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**Communication, Grammar and Grammaticalization:
Aspects on the Grammaticalization of the Construction *vera
búinn að* + Infinitive in Contemporary Icelandic**

1. Introduction

This paper focuses on the use of the construction *vera búinn að* + infinitive (Eng. *have* + past participle) in contemporary Icelandic. The aim of the paper is to discuss the appropriate framework for describing the current status of the *búinn* construction as a perfect in contemporary Icelandic. Using data from authentic recorded conversations, I hope to show that in descriptions of the grammaticalization of constructions such as the *búinn* construction it is necessary to take into account the ways these constructions are used in authentic communication. The purpose of the paper is, however, not to provide a definite model for how to analyze the *búinn* construction in this way. Rather, the intention is to suggest some reasons why the actual use of grammatical constructions should be considered more in studies on grammaticalization. A more detailed and more conclusive analysis of the *búinn* construction specifically is provided in Wide (MS 2000).

The construction *vera búinn að* + infinitive had the meaning ‘to be prepared/ready to do something’ in Old Icelandic, that is, a kind of future reference. The earliest examples from written language of the construction used in a perfect type meaning (‘to have done something’) have been dated to the late 16th century (cf. Árnason 1977: 33-53). Today the construction functions exclusively as a perfect-type construction in Icelandic and cannot have a future reading unless a prefix such as, for example, *til-* ‘to-’ is added in front of *búinn*. The construction is widespread, especially in the spoken language. In some contexts the construction even seems to be taking over more traditional functions of the older *have*-perfect, *hafa* + supine, which has been the most frequently-used perfect construction in Icelandic and functioned as a perfect already in Old Icelandic. The *búinn* construction is, however, still semantically more restricted than the *hafa* construction. Moreover, the *hafa* construction seems to be favored in written and formal language.

In addition to the *hafa* and *búinn* constructions, there is a third construction in contemporary Icelandic closely related to the cross-linguistic category of perfect: *vera* 'be' + past participle, which is primarily used as a resultative (result perfect) and is historically related to *be*-perfects in other Germanic languages. As a resultative, the *vera* construction generally denotes the final or result state of an event that holds at reference time and cannot be 'undone' (cf. Eng. *He is gone*). In some contexts, however, the *vera* construction can also be used in a perfect sense (cf. Berkov 1988: 445). Furthermore, in some cases the *búinn* construction seems to be used where one would expect the older *vera* construction. My intention in this paper, however, is not a detailed comparison of the use of the *búinn* construction with the older *hafa* and *vera* constructions (although I will give a rough picture of the differences among the three constructions in section 3). Rather, I will examine the use of the *búinn* construction *per se* and highlight three different ways of evaluating to what extent it has been grammaticalized or its use extended/generalized in contemporary Icelandic. First, I will compare the use of the construction with different types of events (states, activities, accomplishments and achievements) in a comparatively small data set (radio conversations). Secondly, I will consider the frequency of the construction in different types of written texts. Thirdly, I will treat the use of the construction in authentic interaction. Before examining the *búinn* construction from these three perspectives, I will, however, first briefly state the background of my paper.

2. Grammaticalization and the concept of emergent grammar

Grammaticalization has been investigated from two main perspectives. On the one hand, grammatical forms and typical pathways of change which affect them have been approached diachronically. On the other hand, fluid patterns of language use have been treated primarily as a syntactic discourse-pragmatic phenomenon (Hopper & Traugott 1993: 2). Even though many studies combine the two perspectives, the historical dimension often seems to be emphasized more. Furthermore, questions have been raised as to whether the two approaches in fact address different phenomena. The purpose of this paper is to give an example of a study in which both approaches to grammaticalization are considered, but the emphasis clearly lies on the synchronic discourse-pragmatic level.

Diachronically grammatical forms tend to follow recurrent pathways of change, such as *resultative* → *perfect* → *perfective/simple past* (cf. Bybee

et al. 1994: 105). In the meantime, the grammatical forms become less restricted in use and more general in meaning. Investigations of the types of verbs and adverbials with which perfect-type constructions occur and the meanings the constructions have at different points in time thus play an important role in grammaticalization studies. The data used in studies of this kind, however, usually consist of more or less decontextualized examples analyzed on a sentence-level. At the same time, the categories and notions used in the analyses are fairly abstract and broad. Even though the results of studies of this kind are notable and important for our understanding of grammaticalization processes, they should, however, as Hopper (Hopper 1998b: 156) puts it, “not be allowed to overshadow the constant necessity to investigate texts for insights into the emergence of grammatical forms.”

