

Not all objects are born alike

– accessibility as the key to variation in pronominal object shift in Scandinavian

Pronominal object shift is a phenomenon that has attracted the interest of many linguists over the years and it is consequently well described in the literature, just a few examples are: Holmberg (1986, 1999), Hellan & Platzack (1995), Josefsson (1992; 2003), Sells (2001), Svenonius (2002) and Vikner (1994, 1997). For the mainland Scandinavian languages, it has been argued that shifted pronominal objects, see (1 a), are unstressed and cannot be interpreted as contrasted while in situ objects, see (1 b), are stressed and receive a contrastive interpretation, see (1). Exceptions are Swedish and some Danish and Norwegian dialects where also non-contrasted pronominal objects may remain in situ (Pedersen 1993). In standard Danish on the other hand, shift of weak pronominal objects is considered obligatory.

- (1) a. Jeg kendte [°]*hende ikke* (#*ikke hende*) [DAN]
I know-PST her NEG NEG her
'I didn't know her'
- b. Min modstander kender *ikke "mig* (#*mig ikke*) men jeg kender ham. [DAN]
my competitor know-PRS NEG me me NEG but I know-PRS him
'My competitor doesn't know me, but I know him.'

This talk aims to shed new light on the phenomenon of pronominal object shift in mainland Scandinavian, by presenting new data leading to the assumption that accessibility (cf. Gundel et al. 1993) and not informative status is the key to much of the variation.

Generally, literature about pronominal object shift deals with data concerning objects referring to entities – introduced in the text by NPs – and standard object shift analyses account only for these, mostly building on constructed examples and informant judgements. The point of departure for this talk is an extensive corpus study of pronominal object shift in spoken and written Danish and Swedish. This study reveals an interesting pattern that has not been discussed in previous analyses; pronominal objects referring to propositions – introduced by clauses or VPs – have a different distribution and a different interpretation than objects referring to entities.

Shifting or in situ placement of pronominal objects with propositional reference (henceforth P-OBJ) do not evoke the same interpretations as objects referring to entities (henceforth E-OBJ) and the former hence appear in situ to a greater extent than the latter, without any contrastive interpretation. It is instead in sentences where a P-OBJ is shifted that contrast is involved. In these, the finite verb receives a contrastive interpretation, as in (2) below, where *tror* is opposed to *vet* in the following sentence. In a sentence where the finite verb is not contrasted, see (3) below, the P-OBJ appear in situ without any contrastive interpretation, and the shifted variant is infelicitous.

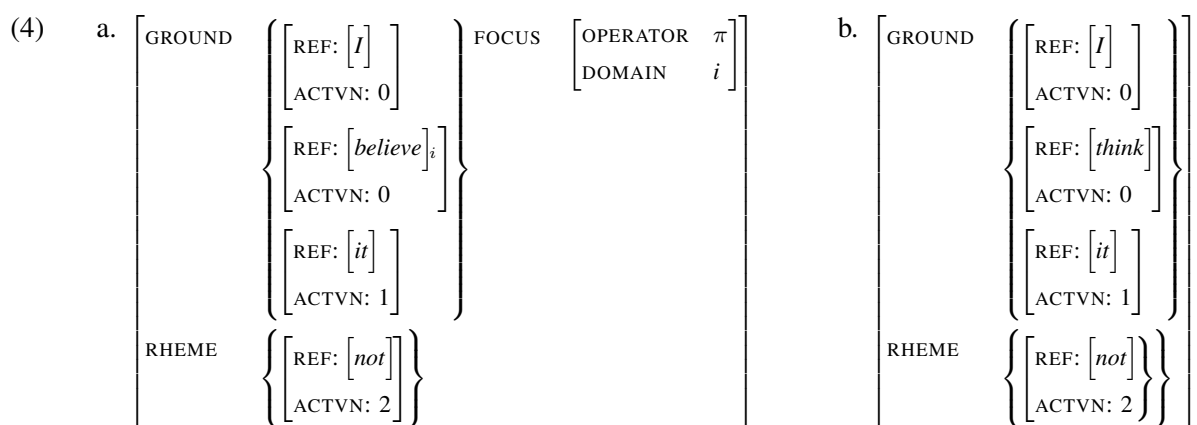
- (2) Jag tror [°]*det inte* (#*inte det*). Jag vet det. [SWE]
I think-PRS it NEG NEG it I know-PRS it
'I don't "believe it, I "know it'
- (3) – Tycker du att vi ska sluta nu? – Nej, jag tycker *inte 'det* (#*det inte*). [SWE]
think-PRS you that we FUT stop-INF now no I think-PRS NEG it it NEG
'– Do you think we should stop now? – No, I don't think so.'

The relative stress on the non-shifted P-OBJ does not evoke a contrastive interpretation, but is rather an “activation stress”, which corresponds to the observation in Gundel et al (1999; 2003), that pronouns with propositional antecedents are first promoted to the second highest level (ACTIVATED) of the accessibility hierarchy in Gundel, Hedberg and Zacharski (1993) and only later to the highest level (IN FOCUS). Pronouns with antecedents referring to entities, on the other hand, are directly promoted to the highest level of the accessibility hierarchy.

The analysis of Gundel et al (1999; 2003) is here extended to account for the shifted or in situ placement of objects in mainland Scandinavian and we will show that object shift is in fact not related

to the informative status (ground/theme vs. focus/rheme) of the object referent. Cognitive status is, just as informative status, a major trigger of information packaging (Vallduví 1992) and it hence leads to the choice of lexical item for example in English (cf. *that* or *it*) (Gundel et al. 1999; 2003) and the choice of prosodic features (cf. activation stress or de-stressing) and, as we will show, the choice of syntactic position (cf. shifted or non-shifted objects) in mainland Scandinavian.

By including cognitive status as an activation feature (ACTVN) for of the referents of the discourse functions in the d/i-structure, as has been suggested by O'Connor (2006), this can be neatly accounted for within LFG. Nevertheless, setting the value of this feature to plus ('needs activation') or minus ('already active') will not suffice to account for object shift, since the pronominal object shift depends on two distinct accessibility levels within the "already active" minus value of O'Connor (2006:87). Instead, we suggest that the value of the ACTVN feature be 0 for IN FOCUS, 1 for ACTIVATED and 3 for the subsequent statuses on the accessibility hierarchy. A simplified version of the d/i-structures of (2) and (3) is shown in (4) below.



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