restructuring effects) could take place. More exactly, TP would have had the possibility of being defective in the old language, while in Modern Icelandic it cannot. Consequently, the VP moves only to the lowest TP in the modern language, and OV orders are ruled out (2000).

These proposals might all be correct, or at least one of them. However, they are all insufficient, as they all have in common that they are unable to explain *why* the parameter change took place. In this section, we argue that the parameter change in question was due to a change elsewhere in the system, that is, in the information structure. In other words, we

claim that word order in Older Icelandic was subject to prosodic micro-variation, giving rise to the different word order patterns. The basic claim is that the loss of OV word order reflects a gradual increase of a rule to have focused elements in a low position. The previous studies on the loss of OV orders in the history of Icelandic have focused on the abrupt disappearance of the OV orders in the beginning of the nineteenth century, that is, the parameter change that must have taken place at that time. As we have seen, the immediate cause of the parameter change must lie in some alternation to the PLD. Here, we will try to address the micro-variation in the PLD, leading to the frequently discussed parameter change in the history of Icelandic. We want to focus on the gradual loss of the OV word order patterns that took place in the centuries prior to the parameter change, focusing on the E-language changes in the PLD that must have paved the way for the parameter change when OV word order was lost. We propose that the word order patterns in Older Icelandic were derived by a peripheral rule that applied optionally according to prosodic output conditions at PF, thus accounting for the relatively free word order in that stage of the language (cf. Hróarsdóttir and Hinterhölzl 2001).

Modern Icelandic has pure VO-order within the VP, as shown in (8). The word order in (8) with [_{VP} [auxiliary verb – main verb – object]] is the only possible order of these elements in Modern Icelandic (abstracting away from topicalization and stylistic fronting).

- (8) Þeir munu aldrei **hafa lesið bókina**
they will never have read book-the
‘They will never have read the book’

Old Icelandic mainly differs from Modern Icelandic in that the older stage has the (surface) patterns in (9), while the modern language does not.

- (9) a. V_{fin} ... Object – V_{aux} – V_{main}
b. V_{fin} ... V_{aux} – Object – V_{main}
c. V_{fin} ... (object) - V_{main} – V_{aux} - (object)

The striking fact is that these three word order patterns have disappeared from the language at the same time. Note that these three word order patterns are typical examples of restructuring in the Modern West Germanic languages, exemplifying, long distance scrambling, Verb Projection Raising (VPR), and Verb Raising (VR), respectively. Thus, the change in question can be characterized as a loss of restructuring in the history of Icelandic.

3.2 *Information structure and OV word order in Older Icelandic*

Although it is a well-known fact that Modern Icelandic has pure SVO word order, several other orders of the VP-internal arguments were possible at earlier stages in the history of Icelandic, including both pure and mixed OV word-order patterns, in addition to VO word order (cf. Sigurðsson 1988; Rögnvaldsson 1996; Hróarsdóttir 1996, 2000). The attested OV word-order patterns were lost at the beginning of the nineteenth century. In order to have a closer look at Older Icelandic, Hróarsdóttir (2000) studied the frequency of the different word order patterns in the VP in various texts dating from the fourteenth to the nineteenth centuries, in addition to personal letters dating from throughout the nineteenth century. These

texts are literary works, all in reliable editions based directly on the original composition. A corpus of approximately 5000 sentences containing at least one non-finite verb was studied.³ A list of the sixteen texts used for this study is given in the Appendix, together with bibliographic information.

A few examples are shown in (10) through (12). (10) illustrates pure OV order, and (11) and (12) show examples of the possible mixed OV orders. All of the complements included in the main study here are ungrammatical in a preverbal position in Modern Icelandic, except for negative and quantified complements.

(10) Pure OV word order

- a. að eg skal **þér það** allvel **launa**
that I shall you it well reward
‘that I shall reward you well for it’
- b. at ek skyldi eigi **fleiri born upp ala**
that I should not more children up bring
‘that I should not bring up any more children’
- c. að eg mundi **hann sigrað geta**
that I would him defeat could
‘that I would be able to defeat him’

(11) Mixed word order: one non-finite verb plus two or more objects

- a. hafer þu **þínu lidi** **jatat þeim**
have you your assistance promised them
‘if you have promised them your assistance’

³ Approximately 25-30 pages (resulting in 500-1000 lines) were extracted from each text, where possible, until a corpus of approximately 5000 sentences containing at least one non-finite verb had been reached, exhibiting either OV or VO word order. Letters by seventy-five individuals were studied, approximately three letters from each writer (150 lines), and they were divided into seven groups, with approximately ten writers in each. Only letters when the year of the author’s birth is known were used. The first group has letters from speakers born 1730-50 and the last group has letters from speakers born 1850-70.