Grammaticalization processes are assumed to start and take place fundamentally in discourse (cf. Hopper & Traugott 1993: 63-68, 207). Nevertheless, most studies of grammaticalization processes pay very little attention to actual discourse phenomena. The main focus is clearly on more abstract levels of language and logic, and discourse phenomena are often mentioned only as motivations for changes at the sentence level. According to Hopper (1998b: 156), the inclusion of contextual information would, however, bring “into focus the complex ensemble of processes and relations involved in language change”, thus allowing a “processual, emergent and dynamic representation of language change.”

Hopper (1998b: 156-157) points out that an understanding of the ‘whole’ of linguistic activity does not work “by assuming an integrated ‘cognitive’ totality in advance, but by piecing together bits of textual evidence from here and there to build a more integrated picture from below.” As long as we have no accepted definition of grammar, we cannot talk about a distinct process of grammaticalization. In order to adopt a wider view of grammaticalization we have to modify of our perspective on grammar. Instead of seeing grammar as a set of *a priori* categories and rules, Hopper thus suggests that structure in language should be viewed “as intrinsically unfixated and unstable, in other words as emergent” (ibid. p. 148).

By definition, the concept of emergent grammar is based on the idea of communication (Hopper 1998a: 162). Structure, or “grammar,” is relocated “from the center to the periphery of linguistic communication.” It is hence “not the source of understanding and communication but a by-product of it” (ibid. p. 156). Grammatical forms are continually being adapted to meet “the needs of the hearer or the audience” (ibid. p. 161). Instead of being

dependent on “an essential inner core of constant meaning”, a sign’s form is dependent on “previous uses and contexts in which the current speaker has used or heard it” (ibid. p. 157). There is no abstract structure in emergent grammar, only a vast collection of subsystems created by the partial settling or sedimentation of frequently-used forms (ibid. p. 158). Grammar thus represents different kinds of repetition, “an open-ended collection of forms that are constantly being restructured and resemanticized during actual use” (ibid. p. 159).

When one adopts the perspective of emergent grammar, there is “no neat distinction between lexicalization and grammaticalization, or any other aspect of change” (Hopper 1998b: 148). The process of grammaticalization starts when “collocations and contextually bound forms become habitual”, that is ‘routinized’ and “released from their restricted context” (ibid. p. 152). Grammaticalization studies should therefore pay more attention “to groups of words, rather than individual lexical items”, because “a purely structural account of grammaticalization is likely to overlook the very precise cultural sources of the collocations that stand at the head of the drift toward grammaticalization” (ibid. p. 149).

Emergent grammar is dialogic in nature. Grammar, understood as meaningful repetition, is distributed not only among “the various participants in a collaborative act of communication,”¹ but also “among different genres of speech and among different registers”. Utterances need to be grounded in genre, register, audience, etc., in order to have meaning (Hopper 1998a: 162). Emergent grammar thus shifts the emphasis in investigations from what speakers *can* do to what speakers *actually* do in natural settings. The focus lies on seeking out the “frequently occurring patterns and distributions of forms,” and showing “how in turn frequency affects these forms” (ibid. p.165).

Because of its dialogic nature and focus on communication, emergent grammar demands the adoption of various concepts and theoretical assumptions from communication studies. In Wide (MS 2000) I rely chiefly on the framework of *dialogism* as proposed in Linell (1998). According to dialogism the basic units in discourse are actions and interactions, that is discursive practices, in their contexts. Discourse within the dialogistic framework is hence understood in terms of “dynamic and mutual interdependencies between individuals as actors-in-specific-interactions and contexts, the latter seen as invoked by and emergent with (inter)actions”

¹ Hopper (1998a) here refers to Fox (1994) and Goodwin (1979).

(ibid. p. 7-8). Due to the scope and short length of this paper it will, however, not be possible to argue for the framework of dialogism to any greater extent here. I will nevertheless try, in section 6, to carry out an analysis of the contextualized use of the *búinn* construction paying attention to properties, which according to dialogism, are characteristic of and essential to not only dialogue, but all human cognition and communication. These properties include sequential organization, joint construction and interdependencies between acts and activities (cf. Linell 1998: 8-9). In addition to these properties, I will also consider a few more specific concepts from the literature on language and communication such as *common ground* (Clark 1996) and *reinitiation* (cf. e.g. Korolija & Linell 1996).

3. The *búinn*, *hafa* and *vera* constructions contrasted²

Hafa + supine and *vera* + past participle are etymologically related to *have*- and *be*-perfects in other Germanic languages. The *hafa* construction (illustrated in (1a) below) can be used with all verbs (Friðjónsson 1989: 98) and get universal as well as existential readings (cf. Jónsson 1992, Carlson & Wide MS 1999). The *vera* construction, on the other hand, is mainly used with verbs of change and movement. Even though an actional meaning of the construction can sometimes be discerned (cf. Berkov 1988: 445), the construction quite clearly seems to be used as a *resultative* or *result perfect* in Icelandic (see example (1b) below).

