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Scandinavian Object Shift revisited: The relevance of (types of) topicalhood

Scandinavian Object Shift (OS) is a phenomenon that has intrigued linguists for more than twenty years since it was first discussed in Holmberg (1986). The phenomenon, in which pronominal objects are shifted across negation (and adverbs), is illustrated in (1).

Pronouns undergoing OS are typically destressed and defocused. These characteristics have led to analyses of OS related to prosody (cf. Erteschik-Shir 2005) and focus (Holmberg 1999, Mikkelsen 2011). Based on data from Mainland Scandinavian (specifically Norwegian) we will show that these analyses are problematic, and propose an alternative.

Some pronominal objects do not undergo OS, even though they are destressed and do not receive a focus interpretation. This applies to indefinite pronouns, (2). In addition, in certain contexts the pronominal object *det* 'it' is strongly dispreferred in a shifted position. As pointed out by Andréasson (2008) for Danish and Swedish, *det* cannot shift when it refers to a VP or a clause. The same holds for Norwegian, (3). Furthermore, as shown in Anderssen et al. (2011) (see also Lødrup 2010), when the pronominal object *det* refers back to a noun phrase with a generic interpretation it generally resists OS, (4). A characteristic property shared by the pronouns in (3)-(4) is that they refer to a non-individuated referent; a complete clause in (3) and fish in general in (4). Note that *det* referring to an individuated DP (the house), as in (1), obligatorily shifts.

Holmberg (1999) suggests that shifted pronominal objects are defocused, whereas non-shifted ones are focus elements. However, this generalization only captures part of the data, since non-focused pronominal objects can be found in both shifted and non-shifted position. Consequently, *defocusing* as such cannot be the trigger for OS. Rather, we here propose an account of OS in terms of topicalization to a TP-internal TopicP (cf. Jayaseelan 2001). However, this topic position is only available to pronominal objects with an individuated reference. This accounts for the distinction between (1) and (3)-(4). Notably, topical pronominal objects like that in (1) cannot be topicalized into a clause-initial position without receiving a contrastive interpretation, (5-B) vs. (5-B''). Thus, OS is the only way referential pronominal objects can be topicalized. In contrast, objects with a non-individuated reference can either remain in situ or be topicalized to the clause-initial position, (6). Finally, as illustrated in (7), indefinite pronominal objects cannot be topicalized to either of these positions. This is due to the fact that such elements cannot function as topics.

This yields an interesting pattern where there is a complimentary distribution between the available topicalization positions of pronominal objects with individuated and non-individuated reference. We will discuss this distribution in the light of the different topic positions proposed in Frascarelli (2007) and Frascarelli & Hinterhölzl (2007). Objects with an individuated reference function as familiar topics that are D-linked, i.e. have an accessible referent in the discourse. We suggest that this interpretation is licensed in a TP-internal TopicP in Scandinavian. Objects with a non-individuated reference are not D-linked in the sense that they do not have an accessible nominal referent in the discourse. Moreover, when topicalized into the clause-initial position, they function as Aboutness shifting topics. Referential (shifting) pronominal objects cannot have this function as they contain information already given in the context.

- (1) a. Jeg fant **{*huset}** ikke **{huset}**. b. Jeg fant **{det}** ikke **{*det}**.
I found house.the not house.the I found it not it
 ‘I didn’t find the house.’ ‘I didn’t find it.’
- (2) Jeg ville låne en sykkel, men han hadde **{*en}** ikke **{en}**.
I wanted borrow a bicycle but he had one not one
 ‘I wanted to borrow a bicycle but he didn’t have one.’
- (3) A: Har hun gått hjem?
has she gone home
 ‘Has she gone home?’
 B: Jeg tror **{*det_{Clause}}}** ikke **{det_{Clause}}}**.
I think it not it
 ‘I don’t think so.’
 (*det* = ‘that she has gone home’)
- (4) A: Hva med fisk til middag?
what with fish-MASC to dinner
 ‘How about fish for dinner?’
 B: Nei, Per spiser **{#det_{Gen}}}** ikke **{det_{Gen}}}**.
no Per eats it not it
 ‘No, Per doesn’t eat that.’
 (*det* = ‘fish in general’)
- (5) A: Har du spist bananen din?
have you eaten banana.the your
 B: #Nei, **den** likte jeg ikke.
no it liked I not
 B’: Nei, jeg likte **den** ikke.
no I liked it not
 B’’: Nei, **DEN** har jeg kastet.
no THAT have I thrown
- (6) A: Spiste du noe frukt?
ate you any fruit
 B: Nei, jeg gjorde ikke **det**.
no I did not it
 B’: *Jeg gjorde **det** ikke.
I did it not
 B’’: Nei, **det** gjorde jeg ikke.
no it did I not
- (7) A: Jeg vil ha en sjokolade!
I want have a chocolate
 B: Jeg har ikke **en**.
I have not one
 B’: *Jeg har **en** ikke.
I have one not
 B’’: ***En** har jeg ikke.
one have I not

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