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Object shift in the Scandinavian languages : syntax, information structure, and intonation

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Object Shift in the Scandinavian Languages: Syntax, Information Structure, and Intonation

Scandinavian Object Shift is a movement phenomenon where a weak, unstressed object pronoun moves across a sentential adverb. An object pronoun can move only when verb movement takes place (*Holmberg's Generalization*). No movement phenomenon other than Object Shift in which movement of a sentential element is dependent on that of another sentential element has been found. Due to this property, Object Shift has long been one of the most controversial issues in generative syntax.

The thesis discusses the constructions relevant to Object Shift from the intonational perspective, by presenting experimental data from all the Scandinavian languages. It is shown that downstep typically occurs in the Object Shift construction but does not occur in the constructions where Object Shift cannot occur. A new hypothesis on Scandinavian Object Shift is presented: the object pronoun moves to cause downstep. Holmberg's Generalization is accounted for as follows: When main verb movement takes place, an object pronoun moves and causes downstep to eliminate a focal effect on the sentential element(s) after the main verb. In the environments in which downstep must not occur, i.e. in the constructions where the final pitch peak occurs on the (in-situ) main verb, Object Shift does not occur either.

It is also shown that whether Object Shift is obligatory, optional or absent depends on whether a Scandinavian variety at issue has an early or delayed pitch gesture. A new generalization on Object Shift is presented: the earlier the pitch gesture occurs, the more likely is Object Shift to occur; the more delayed the pitch gesture is, the more likely is Object Shift to be absent. Object Shift is thus not a dichotomous property, i.e. either present or absent, but a gradient phenomenon in the Scandinavian languages.

This thesis targets researchers of various fields of linguistics, (generative) syntax, information structure, and experimental phonetics.

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