Inside and Outside the Icelandic DP – Some Notes on Adjectival Inflection
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Icelandic adjectives come with two sets of adjectival inflection: weak and strong. Strongly inflected adjectives occur in predicative contexts, or adnominally in indefinite noun phrases; weakly inflected ones only occur adnominally in definite noun phrases. There is, however, one context that is not obviously captured by this characterization; consider the following contrast:

(1) a. gul.i bíll - inn yellow.WK car - the
b. gul.ur bíll - inn yellow.STR car - the

Both noun phrases in (1) are definite as indicated by the suffixed article. Thus the strong inflection in the b-example is unexpected. Moreover, it has been noted that this morpho-syntactic difference has semantic concomitants:

(2) If a noun phrase of the type ["the yellow car"] is not meant to identify ‘the yellow car’, but only to identify a car, which happens to be yellow, Icelandic marks this with the strong form of the adjective. Compare the restrictive adjective in [(1a)] to the non-restrictive one in [(1b)].

(Delsing 1993:132, fn. 25)

This paper claims that the contrast in (1) is primarily a structural one that entails the properties of the respective adjectives, both morphological (weak vs. strong) and semantic (restrictive vs. non-restr.). More specifically, I argue that (i) weak inflection is triggered/licensed in a specific context, whereas strong inflection is merely the default spellout (i.e. the elsewhere case):

(3) a. Weak inflection is triggered by a c-commanding definiteness morpheme/article
b. Strong inflection occurs iff weak inflection is not triggered

(ii) the strong adjective in (1b) is merged outside DP, hence outside the c-command domain of the definite article, thus weak inflection is not triggered and the default strong inflection occurs. (iii) this structural assumption has semantic consequences: being merged outside DP, the strong adjective must be assumed to combine with a referential expression (of type <e>). This automatically captures the often observed lack of restrictivity, cf. (2), and other semantic properties of noun phrases like (1b).

Reference:
References