- b. þa uildi hann nu giarna **hialp weita leoninum**
then wanted he now readily help give lion-the
‘Then, he readily wanted to help the lion’
 - c. Hafdi þa huorgi **sari komit a annann**
had then neither wound got on other
‘Neither had been able to wound the other’
- (12) Mixed word order: at least two non-finite verbs plus at least one object
- a. að hann skyldi aldrei **mega sól sjá**
that he should never be-allowed sun to-see
‘that he should never be allowed to see the sun’
 - b. og ekki skal faðir minn **geta þér hjálpað**
and not shall father mine can you helped
‘And my father will not be able to help you’
 - c. og hvör mundi **þat hafa gjört**
and who would it have done
‘And who would have done it’
 - d. þeir quaðuz eigi **þat mundu gera**
they said not it would do
‘They claimed they would not do it’
 - e. at hann mun **raða vilja ferðum sínum**
that he will decide want journeys his
‘that he want’s to decide his own journeys’

The main results for the frequency of OV-order are shown in tables (1) and (2), where OV is defined as all instances where at least one of the object precedes the main verb.

Texts		All clauses			
		OV	VO	Total	% OV
early 14th	Finn	78	46	124	62.9 %
mid. 14th	Guðm	43	54	97	44.3 %
late 14th	Árn	41	32	73	56.2 %
late 14th	Dín	68	33	101	67.3 %
early 15th	Sig	81	47	128	63.3 %
late 15th	Vikt	59	65	124	47.6 %
early 16th	Afs	29	24	53	54.7 %
late 16th	Morð	100	79	179	55.9 %
late 17th	Skál	43	103	146	29.5 %
late 17th	Árm	182	108	290	62.8 %
ca 1700	Munn	73	87	160	45.6 %
early 18th	J.Ey	15	15	30	50.0 %
early 18th	Bisk	25	50	75	33.3 %
late 18th	Próf	48	85	133	36.1 %
early 19th	Álf	138	123	261	52.9 %
early 19th	Esp	18	116	134	13.4 %
1. age group	1730-1750	88	250	338	26.0 %
2. age group	1750-1770	47	203	250	18.8 %
3. age group	1770-1790	65	345	410	15.9 %
4. age group	1790-1810	45	342	387	11.6 %
5. age group	1810-1830	36	425	461	7.8 %
6. age group	1830-1850	27	418	445	6.1 %
7. age group	1850-1870	29	447	476	6.1 %
		1378	3497	4875	

Table 1: Number of clauses with OV- and VO-orders (in each text)

Furthermore, OV-order is taken to include not only sentences where a nominal object precedes the main verb, but also sentences where other complements of the main verb precede it (PPs, adverbials, adjectives, and other non-finite verbs). The aim was to only take into account adverbials and PPs that are complements of the main verb.

Texts	All clauses			
	OV	VO	Total	% OV
14th century	230	165	395	58.2 %
15th century	140	112	252	55.6 %
16th century	129	103	232	55.6 %
17th century	298	298	596	50.0 %
18th century	88	150	238	37.0 %
19th century	493	2669	3162	15.6 %
	1378	3497	4875	

*Table 2: Number of clauses with OV- and VO-orders
(in each century)*

OV-orders occurred most frequently in texts dating from the fourteenth to seventeenth centuries (from an average of 58.2% to 50.0%) and decreased to an average of 37.0% in texts from the eighteenth century. OV word order then gradually disappeared in texts and letters dating from the nineteenth century.

