

Scandinavian Pronouns and Structural Deficiency - the significance of Norwegian ‘Subject Shift’

Most of the literature on Scandinavian Object Shift (henceforth OS) (e.g. Holmberg and Platzack 1995; Holmberg 1999; Svenonius 2001; Fox and Pesetsky 2004) treats it as a unique phenomenon in (at least) two respects. First, internal to the language systems, the mechanisms proposed to underlie OS are formulated with reference to *object* pronouns only. And second, from a comparative perspective, OS has been disassociated from similar shift processes in other languages, like scrambling and cliticization. In this paper I provide compelling reasons for reconsidering this status. Most importantly, I introduce a novel set of data illustrating ‘Subject Shift’ in Norwegian, showing that the pattern seen with OS extends to the distribution of weak subject pronouns as well. On the basis of this, I argue in favor of a new version of the analysis first proposed in Holmberg 1984: weak pronouns in Scandinavian are clitics, and OS should be analyzed accordingly as a species of cliticization.

Norwegian exhibits the well-known asymmetrical distribution of strong pronouns/DP objects and weak object pronouns with respect to negation:

- | | |
|--|--|
| (1) Jeg drakk ikke akevitten/DEN.
I drank not the.aquavit/IT
‘I didn’t drink the aquavit.’ | (2) *Jeg drakk akevitten/DEN ikke.
I drank the.aquavit/IT not |
| (3) *Jeg drakk ikke den.
I drank not it | (4) Jeg drakk den ikke
I drank it not/‘I didn’t drink it.’ |

The shifting of the weak object pronoun in (4) has commonly been analyzed as an operation with specific reference to *object* pronouns (e.g. Holmberg and Platzack 1995; Holmberg 1999; Fox and Pestersky 2004), or to the structural position of the object (Chomsky 1999; Svenonius 2001). These analyses fail to account for the fact that similar distribution patterns emerge elsewhere. Norwegian also exhibits what I will refer to as ‘Subject Shift’, a pattern that occurs in cases where an element other than the subject occupies the pre-V2 topic-position. The asymmetry is again seen relative to (unstressed) negation: strong pronouns/DPs have to follow the negative *ikke*, whereas weak pronouns obligatorily precede it:

- | | |
|--|---|
| (5) I går så ikke Ella/HUN på tv.
in yesterday saw not Ella/she on tv
‘Yesterday, Ella/she didn’t watch tv.’ | (6) *I går så Ella/HUN ikke på tv.
in yesterday saw Ella/she not on tv |
| (7) *I går så ikke hun på tv
in yesterday saw not she on tv | (8) I går så hun ikke på tv
in yesterday saw she not on tv
‘Yesterday she didn’t watch tv.’ |

Likewise with particle shift in Norwegian; weak elements obligatorily shift across the particle, whereas strong Pronouns/DPs do not (although particle shift of DPs is reported to be a constrained option for some speakers of Norwegian – (see Svenonius 1996)). All three constructions thus show the same pattern of complementarity: weak pronouns are illicit *in situ* and have to appear higher up in some derived (verb adjacent) position. Strong elements on the other hand are not permitted in these positions. Looking at the three sets of data, there appear to be no reasons for assuming OS to be essentially different from the other distributional asymmetries between weak and strong pronouns/DPs. This speaks in favor of analyzing OS as *one* of the syntactic consequences resulting from general properties of weak pronouns in Norwegian. I show that this is indeed feasible within the frames of general theories of pronominal systems like that of Cardinaletti and Starke 1999.

Distributional differences like the ones seen in (1)–(8) lie at the core of the opposition observed between classes of pronouns across languages. In Cardinaletti and Starke’s terms: weak

(clitic) elements appear in derived positions due to *structural deficiency* (i.e. they are heads) whereas strong pronouns are phrases that remain in their base (theta) position. Applying this model of explanation to Norwegian does not only adequately describe the distribution of Norwegian pronouns, it also serves to analyze OS in terms of general principles shown to hold for pronominal systems in an extensive group of languages –if not universally. I predict that this analysis applies to the other Scandinavian languages as well, thus assuming Object Shift of DPs in Icelandic to be essentially different from pronominal shifts (Icelandic DP-shifts being *optional*, and constrained in ways reminiscent to that of scrambling in e.g. Dutch).

