Object shift in copular clauses

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1 Introduction

> "Object shift is the name given to the phenomenon where an object constituent appears further forward in the sentence than one would normally expect; in particular it appears in front of negation and adverbial elements usually taken to mark the left edge of VP." (Sells 2001:2)

(1) Du husker sikkert ikke **Morten**. [No shift]
you remember probably not Morten
You probably don't remember Morten.

(2) Du husker **ham** sikkert ikke. [Object shifted]
you remember him probably not
You probably don't remember him.

Central questions

1. Which objects shift? ⇐
   Necessary, but not sufficient that object be pronominal (Mainland Scandinavian)
2. Where do they shift to?
3. Why do they shift?
4. Under what circumstances do they shift? [Holmberg's Generalization]

Holmberg and Platzack (1995:141–183) (see also Johnson 1991, Holmberg 1986)

- Objects shift bound up with case – answers Qs 2–4
- No good answer to Q1:
  "The greatest drawback of this theory, as I see it, is that it does not account for why object shift affects only certain types of nominal objects, regardless of verb movement." (Holmberg 1999:22)

Holmberg (1999) [H99] Information structural basis for object shift [OS]:

- inherently [–focus] objects must shift out of the VP because that is the focus domain of the clause (cf. Platzack 1998:136–8; Diesing and Jelinek 1995)
- **prediction**: [+focus] pronouns do not shift, [–focus] pronouns do.

Erteschik-Shir (2005) [ES] Prosodic basis for OS:

- phonologically weak pronouns must undergo Prosodic Incorporation (PI)[1]
- PI of object into V prevents adverbial/negation from linearizing between the two:

  *V+adv/neg+pronoun

- adverbial/negation linearizes right of incorporated pronoun and PIs into V-object complex:

  V+pronoun+adv/neg

- **prediction**: prosodically strong pronouns do not shift, prosodically weak pronouns do.
- in line with dominant view in Danish grammatical tradition (Diderichsen 1968:193, Hansen 1984:59ff, Togeby 2001)

Focus vs. prosody Given the tight correlation between bearing focus and being prosodically prominent in Scandinavian languages, it is difficult to tease apart these two proposals on empirical grounds.

This paper:

- give evidence from one particular domain (copular clauses) that object shift is not purely phonologically conditioned (contra ES), but rather requires reference to the information structure of the object and clause (H99; Hosono 2005)
- small piece, but important given the crucial role played by OS in debates about central theoretical notions like equidistance and AgrOP, about the existence of alignment constaints in syntax (Sells 2001), and about the architecture of the grammar: Stylistic Syntax (H99), Sound Patterns of Syntax (ES), Single Output Syntax (Bobalijk 2002), linearization (Fox and Pesetsky 2005).

Note Since I am only interested in the properties of the object itself that influence whether it shifts, and not in the external factors, I only consider examples where the external conditions for OS are met: no phonological material intervenes between the base-position of the object and the left edge of νP/VP.

[1] PI itself is optional but unincorporated weak pronouns are uninterpretable at PF (ES:51).

2 Background

2.1 Danish OS

- Only pronominal objects may shift:

(3) Du husker **ham/hende/den** sikkert ikke.
you remember him/her/it probably not
You probably don't remember him/her/it.

(4) *Du husker **Morten/naboen/min fødselsdag** sikkert ikke.
you remember Morten/neighbor-the/my birthday probably not

- Obligatory where possible (Hansen 1984:59ff, Togeby 2001:107, Vikner 1989:143):

(5) Du husker **ham** sikkert ikke.
you remember him probably not
You probably don't remember him.

(6) *Du husker sikkert ikke **ham**.
you remember probably not him

- "strong" pronouns don't shift:

(7) Han husker DIG men du husker sikkert ikke **HAM**.
he remembers you but you remember probably not him
He remembers YOU, but you probably don't remember HIM.

(8) *Han husker DIG men du husker **HAM** sikkert ikke.
he remembers you but you remember him probably not

Question Is strong defined in terms of information structure ([+focus]) or prosody (stressed)?

2.2 Copular clauses

(9) Predicational: [description BE name]

a. Rem Koolhaus is the architect behind the new Seattle library.

b. Morten er min nye løbemakker.
Morten is my new running-partner
Morten is my new running partner.