There are reasons to believe that there have been two crucial changes in the history of Icelandic; the former one presumably taking place prior to the earliest attested Icelandic texts, where there was a change from a grammar that only allowed OV word

order towards a grammar that allowed both OV and VO word order patterns. Of course, we cannot be certain that there ever existed a uniform OV grammar in Old Icelandic but we find it very likely. However, if this is true, then there was *an innovation of microvariation* very early in the Icelandic history, and we see this variation (OV and VO word orders) already in the first attested texts. But why did this innovation take place? We assume there might be a mixture of at least two factors here: First, we can assume that the VO word order is the default UG order. Also, the word order higher up in the structure, with regard to the finite auxiliary verb, was already VO. In other words, both CP and IP in Old Icelandic were head-initial; the complementizer always precedes the rest of the sentence and Icelandic exhibits the well-known Germanic verb-second phenomenon in both main and subordinate declarative clauses. Hence, we can assume an innovation of variation leading to a more consistently head-initial language. The second factor in the innovation has to do with a change from a grammar generating OV order, towards a grammar allowing VO word order as well in certain contexts for reasons of *focusing*. Let us consider this assumption further.

If we now focus only on the nominal objects in pre- and postverbal positions in the attested Older Icelandic texts, then we see a gradual loss of preverbal nominal objects, at least from the 17th century. Consider Tables 3 and 4.

Texts		Full NPs			Pronouns		
		OV	VO	% OV	OV	VO	% OV
early 14th	Finn	12	23	34.3%	13	11	54.2%
mid. 14th	Guðm	6	35	14.6%	11	4	73.3%
late 14th	Árn	15	20	42.9%	6	0	100%
late 14th	Dín	17	20	45.9%	18	7	72.0%
early 15th	Sig	26	24	52.0%	13	10	56.5%
late 15th	Vikt	18	34	34.6%	10	9	52.6%
early 16th	Afs	8	11	42.1%	4	1	80.0%
late 16th	Morð	38	48	44.2%	14	4	77.8%
late 17th	Skál	5	39	11.4%	8	24	25.0%
late 17th	Árm	41	53	43.6%	63	41	60.6%
ca 1700	Munn	18	37	32.7%	13	15	46.4%
early 18th	J.Ey	2	1	66.7%	1	0	100%
early 18th	Bisk	9	27	25.0%	7	12	36.8%
late 18th	Próf	6	38	13.6%	6	27	18.2%
early 19th	Álf	23	49	31.9%	39	22	63.9%
early 19th	Esp	2	60	3.2%	1	9	10.0%
1. age group	1730-1750	15	80	15.8%	22	64	25.6%
2. age group	1750-1770	3	67	4.3%	9	38	19.1%
3. age group	1770-1790	7	111	5.9%	14	108	11.5%
4. age group	1790-1810	2	95	2.1%	16	112	12.5%
5. age group	1810-1830	4	127	3.1%	10	122	7.6%
6. age group	1830-1850	3	115	2.5%	14	108	11.5%
7. age group	1850-1870	6	140	4.1%	12	117	9.3%
		286	1254		324	865	

Table 3: Full NPs versus pronouns

Table (3) shows the results for pre- and postverbal nominal objects in each of the texts studied, while table (4) illustrates the total frequency for the texts from each century.

Texts	Full NPs			Pronouns		
	OV	VO	% OV	OV	VO	% OV
14th century	50	98	33.8%	48	22	68.6%
15th century	44	58	43.1%	23	19	54.8%
16th century	46	59	43.8%	18	5	78.3%
17th century	63	129	32.8%	85	80	51.5%
18th century	17	66	20.5%	14	39	26.4%
19th century	66	844	7.3%	136	700	16.3%
	286	1254	18.6%	324	865	27.2%

Table 4: Full NPs versus pronouns (in each century)

There is also a grammatical ordering with respect to old information preceding new information in the Older Icelandic texts, as shown in Table 5.

Texts	New information			Old information		
	OV	VO	% OV	OV	VO	% OV
14th century	63	93	40.4%	71	30	70.3%
15th century	40	62	39.2%	50	20	71.4%
16th century	42	60	41.2%	35	14	71.4%
17th century	66	143	31.6%	116	87	57.1%
18th century	17	70	19.5%	24	36	40.0%
19th century	70	937	6.6%	159	894	15.1%
	298	1365	17.9%	455	1081	29.6%

Table 5: Old vs. new information (full NPs and pronouns)

The reason for why we do not see a clear rule here, with OV structures always involving old information and VO structures always involving new information, is because this grammatical ordering is partly overlaid by a stylistic ordering in terms of light NPs preferring a preverbal position and heavy NPs preferring a postverbal position. Hence, a relatively heavy NP with old information preferred a postverbal position. The heaviness factors on the word order are illustrated in Table 6.