(1) a. Hann hefur komið hingað (áður/býst ég við).
 he has come here before/I expect
 ‘He has been here (before/I expect).’

b. Hann er kominn hingað (núna).
 he is come here now
 ‘He has arrived/is here (now).’ (Friðjónsson 1988: 98-99)

As mentioned, the use of the *búinn* construction in a perfect sense is an innovation in Icelandic. In its form, *vera búinn* is a *be* perfect formed with *búa* ‘make, live’, etymologically ‘be done with’. Even though the *vera*

² This section draws primarily upon the analysis presented in Carlson & Wide (MS 1999). The main purpose of Carlson & Wide (MS 1999) was to place the Icelandic perfects in the formal typology of Carlson (MS 1997) by using data from earlier research supplemented by a corpus of spoken language data collected by Camilla Wide.

construction and the *búinn* construction sometimes appear in parallel, as in example (2) from the talk radio program *Þjóðarsálin* 'Soul of the nation' (cf. section 4), it is most often possible to perceive a contrast between resultative and near past in comparison of the two constructions (Carlson & Wide MS 1999), such as in example (3) from Kress (1982: 154):

- (2) a. heyrðu það er með fôðurlöndustöðina í Landeyjunum nú
listen it is with the fodder mixing station in Landeyjar now
'listen this is about the fodder mixing station at Landeyjar'
er hún komin í gang og búíð það
is she come in running and BÚINN³ it
er búíð að prufukeyra
is BÚINN to test drive
'it has now started and test runs have been made'
- (3) a. Skipið er farið fyrir löngu.
the.ship is gone for long
'The ship sailed a long time ago.'
- b. Skipið er búíð að blása tvisvar.
the.ship is BÚINN to blow two times
'The ship has already whistled two times (it's time to...)'

Both the *búinn* construction and the *hafa* construction are usually translated into English with the English Perfect *have* + past participle. In principle the *hafa* construction is used to describe general and distant situations, whereas the *búinn* construction is used to describe specific and recent situations (Friðjónsson 1989: 101-102):

- (4) a. Ég hef séð ísbjörn (einhvern tímann).
I have seen a polar bear some time
'I have seen a polar bear.'
- b. Ég er búin að sjá ísbjörninn.
I am BÚINN to see the polar bear
'I have (already) seen/I saw the polar bear.'

Carlson & Wide (MS 1999) characterize the *búinn* construction as a *weakly perfective near perfect* and the *hafa* construction as an *existential*

³ The form *búinn* is inflected in gender and number according to the grammatical subject of the sentence (*hann er búinn*, *hún er búin*, *það er búíð* and so on). As the literal meaning of *búinn* in the construction has eroded to the extent that the construction can express ongoing events, I will use the masc. sing. form BÚINN in the glosses instead of, for example, *done* or *finish*.

perfect. This implies that the *búinn* construction is optionally closed, and the *hafa* construction optionally remote. The contrast can disappear, but comes out clearly in certain contexts. Example (5) shows an example from *Þjóðarsálin* (cf. section 4) where the contrast is quite clear:

- (5) þeir hafa sótt til dæmis allan garðaúrgang núna bara
 they have collected for example all garden waste now prt
 'they have collected all the garden waste for instance for quite'
- í þó nokkuð mörg ár /.../ nú er búið að loka fyrir þetta
 in still some many years now is BÚINN to close for this
 'a few years now /.../ now this has been stopped'

The *hafa* construction is the only option when the event type is open, and the question is *what* one has been doing rather than for *how long* (Einarsson 1949: 147). Aspectual competition is, however, found with adverbials of duration as demonstrated in example (6) from Friðjónsson (1989: 106). Used in these cases as a universal perfect, the *búinn* construction adds an implicature for 'already (by/until) now'. As example (7) from *Þjóðarsálin* shows, in some of these cases the adverbial of duration is omitted.

- (6) a. Hann hefur vakað í tíu tíma (áður)
 he has stayed.up in ten hours before
 'He has stayed up for ten hours (before).'
- b. Hann er búinn að vaka í tíu tíma (núna).
 he is BÚINN to stay.up in ten hours now
 'He has stayed up four ten hours (now).'
- (7) ég þekki marga sjúkl- marga áfengissjúklinga og ég er
 I know many pat[ients] many alcoholics and I am
 'I know many alcoholics and I have'
- búin að vera mikið í kringum áfengissjúklinga og og
 BÚINN to be much in around alcoholics and and
 'been around alcoholics a lot and and'
- og þett-þetta gengur bara svona
 and th-this goes only like.that
 'and that's just how it goes'

The *búinn* construction cannot be used with all types of predicates. According to reference grammars, the construction is used primarily with actional verbs (Friðjónsson 1989: 104) and usually not with durative, stative or momentaneous verbs, unless an adverbial is added expressing how long

something has been going on or how many times something has occurred (cf. above, Friðjónsson 1989: 105). The grammars thus seem to suggest that the *búinn* construction is restricted to bounded actions or states. As demonstrated in examples (6)-(7), however, there are data which suggest that the *búinn* construction can also be used with less bounded predicates.