(10) Specificational: [name BE description]

a. The architect behind the new Seattle library is Rem Koolhaus.

b. Min nye løbemakker er Morten.
my new running-partner is Morten
My new running partner is Morten.

Why are copular clauses relevant? Information structure asymmetry (Akmajian 1979, Higgins 1979, Williams 1997, Partee 2000)

(11) Q: Who is the architect?
A1: The architect is Rem KOOLhaas. [specificational]
A2: Rem KOOLhaas is the architect. [predicational]

(12) Q: Who is Rem Koolhaas?
A3: #The ARchitect is Rem Koolhaas. [specificational]
A4: Rem Koolhaas is the ARchitect. [predicational]

- Predicational clauses have free focus structure: object focus (A4) or subject focus (A2)
- Specificational clauses have fixed focus structure: object focus (A1), no subject focus (A3)
- H99 predict a difference wrt. object shift: possible in predicational clauses (since object need not be focus), impossible in specificational clauses (since must be focus)
- borne out (Mikkelsen 2002:§4.3, based on exs from Jespersen 1924:153, fn. 2):

(13) PREDICATIONAL: OS possible

Frk. C. var den smukkeste pige på ballet sidste år og hun er **det** igen i år.
Miss C was the prettiest girl at ball.DEF last year and she is it again in year
'Miss C. was the prettiest girl at the ball last year and she is that again this year.'

(14) SPECIFICATIONAL: OS impossible

Den smukkeste pige er (*hende) så afgjort **HENde**.
the prettiest girl is (her) so decidedly her
'The prettiest girl is without question HER.'

- why does the object not shift in (14)?

  H99: object is necessarily [+focus] and [+focus] objects don't shift.

  ES: object is stressed and stressed objects don't Prosodically Incorporate.

- in (14) pronoun is deictic, which could require it to be stressed[2]
- need to investigate anaphoric uses, where pronoun can in principle be unstressed
- construct examples where pronoun can be anaphoric without spoiling environment for a specificational clause (Higgins 1979:235)

[2]Though see judgements on (27) in appendix.

3 Focus vs. Prosody

Data Asked 11 speakers (all linguists) to judge 5 x 4 sentences with the explicit instruction that I was interested in determining the effect of stress on object shift in these structure. They were told to interpret a lower case pronoun as unstressed and an uppercase pronoun as stressed.

EXAMPLE OF TEST SENTENCE (no judgements incl.; full data set and judgements in appendix)

(15) Den hurtigste spiller på holdet er uden tvivl Morten og ...
the fastest player on team is without doubt Morten and

a. _den højeste er faktisk også **ham**. [focus, no stress, no shift]
the tallest is actually also him
the tallest one/player is actually also him.

b. _den højeste er **ham** faktisk også. [focus, no stress, shift]
the tallest is him actually also

c. _den højeste er faktisk også **HAM**. [focus, stress, no shift]
the tallest is actually also him

d. _den højeste er **HAM** faktisk også. [focus, stress, shift]
the tallest is him actually also

Predictions and results (by assumption the pronouns in a-d are all focussed)

	a	b	c	d
	[no stress, no shift]	[no stress, shift]	[stress, no shift]	[stress, shift]
ES	*	√	√	*
H99	√	*	√	*
Judgements	√	*	*/??	*

1. contra ES, OS not obligatory with unstressed pronoun (√ on a);
in fact it is impossible (* on b)!
2. judgements support H99: [+focus] objects do not shift, irrespective of stress[3]
3. some variability in judgements, but surprisingly limited:
of 43 judgements on a-type sentences 36 were √
of 44 judgements on b-type sentences 43 were *

[3]The unpredicted badness of (15c) [stress, no shift] plausibly has to do with the parallelism relation between the two clauses and/or the second sentence being affirmative. In examples with a contrast relation between the