Texts	NPs with one word			NPs with two words			NPs with three or more words		
	OV	VO	%	OV	VO	%	OV	VO	%
14th century	29	26	52.7%	8	39	17.0%	5	33	13.2%
15th century	24	16	60.0%	9	29	23.7%	1	13	7.1%
16th century	13	15	46.4%	15	19	44.1%	5	25	16.7%
17th century	27	56	32.5%	14	40	25.9%	5	33	13.2%
18th century	7	15	31.8%	6	23	20.7%	1	28	3.4%
19th century	30	330	8.3%	16	314	4.8%	6	200	2.9%
	130	458	22.1%	68	464	12.8%	23	332	6.5%

Table 6: Number of words within non-negative full NPs

Hence, pronouns and NPs with old information are preverbal but NPs which are heavy or convey new information appear postverbally.

It is quite possible that the reason for the unclear distinction here is due to competing rules existing in Older Icelandic: On the one hand, pronouns and other light categories preferred a preverbal position, while referential categories preferred a postverbal position. Since pronouns are referential, these two rules are in conflict. In other words, there is a grammatical ordering with respect to definite objects preceding indefinite, old information preceding new information, and quantified or negated objects preceding existential objects, but this rule is (partly) overlaid by a stylistic ordering in terms of light preceding heavy. When we take all four rules into consideration, we can account for the OV/VO word order pattern in the Older Icelandic corpus. In other words, it is more or less predictable which objects are going to occur preverbally and which occur postverbally.

3.3 *Summary*

In sum, as indicated in the tables, there is a gradual loss of the OV word order patterns, or, in other words, a gradual increase of the rule to have focused elements in a low position. This is then a gradual E-language change, taking place during several centuries in the history of Icelandic, paving the way for the parameter change in the beginning of the nineteenth century when we have a change from a grammar allowing the microvariation of both OV and VO word order patterns, towards a grammar allowing only pure VO word order. We can assume that at a certain stage in the E-language development, were Icelanders more often put focussed elements in a postverbal position, with the consequences that there was a gradual drop in the frequency of OV word order patterns, the frequency of OV had dropped below a certain threshold to be

useful as cues (Lightfoot 1999). Hence, there is a(n abrupt) parameter change within the next generation acquiring the language (in the beginning of the nineteenth century), where this new generation has a new parameter setting that does not allow the microvariation of both OV and VO word order patterns, and instead only has the pure VO word order setting.

Very briefly, this means that a change in the interpretation of the discourse functions encoded in different word orders in the E-language can lead to a change in the basic word order in the I-language. At one point in the history (gradually), Icelanders must have decided to have focused elements in a low position, partly because UG must tell them to put new elements into low positions. The crucial question is why Icelanders decided to put focused elements in a postverbal position. Hinterhölzl (2001) argued that this is connected with the placement of *heavy* (old information is light, new information is heavier) and *stressed* material (an element that is stressed is part of the focus of the clause). Hence, an essential factor in the change from OV to VO was a stylistic rule of light predicate raising that placed *heavy* (“long” + new) arguments into the postverbal field.

Appendix:

Appendix 1: Primary texts

Finnboga saga ramma. Edited by Hugo Gering. Verlag der Buchhandlung des Waisenhauses, Halle, 1879. [Finnboga saga ramma (Finn). Heroic epic. Date of composition: 1330-1370. Approximately 500 lines studied].

Saga Guðmundar Arasonar, Hóla-biskups, eptir Arngrím ábóta. *Biskupa sögur*. Second volume, pp. 1-220. Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag, Copenhagen, 1878. [Saga Guðmundar Arasonar, Hóla-biskups (Guðm). Story of bishops. Date of composition: 1350-1365. Approximately 650 lines studied].