4. The *búinn* construction with different types of events

When aspectual constructions such as perfects are *grammaticalized* in languages, that is, when they obtain a more general meaning and become more frequent and obligatory, they tend to spread unequally to different types of predicates. To grammaticalize fully as perfects, the constructions must generalize so that they occur with verbs of all semantic types (cf. Bybee et al. 1994: 74). The main types of verbs and events which the *búinn* construction *can* occur with were discussed briefly in section 3, mainly from a semantic point of view. This section will treat the spread of the *búinn* construction to different predicates from a slightly different angle, that is, by examining the types of predicates with which the construction actually occurs in a corpus of authentic recorded conversations. The discussion is based on a pilot study presented in more detail in Wide (forthc.).

The data in the pilot study consisted of 15 broadcasts (approx. 85,000 words) of the talk radio program *Þjóðarsálin* 'Soul of the Nation', which were transcribed at the Institute of Linguistics at the University of Iceland in 1996.⁴ The occurrences of the *búinn* construction in the data were analyzed by using the classical Vendlerian categories of *activities*, *accomplishments*, *achievements* and *states* (Vendler 1967: 97-121). Although various refinements have been put forth in the literature, these categories still seem to be widely used for analyzing actional properties of verbs and verb phrases. As Smith (1991: 28) puts it, the Vendlerian categories "classify events and states at a level that is general and abstract enough to account for the range of possibilities that occurs." The basic oppositions underlying the Vendlerian categories, which Smith (1991) calls situation types, are those between "punctual" vs. "durative" events, "telic" vs. "atelic" events, and "static" vs. "dynamic" events (Bertinetto and Delfitto 2000: 190). States can thus be characterized as static events with neither dynamics nor internal structure and a duration of at least a moment (*know the answer, be in*

⁴ The corpus project was led by Prof. Halldór Ármann Sigurðsson and the author of the paper. The transcriptions were made by Jóhanna Snorradóttir and Jóhannes B. Sigtryggsson.

Athens). Activities, on the other hand, are durative telic events, that is, events with homogenous successive stages and an arbitrary final point (*walk in the park, laugh*). Accomplishments are also durative telic events, but, in contrast to activities they furthermore consist of successive stages and a natural final point (*build a house, walk to school*). Achievements, finally, can be described as instantaneous changes of state, which lead to a new state (*reach the top, win a race*) (Smith 1991: 28).

There were 150 examples of the *búinn* construction in the data. Not surprisingly, most of the examples (87) occurred with accomplishments. In 5 cases the construction was, however, not completed and thus lacked a verb in the infinitive. As seen in Table 1 below, there were also 6 unclear cases, that is, cases where I could not categorize the event. In 2 of these 6 cases the problem was to decide whether the event was to be seen as an accomplishment or an activity, that is, whether the focus was on the result of the activity or on the activity itself. Similarly, in two cases it was difficult to decide whether the event should be seen as an accomplishment/achievement or a state, that is, whether the event was dynamic or stative. Finally, in two cases it was unclear whether the event was an accomplishment or an achievement, that is, whether the event should be seen as the result of an conscious activity or as a change of state.

Type of predicate	Tokens	Rate
Accomplishments	87	58%
Achievements	18	12%
States	18	12%
Activities	16	11%
Unclear cases	6	4%
Main verb missing	5	3%
Total	150	100%

Table 1. Types of predicates (*Þjóðarsálin*).

The 6 unclear cases demonstrated that the categories of states, activities, accomplishments and achievements are sometimes not easy to distinguish in authentic data. Nevertheless, some clear patterns could be

found. The *búinn* construction, for example, occurred 105 times in the data with predicates that could be characterized as accomplishments or achievements. In both of these types of events the action is bounded. Thus, the prototypical type of predicate occurring with the *búinn* construction in the data was clearly a concrete action whose beginning and end could be seen or imagined. In most cases, such as in (8), the examples also involved an active agent, which is typical of accomplishments (but not achievements).

- (8) ertu búinn að ertu búinn að lesa þessa bók?
 are.you BÚINN to are.you BÚINN to read this book
 'have you have you read this book?'

In 18 occurrences the *búinn* construction appeared with predicates which can be categorized as achievements. The *búinn* construction hence is clearly not restricted to actions performed by agents; it can also be used to describe completion of actions that cannot be controlled. This is the case in example (9), where a person had called in to talk about a friend who missed some weeks of unemployment benefits due to a mistake by the employment exchange office.