Under my analysis, the object clitics cliticize onto the verb in accordance with general adjacency-requirements that are shown to hold between clitics and their hosts (e.g. Marantz 1988; Embick and Noyer 2001). When the verb moves to T, the clitic moves along as a part of the *v*-complex, OS thus being a direct result of *v*-to-T movement. This implies that cliticization of weak pronouns in Norwegian takes place in the syntax, not in one of the post-syntactic components (cf. Embick and Noyer's classification of clitics *raising* to their hosts as a syntactic operation). Subject Shift and Particle Shift is analyzed accordingly; the pronouns cliticize onto the verb and yield the patterns seen in (5)-(8) and with Particle Shift.

I further show that the arguments presented against a cliticization analysis of OS are not detrimental. The most serious challenge seems to be 'clitic stranding' in yes-no questions, where the object pronoun does not move with the verb to C. (Holmberg and Platzack 1995:155). I account for this stranding employing the possibility pointed out in the literature that T-to-C movement is a fairly 'late' operation, fed by the syntax (*v*-to-T movement) but taking place at PF (see e.g. Merchant 2001:73). This analysis opens for the possibility of T-to-C movement of the verb only, leaving the clitic behind in T. Besides, a similar type of stranding also occurs with clitics in West Flemish (Zwart 1997:276).

Finally, the cliticization-approach to OS also has implications for the observation that Object Shift only occurs when the verb moves to T (Holmberg's Generalization):

- | | |
|--|------------------------------|
| (9) Jeg har ikke tatt den. | (10) *Jeg har den ikke tatt. |
| I have not taken it/'I haven't taken it' | I have it not taken |

The situation in (10) is commonly conceived of as the verb 'blocking' OS. This blockage has been explained with reference to general constraints on movement (most recently linearity statements; Fox and Pesetsky 2004). On my analysis, the weak pronoun in (10) cliticizes onto the verb, leaving no motivation for OS when the verb remains *in situ*. Unlike other proposals, which are merely filters on OS, and which require additional mechanisms for Object Shift to begin with, my analysis captures the intuitive assumption that OS is *caused* (rather than merely permitted) by *v*-to-T movement.

Selected References: Cardinaletti, A. and Starke, M. (1999) The typology of structural deficiency. In Riemsdijk, H. Van *Clitics in the languages of Europe*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter/ Chomsky, N. (1999) Derivation by Phase. *MIT Occasional Papers in Linguistics*, 18. MITWPL: Cambridge Massachusetts /Embick, D. and Noyer, R. (2001) Movement Operations after Syntax. *Linguistic Inquiry* 32: 555-595/Fox, D. and Pesetsky, D. (2004). *Cyclic Linearization of Syntactic Structures*. MS, MIT/ Holmberg, A. & Platzack, C. (1995). *The role of Inflection in Scandinavian Syntax*. New York: Oxford University Press / Holmberg, A. (1999). Remarks on Holmberg's generalization. *Studia Linguistica* 53: 1-39 / Marantz, A. (1988). Clitics, Morphological Merger and the Mapping to Phonological Structure. In Hammond, M. and Noonan, M. (eds.) *Theoretical Morphology*. San Diego, Calif: Academic Press/Merchant, J. (2001). *The Syntax of Silence*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Svenonius, P. (1996) The Optionality of Particle Shift. *Working Papers in Scandinavian Syntax*/__ (2001) On Object Shift, Scrambling and the PIC. In E. Guerzoni and O. Matushansky (eds.) *A few from building E39*, MITWPL: Cambridge, Massachusetts.57:47-75/Zwart, J.-W. (1997) *Morphosyntax of Verb Movement*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers