

When is Object Shift prevented?

There is a phenomenon observed in Scandinavian, which is called *Object Shift* OS (Holmberg 1999). A typical pattern of OS is as follows: the weak pronoun *henne* can move only when the main verb *kysste* also moves (a); when the main verb *kysst* remains in situ, however, the pronoun cannot move alone (b) (Holmberg's Generalization). Holmberg's (1999) main claim is that the weak pronoun is shifted only when it is defocalized. Based on the survey of information structure of the environments in which OS occurs, I show that the pronominal object is in effect shifted when it is focalized as well as defocalized, but OS is surely prevented when the object pronoun is contrastively focalized.

I make the survey based on the following six patterns of information structure: (c) *argument-focus*, (d) *contrastive argument-focus*, (e) *predicate-focus*, (f) *verb-focus*, (g) *contrastive verb-focus*, and (h) *sentence-focus*. (Distinction between (c-d) is based on Kiss (1998), aside from difference in terminology; (e) and (h) are based on Lambrecht (1994); I distinguish (f-g) from (e) unlike Lambrecht, since OS has a main verb as a boundary of movement.) Sentence patterns relevant to OS are as follows: (i) with OS, (j) without OS, (k) V-fronting accompanied by OS, which construction has the effect of contrastive verb-focus (Holmberg 1999), and (l) VP-fronting. I examine which pattern(s) among (i-l) is appropriate for each answer of the Swedish versions of (c-h), which is illustrated in (m-r). (All judgments are made by Anders Holmberg (p.c.)).

It is obvious that the object pronoun moves when it is defocalized, as illustrated in verb-focus (p) and contrastive verb-focus (q), in which only the verb is focused, with the sentential elements other than the verb defocalized. It appears to be difficult to determine whether the pronominal object in effect moves in argument-focus (m): the only appropriate answer is *Han såg MEJ, igår* 'he saw ME, yesterday', in which the pronoun just follows the finite verb, with the adverb attached intervened by a pause (Anders Holmberg (p.c.)). The data of predicate-focus (o) and sentence-focus (r) show that the pronoun can move even when the pronoun itself is interpreted as part of focus presenting a new information: the pronominal object does move when it is focalized as well as defocalized, unlike Holmberg's (1999) claim stated above. Remarkable is contrastive argument-focus (n): movement of the object pronoun is surely prevented except in VP-fronting, in which the object pronoun moves along with the main verb as part of the VP. I would like to generalize this fact as follows: *a pronominal object cannot be shifted when it is contrastively focalized*.

Based on the claim, it will be predicted that any kind of pronominal objects can be shifted unless they are contrastively focalized. This is testified for expletives (s) and quasi-arguments (t). It is not necessary to refer to the issue of whether the pronominal is defocalized (Holmberg 1999) and whether they are topics or foci (Erteschik-Shir 2001), under the claim that any pronominals can move except when they are contrastively focused. The prediction is also testified in movement of a stressed pronoun in Icelandic (u). According to Anders Holmberg (p.c.), the shifted pronoun is interpreted as contrastive topic. Even the stressed object pronoun can be shifted to a sentence-medial position, as long as it is not contrastively focalized. A *wh*-object may move in multiple *wh*-interrogative in Icelandic (Halldór Sigurðsson (p.c.)) (v). This is within the prediction: rejecting multiple foci in a sentence (e.g. Lambrecht 1994), the *wh*-object in multiple *wh*-question may not always receive (contrastive-)focus interpretation, which will not prevent the *wh*-object from moving. Consider the facts on reflexives. Erteschik-Shir (2001) points out that a short reflexive (w), but not a disyllabic reflexive (x), undergoes OS though neither of them is a topic. Use of *sig/sigselv* is not idiomatic: when available, their alternation appears to be always possible (Anders Holmberg (p.c.)). Let us observe possibility of the alternation in contrastive argument-focus, illustrated in (y). (Judgment is made by Anders Holmberg (p.c.)). Use of the short reflexive *sej* in situ is impossible, even though it is heavily stressed (y-a); instead, use of the long reflexive is obligatory (y-b). It appears that use of the reflexives is distinguished in terms of their functions: only the long one that must stay in situ can be used in contrastive-focus, though the short one may be used in all the other cases. Here too, the prediction above that the object pronoun that is not contrastively focalized can be shifted is attested.

Examples:

- a) Jag kysste henne inte [_{VP} t_V t_O]. ‘I kissed her not’
 b) *Jag har henne inte [_{VP} kysst t_O]. ‘I have her not kissed’
 c) Who did John see yesterday? -- He saw [_{Foc} me] yesterday.
 d) Did you kiss [_{Foc} MARY]? -- I didn’t kiss [_{Foc} HER] (, but kissed LUCY).
 e) What did John always do? -- He always [_{Foc} kissed me].
 f) What did John always do to Mary? -- He always [_{Foc} kissed] her.
 g) Did you [_{Foc} KISS] Mary? -- I didn’t [_{Foc} KISS] her (, but HELD her tight).
 h) What happened? -- [_{Foc} John kissed me yesterday].
 i) Jag kysste henne inte. ‘I kissed her not’
 j) Jag kysste inte HENNE/henne. ‘I kissed not HER/her’
 k) Kysst har jag henne inte. ‘kissed have I her not’
 l) Kysst henne har jag inte. ‘kissed her have I not’
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| <p>m) Argument-focus:
 Who did John see yesterday?
 -- He saw me yesterday.
 a. *Han såg mej igår.
 he saw me yesterday
 b. *Han såg igår mej/MEJ.
 c. *Sett har han mej igår.
 d. *Sett mej har han igår.</p> | <p>n) Contrastive argument-focus:
 Did you kiss MARY?
 -- I didn’t kiss HER (, but ...).
 a. *Jag kysste henne inte.
 I kissed her not
 b. Jag kysste inte HENNE.
 c. *Kysst har jag henne inte.
 d. Kysst henne har jag inte.</p> | <p>o) Predicate-focus:
 What did John always do?
 -- He always kissed me.
 a. Han kysste mej alltid.
 he kissed me always
 b. ?Han kysste alltid mej/MEJ.
 c. ?/*Kysst har han mej alltid.
 d. Kysst mej har han alltid.</p> |
| <p>p) Verb-focus:
 What did John always do to Mary?
 -- He always kissed her.
 a. Han kysste henne alltid.
 he always kissed her
 b. Han kysste alltid henne.
 c. Kysst har han henne alltid.
 d. Kysst henne har han alltid.</p> | <p>q) Contrastive verb-focus:
 Did you KISS Mary?
 -- I didn’t KISS her (, but ...).
 a. Han kysste henne inte.
 he kissed her not
 b. Han kysste inte henne.
 c. Kysst har jag henne inte.
 d. Kysst henne har jag inte.</p> | <p>r) Sentence-focus:
 What happened?
 -- John kissed me yesterday.
 a. Jan kysste mej igår.
 Jan kissed me yesterday
 b. Jan kysste igår MEJ (/mej).
 c. *Kysst har Jan mej igår.
 d. *Kysst mej har Jan igår.</p> |
- s) Han tar det mycket sällan [_{SC} t_{det} lugnt]. ‘he takes it very seldom easy’
 t) Jeg hørte det ikke [_{SC} t_{det} regne]. ‘I heard it not rain’
 u) Jón keypti HANN ekki. ‘Jón didn’t buy IT’
 v) (?)Hver gerir hvað ekki? ‘who does what not (who doesn’t do what)?’
 w) Han så (^{OK}sig) ikke (*sig) i spejlet. ‘he saw self not in the mirror’
 x) Han så (*sigselv) ikke (^{OK}sigselv) i spejlet. ‘he saw not himself in the mirror’
 y) (Imagine a situation in which Mary met a terrible accident, and her face has severely been damaged.) Did she look at herself in the mirror? -- No, she didn’t look at HERSELF (, but just looked at the SHADOW of her face).
 a. *?Hon såg inte SEJ i spegeln. b. Hon såg inte sej själv i spegeln.
 she saw not SELF in the mirror she saw not herself in the mirror
 ‘She didn’t see herself in the mirror.’

References:

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