- (9) að hún væri þá búinn að missa þá vinnu
 that she was then BÚINN to lose that job
 'that she had then lost that job'

Whereas accomplishments and achievements have inherent boundaries and describe actions that are completed, activities and states are actions without such boundaries. There are, however, temporal boundaries that do not complete an action, but put an end to a period of some durative action (or state). Most of the examples of the *búinn* construction with activities and states in the data were of this kind. The boundary was either a time adverbial and/or the progressive form *vera að* 'be to' + infinitive, as in example (10), in which a caller was asking for help in finding a transmission case for his car.

- (10) ég er búinn að vera að leita í hálf ári
 I am BÚINN to be to search in half year
 'I've been searching for half a year'

Compatibility with stative predicates is usually considered an important aspect of the grammaticalization process of past, perfective and perfect

constructions (cf. Bybee et al. 1994: 74-76). There were only a few examples in the data of the *búinn* construction with predicates representing states by means of a single verb, such as *ég er bara búin að búa hér* 'I have just been living here.' Most examples were what Vendler (1967: 108) calls *qualities*. Example (11), in which a caller was talking about a possible change in the fishing quota system and said that there had been a lot of pressure lately to get the change approved, is a typical example.

- (11) það er búinð að vera mikill þrýstingur
 it is BÚINN to be much pressure
 'there has been a lot of pressure'

Use of the *búinn* construction with predicates expressing qualities, such as in (7), seems to be fairly common. This could indicate that the construction is generally expanding to stative predicates (cf. Carlson & Wide MS 1999, section 3 above). A search on various forms of *búinn* in the written language index at the Lexicographic Institute at the University of Iceland,⁵ however, reveals some interesting historical examples of the *búinn* construction, such as example (12):

- (12) er hún nú búin að vera í tíu vistum
 is she now BÚINN to be in ten stays
 'has she now been serving in ten households' (late 17th century)

The use of the *búinn* construction with stative predicates which could be characterized as qualities (cf. Vendler 1967: 108) thus cannot be considered entirely new in Icelandic. Rather, it seems to have existed for quite a long time. There is, however, an important difference between examples (11) and (12): the use of the time adverbial *nú* 'now'. It is possible that the use of the *búinn* construction with stative and durative predicates was more strictly connected with the use of *nú* and similar time adverbials in the past. To explore this diachronic aspect of the construction, however, it would be necessary to carry out a thorough analysis of the occurrences of the *búinn* construction in texts from the 16th to the 20th century.

To summarize, the pilot study on the use of the *búinn* construction in the *Þjóðarsálin* corpus clearly shows that the construction tends to be used

⁵The written language index consists of some 2.5 million examples of nearly 700 hundred words from the year 1540 onwards. A search engine is available also on the Internet.

with certain types of events, such as accomplishments and achievements. When the construction is used with activities, in many cases the event seems to occur together with a boundary of some kind, for example, the progressive construction *vera að* + inf. 'be to + inf.' or a time adverbial. With respect to states, the construction seems to be fairly accepted with qualities, but not very frequent with other types of states. The results of the pilot study hence coincide for the most parts with the description of the construction in reference grammars (cf. section 3).

The grammaticalization of temporal and aspectual constructions is often studied on the basis of the types of predicates with which the constructions occur. One way to establish the extent to which the *búinn* construction has been grammaticalized in Icelandic would thus be to draw conclusions on the basis of sentence-level studies such as the pilot study presented in this section. However, as the 17th century example in (12) reveals, drawing conclusions about the grammaticalization of the *búinn* construction solely on the basis of types of events and verbs might not tell the whole truth about the process. Taking into account the use of time adverbials such as *now* on the sentence level and referring to the concept of *current relevance* would of course broaden the picture of the construction. This concept is widely employed in the literature on perfects and can be defined either as a "the continuance of result" or as "a condition on discourse" (cf. Dahl & Hedin 2000: 391-393). In addition to the fact that current relevance is actually quite a fuzzy notion, such an analysis would, however, still leave out two important factors: the use of the construction in various types of texts and in specific contexts within these texts. The remainder of this paper will deal with these factors, beginning with the use of the construction in different types of texts.

5. Frequency in different types of texts

The *búinn* construction is often said to be more common in spoken/colloquial language (cf. Kress 1982: 155, Bonner 1995: 53). The construction also seems to be less frequent the more formal the genre of text or spoken language in question. A pilot study performed on the vast text collections at the Lexicographic Institute at the University of Iceland, which cover both texts written in Icelandic and texts translated into Icelandic, shows clearly that the relative frequency of the construction is higher, for example, in fiction than in texts for specific purposes, that is, specialist or

professional texts (texts on hygiene, psychology, history, jurisprudence, natural science and arts, scientific articles, journals and legal codices):

Text type	Texts	Words	Tokens	Tokens/1000 w.
Texts for specific purposes	57	3313278	99	0.03
Magazines	4	200093	102	0.51
Memoirs	28	1791125	848	0.47
Fiction (novels and plays)	46	2849878	1439	0.51
Children's (and juvenile) books	41	1031869	1452	1.41
Total		9186243	3940	0.43

Table 2. Relative frequency of the *búinn* construction in different types of texts.

The addition of a comparison to the use of other perfect constructions in the texts would do more justice to the picture of the distribution of the *búinn* construction. Such a comparison would, however, be extremely time-consuming due to the untagged nature of the data. Nonetheless, the relative frequencies presented in Table 2 give a rough sketch of the type of texts in which the *búinn* construction appears. The figures also seem to support the assumption that the construction is more frequent the more informal the text in question. As Table 2 shows, the highest frequency of the construction was found in children's books, which are likely to be less formal than the other texts included in the survey. Among the children's books included, Icelandic (i.e. not translated) juvenile books showed the highest frequencies, up to 3.6 occurrences per 1000 words in a single book. As with all types of texts in the survey, there were, however, some considerable differences among the various children's books included, ranging from 0 occurrences in shorter excerpts and 0.4 occurrences per 1000 words in entire books to the aforementioned 3.6 occurrences per 1000 words in a book taken in its entirety. The differences in frequency among the texts included in the pilot study should perhaps therefore not be regarded simply as a question of style or genres. Rather, it seems likely that the frequency of the *búinn* construction relates to the communicative activities or acts represented or described in the texts. Children's and juvenile books are perhaps more

dialogical in character than the other texts investigated in the pilot study. This does not necessarily mean that they are exclusively built upon dialogue, but rather that the narration in them is more reflective and reflexive than, for example, in texts for specific purposes. This question will, however, not be investigated in more detail here. Instead the dialogical characteristics of the *búinn* construction will be highlighted in section 6, where the use of the *búinn* construction in authentic recorded conversations is analyzed.

The variation in the frequency of the *búinn* construction shown in the pilot study raises the question of what role the choice of data plays, for example, in a study of grammaticalization. Depending on the data one chooses to consider, the spread of the *búinn* construction in Icelandic will appear quite different. Another question raised by the distribution of the construction in the data, especially considering the internal differences within the groups, is the role played by the contexts, topics and communicative functions of the texts in the use of the construction. This question will be discussed in the next section.

6. Situated use in authentic recorded conversations

The use of the *búinn* construction does not seem to depend solely on the types of texts examined. As discussed in section 5, there can be considerable differences in the use of the construction among different texts of the same type. One of the chief assumptions made in Wide (MS 2000) is that these differences stem, at least in part, from the fact that the use of the *búinn* construction is highly dependent on the type of communicative activities going on in the text/conversation. Due to the limited space available, I cannot explore this question to any further extent in this paper. I would, however, like to demonstrate some features of the *búinn* construction that might support such an assumption. Let us begin by examining one example from the *Þjóðarsálin* program, in which a caller (E) was advising the moderator (M) to stop people from talking about the presidential elections going on at the time of the call. (p stands for an unmeasured pause, prt for a discourse particle and [/] for the beginning/end of overlapping speech)

(13) Forbid people to talk about the presidential elections!

1 E: stoppa bara alla þessa umræðu um (p) forsetaframbjóðendurnar
 stop prt all this discussion about the presidential candidates
 'just stop this whole discussion about the presidential candidates'

- 2 M: já (p) það er (p) það ((laughs))
 yes that is that
 'well, you don't say'
 ((10 turns omitted))
- 3 E: [og ég bara (p) ég bíð] bara eftir því að þið hafið bein
 and I prt I wait prt after that that you have bone
 'I am just waiting for you to have the'
- 4 í nefinu og strikið yfir þetta
 in the nose and strike over this
 'guts and put a stop to this'
- 5 M: já (p) en Þjó-Þjóðarsálin er nú s- (p) ykkar vettvangur
 yes but 'Soul of the nation' is PRT your forum
 'yes Þjó- but Þjóðarsálin is actually your forum'
- 6 til þess að [fítja upp málefnum] og ræða málin
 to its to bring up issues and discuss the matters
 'for bringing up issues and discussing matters'
- 7 E: [það er en] (p) en þið hljótið
 that is but but you must
 'that is but but you must'
- 8 að vera búinn að reka ykkur á það að stór hópur af þessu
 to be BÚINN to bump into on that that big group of these
 'have noticed that many of these'
- 9 fólki hefur ekki stjórn á sér
 people have not control on themselves
 'people cannot control themselves'
- 10 M: nei (p) og við erum líka búinn (p) að minnast á það hér í
 no and we are also BÚINN to mention on that here in
 'no and we have also pointed out here on'
- 11 Þjóðarsálinni að fólk (p) ja haldi sér innan (p)
 'Soul of the nation' that people yes hold themselves within
 'Þjóðarsálin that people should keep within'
- 12 E: [það bara dugar ekki]
 that prt suffices not
 'that's just not enough'
- 13 M: siðferðis [marka þegar það (p) tjáir] sig um þessi mál /.../
 morality limits when it expresses itself about these issues
 'ethical limits when they are expressing their opinion on these issues...'

As seen, the *búinn* construction in example (13) occurred in connection to a sequence where a problem needed to be solved. The entire call from which the example is taken dealt with the premises of E's suggestion that people should be forbidden to talk about the presidential elections. E and M had quite different opinions about these premises, and the communicative problem arising from their argumentative positions were never solved during the call. As seen in line 2, the moderator (M), signaled already in her first response to the suggestion made by E, that she did not agree with him. Her use of the word *já* seems to have had the function of a discourse marker signaling hesitation or delay. The two pauses in the turn and the laughter at the end likewise contribute to the impression that M did not want to agree with E on his proposal. Nor did she, on the other hand, show clearly that she disagreed with him. Rather, she seems to have tried to avoid addressing E's proposal directly. In the omitted turns, in which there were several overlaps and the turns were quite short, E tried to argue for his standpoint using various strategies. The moderator, in turn, continued avoiding the question, until E restated his proposal for the second time (line 4). At that point the moderator made a clear statement about the role of the program *Þjóðarsálin* (lines 5-6). In the two turns following this statement, the *búinn* construction occurred twice.

The activity going on in (13) could unambiguously be characterized as argumentative. E suggested that people should be forbidden to talk about the presidential elections (line 1). He tried to back up his point by various means at the same time as M attempted to discard his suggestion to forbid people to talk about the elections. This pro-contra character of the conversation between E and M becomes particularly apparent in the sequence shown in lines 7-13, where the *búinn* construction occurred in the beginning of two consecutive turns by E and M. E first responded to M's previous statement (lines 7-9) by pointing out that the moderators must have noticed that many of the people talking about the election campaign could not control themselves. He thus referred to (and evaluated) past events and explicitly indicated that the moderator of the program must have noticed these happenings, too ("but you must have..."). The implication of his contribution seems to have been that, knowing or remembering this, the moderator should agree with him; it is almost possible to imagine an unspoken clause starting with *þannig að* 'therefore' following his statement. In a way, E was taking a step back in time and in the conversation in order to question the premise (or premises) put forth by the moderator. With his response, he also provided yet another argument for why people should not be allowed to talk

about the presidential elections in the program, that is, a reason why his proposal (lines 1 and 4) should be considered. The moderator, however, likewise maintained her stance. By starting with *no*, she first made a *pro forma* agreement with E's evaluation that some people could not control themselves. After a short pause, however, she went on to point out to E something which he in turn should have known, namely that the moderators had advised people to keep within certain limits when they talked about the presidential elections (lines 10-11, 13). The moderator thus likewise took a step back in time and counterattacked E's questioning of her premises by reminding E of past actions which were also highly relevant for the issue they were discussing. The unspoken implication of M's utterance seems to have been that the program hosts did not have to act in accordance with E's suggestion, as they had already addressed the problem E was talking about. As seen in line 12, however, E continued to argue for his point by responding that "that's just not enough". Both parties also continued the argument without giving in, until the moderator simply thanked the caller for calling and ended the conversation.

The argumentative or problem-solving activity going on in example (13) seems to be a typical context for the *búinn* construction. The whole sequence could, however, also be seen as a discussion of the presuppositions about the issue discussed, or in other words, as a negotiation of the common ground of the caller and the moderator. Common ground may be defined briefly as "the sum of the interactants' mutual, common or joint knowledge, beliefs and suppositions" (Clark 1996: 93). As seen in lines 1-2, the moderator did not agree with the caller on the issue that people should be forbidden to talk about the presidential elections. The caller then tried to argue his case by making an assertion (line 7-8: *þið hljótið að vera búin að reka ykkur á...*) about the common ground of the caller and the moderator. The moderator, however, did not agree with the assertion and instead referred to, or *reinitiated* (cf. e.g. Korolija & Linell 1996: 810-812), another aspect of the problem discussed (line 9-10: *við erum líka búin (p) að minnast á...*), that is, made an assertion of her own.