4 Alternatives

4.1 Alternative prosodic account

- OS of unstressed pronouns is optional in Swedish and in Ærø dialect of Danish (ES:70).
- ES: these structures are licensed by stress-shift from V to the adverb, which makes the adverb a possible host for PI of the unstressed pronoun: V+'adv+pronoun
- generally not possible for adverbials or negation to take over stress from V in Danish (Togeby 2001:105)
- copula can be destressed and adverbial or negation stressed (my judgement), but in **both** predicational and specificational clauses
- nonetheless, 10 of 11 speakers reported a **contrast** between specificational and predicational clauses for unshifted unstressed pronouns:
  - (15a) acceptable to all 11 speakers
  - (16a) unacceptable to 10 of them

(16) Simon var min løbemakker i fjor, men ...
Simon was my running-partner in last-year but

a. *han er ikke **det** i år. [no stress, no shift]
he is not it in year

b. han er **det** ikke i år. [no stress, shift]
he is it not in year

- judgements on OS in predicational copular clauses match exactly judgments on OS in non-copular clauses:

(17) a. *Du husker sikkert ikke **ham**.
you remember probably not **him**

b. Du husker **ham** sikkert ikke.
you remember him probably not
You probably don't remember him.

Conclusion unless systematic difference in stress properties of copula and adverbs in predicational and specificational clauses is discovered, ES's proposal for unshifted unstressed pronouns in Swedish and Ærø Danish will not account for observed contrast between specificational and predicational copular clauses in Standard Danish.

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two clauses and/or a negated second sentence an unshifted stressed pronoun is generally accepted; see appendix. If this interpretation is on the right track, the deviance of (15c) is independent of OS consideration; it comes from using a stressed pronoun in a pragmatic context that requires destressing of the pronoun (Neeleman and Reinhart 1998:334ff). This line of analysis seems compatible with both H99 and ES, and hence (15c) is irrelevant for distinguishing the two approaches.

4.2 Alternative structural account

- the post-copular element ("objects") in predicational and specificational clause originate in different structural positions (Moro 1997, Mikkelsen 2005:chapter 9)
  - the post-copular elements in a predicational clause originates as the right-hand element of a small clause (= complement to the functional Pred in Mikkelsen 2005)
  - the post-copular element of a specificational clause originates as the left-hand element of a small clause (= specifer of the PredP)
- could this explain why the latter doesn't shift?
- unlikely, as there appears to be no unifying structural restriction on the "objects" that do shift:

1. indirect objects:

(18) Jeg viste **ham** alligevel ikke billederne fra ferien.
I showed him anyways not pictures-the from vacation-the
In the end I didn't show him the pictures from the vacation.

(19) Jeg viste alligevel ikke **Sten** billederne fra ferien.
I showed anyways not Sten pictures-the from vacation-the
In the end I didn't show Sten the pictures from the vacation.

2. subjects of non-finite embedded clauses:

(20) De lod **ham** ikke vente alt for længe.
they let him not wait all too long
They didn't let him wait too long.

(21) De lod ikke **patienterne** vente alt for længe.
they let not patients-the wait all too long
They didn't let the patients wait too long.

(22) Jeg hørte **det** ikke regne.
I heard it not rain
I didn't hear it rain.

(23) Jeg har ikke hørt **det** regne. [no OS because *hørt* is not moved]
I have not heard it rain.
I have not heard it rain.

3. locative adverbials:

(24) De bor **her** ikke længere.
they live here not longer
They don't live here anymore.

(25) De bor ikke **i København** længere.
they live not in Copenhagen longer
They don't live in Copenhagen anymore.

5 Conclusion

> "My argument is not for or against a particular account of OS, but rather for the plausibility of accounting for word order by purely phonological means." (ES:90)

The argument made here is that in at least one empirical domain, namely Danish copular clauses, it is not plausible to account for word order by purely phonological means.

H99's account of OS in terms of focus allows for an account of the Danish copoular facts, but leaves the relationship between focus and prosody unresolved:

- when can a focussed element be realized without stress? (cf. Neeleman and Reinhart (1998:334ff) on deaccenting and focus projection)
- maybe pronoun can be deaccented in specificational clauses because topic–focus structure is fixed; no need to signal focus by prosody ("constructional" vs. non-constructional focus)
- implications for how is focus represented in the grammar

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Appendix

I asked 11 speakers (all linguists) to judge the 5 x 4 sentences in (26)–(30) below with the explicit instruction that I was interested in determining the effect of stress on object shift in these structure. They were told to interpret a lower case pronoun as unstressed and an uppercase pronoun as stressed.

(26) and (28) involve canonical specificational clauses of the form [description BE name]. (27) and (29) involve the Danish correspondent of the English *it*-cleft. Whether these are taken to be specificational clauses (Mikkelsen 2005:118–130) or a construction in their own right, the post-copular position is one of focus (Kiss 1998), which is the crucial property for present purpuses. Finally, (30) involves predicational copular clauses ([name BE description]), which are included to test whether they behave differently from specificational copular clauses wrt. object shift.

(26) Min løbemakker i fjor var Simon, men ...
my running-partner in last-year was Simon, but

a. min løbemakker i år er ikke ham.
my running-partner in year is not him.
my running partner his year is not him.

b. min løbemakker i år er ham ikke.
my running-partner in year is him not

c. min løbemakker i år er ikke HAM.
my running-partner in year is not him

d. min løbemakker i år er HAM ikke.
my running-partner in year is him not

(27) *Context: A & B are looking at an old school picture and A says the following while pointing at a face in the picture*:

a. Det var Bo jeg sad ved siden af, men den jeg husker bedst er nu alligevel
it was Bo I sat by side-the of but it I remember best is now anyways
HENDE.
her
It was Bo that I sat next to, but the one I remember best is nonetheless her.

b. Det er nu alligevel HENDE jeg husker bedst.
it is now anyways her I remember best
It is nonetheless her that I remember best.

c. Det er nu alligevel hende jeg husker bedst.
it is now anyways her I remember best

d. Det er hende nu alligevel jeg husker bedst.
it is her now anyways I remember best

(28) Den hurtigste spiller på holdet er uden tvivl Morten og ...
the fastest player on team is without doubt Morten and

a. den højeste er faktisk også ham.
the tallest is actually also him
the tallest one/player is actually also him.

b. den højeste er ham faktisk også.
the tallest is him actually also

c. den højeste er faktisk også HAM.
the tallest is actually also him

d. den højeste er HAM faktisk også.
the tallest is him actually also

(29) a. Er det ikke dig der bestemmer her?
is it not you that decides here
Isn't it you that's in charge here?

b. Er det dig ikke der bestemmer her?
is it you not that decides here

c. Er det ikke DIG der bestemmer her?
is it not you that decides here

d. Er det DIG ikke der bestemmer her?
is it you not that decides here

(30) Simon var min løbemakker i fjor, men ...
Simon was my running-partner in last-year but

a. han er det ikke i år.
he is it not in year

b. han er ikke det i år.
he is not it in year

c. han er DET ikke i år.
he is it not in year

d. han er ikke DET i år.
he is not it in year

Results (v: grammatical, *: ungrammatical, –: no judgement, #: infelicitous, ?/??: degraded)

	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10	S11
(26) specificational [contrastive, negative]											
a. no stress, no shift	v	?	v	v	v	??	v	*	v	v	v
b. no stress, shift	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
c. stress, no shift	v	?	–	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v
d. stress, shift	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
(27) specificational ("cleft") [contrastive, affirmative]											
a. stress, no shift	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v
b. stress, no shift	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v
c. no stress, no shift	v	v	v	v	v	v	*	*	v	v	v
d. no stress, shift	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
(28) specificational [parallel, affirmative]											
a. no stress, no shift	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	?	v
b. no stress, shift	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
c. stress, no shift	v(?)	?	–	*	*	*	*	v	*	#	*
d. stress, shift	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
(29) specificational ("cleft") [negative, 2nd, Q]											
a. no stress, no shift	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	*	v	–	v
b. no stress, shift	*	*	*	*	*	*	?	*	*	*	*
c. stress, no shift	v	v	v	v	v	*	v	v	v	v	v
d. stress, shift	*	*	v	*	*	*	?	*	*	*	*
(30) predicational [contrastive, negative]											
b. no stress, no shift	?/v	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	#	*
a. no stress, shift	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v
d. stress, no shift	?/v	v	v	v	v	*	*	?	*	v	v
c. stress, shift	*	*	v	*	*	*	*	*	*	#	*

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