- Árna saga biskups*. Edited by Þorleifur Hauksson. Stofnun Árna Magnússonar in Iceland, Reykjavík, 1972. [Árna saga biskups (Árn). Story of bishops. Date of composition: 1375-1400. Approximately 500 lines studied].
- Dínus saga drambláta*. Edited by Jónas Kristjánsson. Riddarasögur I. Háskóli Íslands, Reykjavík, 1960. [Dínus saga drambláta (Dín). Chivalric romance. Date of composition: 1375-1400. Approximately 500 lines studied].
- Sigurðar saga þøgla*. Edited by M. J. Driscoll. Stofnun Árna Magnússonar in Iceland, Reykjavík, 1992. [Sigurðar saga þøgla (Sig). Icelandic romance. Date of composition: early fifteenth century. Approximately 1000 lines studied].
- Viktors saga og Blávus*. Edited by Jónas Kristjánsson. Riddarasögur II. Handritastofnun Íslands, Reykjavík, 1964. [Viktors saga og Blávus (Vikt). Chivalric romance. Date of composition: ca. 1470. Approximately 500 lines studied].
- Morðbréfabæklingar Guðbrands biskups Þorlákssonar, 1592, 1595 og 1608, með fylgiskjölum*. Sögufélagið, Reykjavík, 1902-1906. [Afsökunarbréf Jóns Sigmundssonar (Afs). Document/formal letter. Date of composition: 1502-1506. Approximately 375 lines studied (the whole text). Transcript made by Bishop Guðbrandur Þorláksson, 1592].
- Morðbréfabæklingar Guðbrands biskups Þorlákssonar, 1592, 1595 og 1608, með fylgiskjölum*. Sögufélagið, Reykjavík, 1902-1906. [Morðbréfabæklingar Guðbrands biskups (Morð). Document. Date of composition: 1592. Approximately 700 lines studied].
- Sögu-þáttur um Skálholts biskupa fyrir og um siðaskiptin. *Biskupa sögur*. Second volume, pp. 235-265. Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag, Copenhagen, 1878. [Sögu-þáttur um Skálholts biskupa (Skál). Story of bishops. Date of composition: late seventeenth century. Approximately 800 lines studied].
- Ármanns rímur eftir Jón Guðmundsson lærða (1637) og Ármanns þáttur eftir Jón Þorláksson*, pp. 91-121. Edited by Jón Helgason. Íslensk rit síðari alda, first volume. Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag, Copenhagen, 1948. [Söguþáttur af Ármanni og Þorsteini gála (Árm). A short narrative story. Date of composition: late seventeenth century. Approx. 900 lines studied (the whole text)].
- Munnmælasögur 17. aldar*. Edited by Bjarni Einarsson. Íslensk rit síðari alda, volume 6. Hið íslenska fræðafélag í Kaupmannahöfn, Reykjavík, 1955. [Munnmælasögur 17. aldar (Munn). Folk tales,

in oral tradition. Date of composition: 1686-1687. Approximately 700 lines studied].

Ferðasaga úr Borgarfirði vestur að Ísafjarðardjúpi sumarið 1709, ásamt lýsingu á Vatnsfjarðarstað og kirkju. Eptir Jón Eyjólfsson í Ási í Melasveit. Blanda II. Fróðleikur gamall og nýr, pp. 225-239. Sögufélagið, Reykjavík, 1921-1923. [Ferðasaga úr Borgarfirði (J.Ey). Travelogue; a story from a journey. Date of composition: 1709. Approx. 335 lines studied (the whole text)].

Biskupasögur Jóns prófasts Haldórssonar í Hítardal. Með viðbæti. Skálholtsbiskupar 1540-1801. Sögufélagið, Reykjavík, 1903-1910. [Biskupasögur Jóns prófasts Haldórssonar (Bisk). Story of bishops. Date of composition: 1720-1730. Approx. 500 lines studied].

Æfisaga Jóns prófasts Steingrímssonar eptir sjálfan hann. Sögufélagið, Reykjavík, 1913-1916. [Æfisaga Jóns prófasts Steingrímssonar (Próf). Biography. Date of composition: 1785-1791. Approximately 800 lines studied].

Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og ævintýri. Nýtt safn. Volume VI, pp. 1-39. Collected by Jón Árnason. Edited by Árni Böðvarsson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson. Bókaútgáfan Þjóðsaga, Reykjavík, 1961. [Álfarit Ólafs í Purkey (Álf). Folk tale, fairy tale. Date of composition: 1820-1830. Approximately 650 lines studied].

Íslands Árbækur í söguformi. Af Jóni Espólín fyrrum Sýslumanni í Skagafjarðar Sýslu. Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag, Copenhagen, 1843. [Jón Espólín (Esp). Annual stories, in epic form. Date of composition: first half of the nineteenth century. Approximately 650 lines studied].