Discussing common ground or presuppositions for the conversation going on is a typical feature of contexts in which the *búinn* construction can be found. These contexts are not always argumentative as in example (13). The *búinn* construction also appears in sequences where past events are foregrounded for other reasons, such as explaining to new listeners what is going on in a discussion. In example (14), from the Icelandic youth program

Ó hve glöð er vor æska ‘Oh this merry youth of ours’⁶, the hosts of the program (H1, H2) informed the listeners, after a short musical interlude, what had been discussed in the program so far. (D and K were guests in the program)

(14) We have been talking about love

- 1 H1: já velkomin aftur í Ó hve glöð er vor æska hér á rás
 yes welcome again in ‘Oh the merry...’ here on station
 tvö
 two
 ‘yes welcome again to Ó hve glöð er vor æska here on station two’
- 2 (p) við erum að tala um ástina
 we are to talk about the love
 ‘we are talking about love’
- 3 H2: við erum með D hédna og (p) K (p) og hédna við
 we are with D PRT and K and PRT we
 ‘we have with us here D and K and well we’
- 4 **erum búinn að svona vaða á** svona (p) á hédna hundavaði
 are BÚINN to PRT wade on PRT on PRT ford for dogs
 ‘have been so to speak rushing’
- 5 hédna yfir það svona a- allskonar allskonar hluti í sambandi
 PRT over it PRT a- all kinds all kinds things in connection
 ‘through it so to speak a- all kinds all kinds of things connected’
- 6 við ástina
 with the love
 ‘to love’

As can be seen in lines 1-2, one of the hosts first stated generally that love had been the main issue of the program so far. The other host then specified that “they had so to speak been rushing through all kinds of things connected to love.” The *búinn* construction in example (14) thus contributed to a refinement of an earlier statement. This specification of earlier statements (or arguments) also seems to be a typical context for the *búinn* construction to appear in. Just as in contexts where problems about common ground are being solved, this type of context seems to relate to the activity of discussing the premises of the ongoing conversation.

Finally, let us examine an example of the *búinn* construction where the use of the construction is directly connected to non-verbal activities. This

⁶The broadcast is from October 1996 and the transcription was made by Helga Hilmisdóttir.

example is from the Icelandic Child Language Acquisition data at the University College of Education (modified transcription, Ch stands for child, Mo for mother)⁷:

(15) You've been falling enough!

1 Ch: *ég var a' detta!*
I was to fall
'I fell'

2 Ch: *ég var a' detta!*
I was to fall
'I fell'

3 Mo: *já*
yes
'yes'

4 Mo: *nú ertu búinn a' detta svo oft*
now are.you BÚINN to fall so often
'now you have fallen so many times'

5 Mo: *nú skaltu ekki detta meira*
now shall.you not fall more
'now you mustn't fall more'

When the sequence demonstrated in example (15) occurred in the conversation between the two-year old, the child's mother and two other adult women, the child had been insisting for quite some time on sliding off a chest in the room where the conversation took place. When the mother then stated that the child had fallen so many times, she was not only referring to the ongoing activity, but implying that the child had fallen enough, that is, should stop doing so. As seen in line 5, she also explicated this implication by saying *nú skaltu ekki detta meira*. Implications of this kind seem to be very closely connected to the use of the *búinn* construction. The construction is quite often used to govern verbal or non-verbal activities in the communicative setting (cf. example (3) above).

Examples (13)-(15) have simply illustrated the main communicative activities in which the *búinn* construction seems to be employed, that is, solving problems of common ground, discussing the premises of the conversation going on and governing non-verbal activities in the

⁷ Prof. Hrafnhildur Ragnarsdóttir, who leads the project, provided me with data from the corpus of child-adult conversations. The corpus is transcribed in the CHILDES/CHAT format.

communicative setting. A more extensive analysis of the communicative functions of the *búinn* construction in Wide (MS 2000), however, seems to suggest that the *búinn* construction indeed is associated with certain types of communicative activities and is clearly interactive in character.

7. Summary

The main purpose of this paper was to demonstrate various **synchronic** aspects of the grammaticalization of the construction *vera búinn að* + infinitive in contemporary Icelandic. In so doing, I hope to have shown that synchronic variation should be given more consideration in grammaticalization studies. But why should grammaticalization studies consider such factors as frequency in different types of texts and situated uses in authentic conversations? And why should grammaticalization studies focus so much on purely synchronic components? First, many studies on grammaticalization already rely quite heavily on synchronic language use, as they examine diachronic layers of grammatical forms in present day language. Taking into account other aspects of variation in present day language besides the presupposed historical layers of meanings and sentence-level uses of constructions might give more insight on how the changes actually take place. Secondly, returning to the concept of emergent grammar: if grammar is to be seen as a vast collection of subsystems of frequently-used forms that are constantly being restructured and resemanticized during actual use, is it not then of uttermost interest to grammaticalization studies to look more closely at these subsystems also?

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