Appendix 2: Authors of nineteenth century letters

1. age group:

Name of writer, Date of birth, Editions used

Guðrún Jónsdóttir, 1730, *Sendibréf frá íslenzkum konum*, (1 letter)

Vígfús Benediktsson, 1731, *Frásögur um fornaldarleifar I*, (1 letter)

Ragnheiður Þórarinsdóttir, 1738, *Sendibréf frá íslenzkum konum, Konur skrifa bréf* (6 letters)

Guðrún Skúladóttir, 1740, *Sendibréf frá íslenzkum konum*, (8 letters)

Magnús Ólafsson, 1746, *Frásögur um fornaldarleifar I*, (1 letter)

Sæmundur Hálfðánarson, 1747, *Frásögur um fornaldarleifar I*, (1 letter)

Páll Þorláksson, 1748, *Frásögur um fornaldarleifar I*, (1 letter)

Ragnheiður Finnsdóttir, 1749, *Konur skrifa bréf, Sendibréf frá íslenskum konum* (9 letters)
Jón Hjaltalín (Oddsson), 1749, *Frásögur um fornaldarleifar II*, (1 letter)
Jón Magnússon, 1750, *Frásögur um fornaldarleifar I*, (1 letter)

2. age group:

Name of writer, Date of birth, Editions used

Vígfús Ormsson, 1751, *Frásögur um fornaldarleifar I*, (1 letter)
Árni Þorsteinsson, 1754, *Frásögur um fornaldarleifar I*, (1 letter)
Brynjólfur Gíslason, 1757, *Frásögur um fornaldarleifar I*, (1 letter)
Geir Vídalín biskup, 1761, *Geir biskup góði, Skrifarinn á Stapa* (8 letters)
Magnús Stephensen, 1762, *Magnús Stephensen, Brjef*, (7 letters)
Benedikt Sveinsson, 1764, *Frásögur um fornaldarleifar I*, (1 letter)
Sæmundur Einarsson, 1765, *Frásögur um fornaldarleifar I*, (1 letter)
Bjarni Arngrímsson, 1768, *Frásögur um fornaldarleifar I*, (1 letter)
Benedikt Þorsteinsson, 1768, *Frásögur um fornaldarleifar I*, (1 letter)
Steingrímur Jónsson, 1769, *Skrifarinn á Stapa, Gömul Reykjavíkurbref* (8 letters)

3. age group:

Name of writer Date of birth Editions used

Árni Helgason, 1777, *Biskupinn í Görðum*, (3 letters)
Gunnar Gunnarsson, 1781, *Skrifarinn á Stapa*, (3 letters)
Finnur Magnússon, 1781, *Hafnarstúdentar skrifa hei*, (3 letters)
Guðríður Magnúsdóttir, 1782, *Konur skrifa bréf*, (3 letters)
Ingibjörg Jónsdóttir, 1784, *Sendibréf frá íslenskum konum, Konur skrifa bréf* (3 letters)
Grímur Jónsson, 1785, *Þeir segja margt í sendibréfum*, (3 letters)
Bjarni Thorarensen, 1786, *Bjarni Thorarensen, bréf*, (3 letters)
Ragnhildur Magnúsdóttir, 1786, *Konur skrifa bréf*, (3 letters)
Þórður Sveinbjörnsson, 1786, *Gömul Reykjavíkurbref*, (3 letters)
Einar Thorlacius, 1790, *Þeir segja margt í sendibréfum*, (3 letters)

4. age group:

Name of writer Date of birth Editions used

Álfheiður Jónsdóttir, 1794, *Konur skrifa bréf*, (3 letters)
Stefán Gunnlaugsson, 1802, *Skrifarinn á Stapa*, (1 letter)
Baldvin Einarsson, 1801, *Hafnarstúdentar skrifa heim*, (2 letters)

Högni Einarsson, 1805, *Hafnarstúdentar skrifa heim*, (2 letter)
 Þorsteinn Helgason, 1806, *Skrifarinn á Stapa*, (3 letters)
 Páll Pálsson, 1806, *Skrifarinn á Stapa*, (3 letters)
 Kristrún Jónsdóttir, 1806, *Konur skrifa bréf*, (3 letters)
 Tómas Sæmundsson, 1807, *Skrifarinn á Stapa*, (3 letters)
 Gísli Hjálmarsson, 1807, *Hafnarstúdentar skrifa heim*, (3 letters)
 Hildur Johnsen, 1807, *Konur skrifa bréf*, (3 letters)
 Sigríður Pálsdóttir, 1809, *Skrifarinn á Stapa*, (3 letters)
 Torfi Eggerz, 1809, *Hafnarstúdentar skrifa heim*, (1 letter)

5. age group:

Name of writer	Date of birth	Editions used
Þórunn Pálsdóttir	1811	<i>Skrifarinn á Stapa</i> , (3 letters)
Stefán Pálsson	1812	<i>Skrifarinn á Stapa</i> , (3 letters)
Siggeir Pálsson	1815	<i>Skrifarinn á Stapa</i> , (3 letters)
Finnur Thorsteinsson	1822	<i>Skrifarinn á Stapa</i> , (3 letters)
Björn Halldórsson	1823	<i>Þeir segja margt í sendibréfum</i> , (3 letters)
Ástríður Melsted	1825	<i>Gömul Reykjavíkurbref</i> , (3 letters)
Sigríður Jónsdóttir	1826	<i>Konur skrifa bréf</i> , (3 letters)
Jón Borgfirðingur	1826	<i>Gömul Reykjavíkurbref</i> , (3 letters)
Benedikt Gröndal	1826	<i>Gömul Reykjavíkurbref</i> , (3 letters)
Árni Thorsteinsson	1828	<i>Skrifarinn á Stapa</i> , (3 letters)

6. age group:

Name of writer	Date of birth	Editions used
Sigríður Sveinsdóttir	1831	<i>Konur skrifa bréf</i> , (3 letters)
Steingrímur Thorsteinsson	1831	<i>Gömul Reykjavíkurbref</i> , (3 letters)
Sigurður Guðmundsson	1833	<i>Gömul Reykjavíkurbref</i> , (3 letters)
Eiríkur Magnússon	1833	<i>Skrifarinn á Stapa</i> , (2 letters)
Jakobína Jónsdóttir	1835	<i>Konur skrifa bréf</i> , <i>Sendibréf frá íslenskum konum</i> (5 letters)
Kristjana Hafstein	1836	<i>Sendibréf frá íslenskum konum</i> , (1 letter)
Guðrún Þorsteinsdóttir	1838	<i>Skrifarinn á Stapa</i> , <i>Sendibréf frá íslenskum konum</i> (1 letter)
Stefanía Siggeirsdóttir	1842	<i>Skrifarinn á Stapa</i> , (5 letters) <i>Sendibréf frá íslenskum konum</i>
Lára Bjarnason	1842	<i>Konur skrifa bréf</i> , (3 letters)
Torfhildur Þorsteinsd. Hólm	1845	<i>Sendibréf frá íslenskum konum</i> , (1 letter)

Ragnhildur Björnsdóttir, 1845, *Sendibréf frá íslenskum konum*, (3 letters)

7. age group:

Name of writer Date of birth Editions used

Rannveig Ólafsdóttir Briem, 1853, *Konur skrifa bréf*, (3 letters)

Sendibréf frá íslenskum konum

Páll Briem, 1856, *Hafnarstúdentar skrifa heim*, (3 letters)

Hafsteinn Pétursson, 1858, *Hafnarstúdentar skrifa heim*, (3 letters)

Finnur Jónsson, 1858, *Hafnarstúdentar skrifa heim*, (2 letters)

Jón Þorkelsson, 1859, *Hafnarstúdentar skrifa heim*, (3 letters)

Gísli Guðmundsson, 1859, *Hafnarstúdentar skrifa heim*, (2 letters)

Ragnheiður Daníelsdóttir, 1859, *Konur skrifa bréf*, (1 letter)

Valtýr Guðmundsson, 1860, *Doktor Valtýr segir frá*, (3 letters)

Bogi Melsteð, 1860, *Hafnarstúdentar skrifa heim*, (1 letter)

Ólafur Davíðsson, 1862, *Hafnarstúdentar skrifa heim*, (3 letters)

Halldór Bjarnason, 1863, *Hafnarstúdentar skrifa heim*, (3 letters)

Jóhannes Jóhannesson, 1866, *Hafnarstúdentar skrifa heim*, (3 letters)

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