In the north of Sweden there is a dialect which does not make the standard morphological distinction between subject and object pronouns, in certain contexts. Instead the standard subject form is used in object as well as in subject positions, as shown in (1):(1)

(1) a. Maria ville kyssa jag/du/han/vi etc.
Maria wanted (to) kiss I/you/ him/ us etc.
(standard Swedish: ...kysa mig/deg/ honom/ oss etc.)

b. Hon gav den åt jag/du/ han/ vi etc.
she gave it to I you he we
(standard Swedish: ...åt mig/deg/honom/ oss etc.)

I shall refer to these object pronoun forms as case-neutral forms. This dialect, or rather, this dialectal feature, is fairly wide-spread in Northern Norrland, its heartland being (probably) somewhere in Västerbotten. It is believed to be a fairly recent phenomenon. In most of the region it seems to be found only among young people, but there are speakers using these forms who are well past 60. In fact very little seems to be known about the geographic distribution and the history of this dialectal feature (the only published report is Eklund(1982)). The present paper will not, however, be concerned with these issues, but rather deal exclusively with the grammatical description of the case-neutral pronoun (henceforth cnpro) phenomenon, and the explanation of its grammatical properties. The phenomenon is interesting from a grammatical point of view because of the contextual constraints on the cnpros: they are well-formed in certain contexts only. Below is a sample of contexts where the case-neutral form cannot replace the object form:2,3

(2) a. as the object of a reflexive verb:
Jag rakade jag/ OKJag rakade mig.
I shaved I

b. as the subject of a small-clause:
I. Ål tom anser jag galen. / OKÅl tom anser mig galen.
they consider I crazy

ii. Hon gjorde jag ledsen. / OKHon gjorde mig ledsen.
she made I sad

iii. Hon såg jag komma. / OKHon såg mig komma.
she saw I come

c. as the "dative" object in the double object construction:
Hon gav jag boken. / OKHon gav mig boken.
she gave I the book

d. when shifted leftwards around a sentence adverbial:
Hon kyste jag aldrig. / OKHon kyste mig aldrig.

The question is: what principle or principles governs the distribution of cnpros? What property or properties do the structures in (1) have in common that they do not share with the structures in (2)?

The hypothesis that will be defended here is (3):

(3) A cnpro must be a True Object.

Instead of "True Object" the more traditional term "Direct Object" could be used, provided it is defined as in (4):

(4) A True Object is assigned Case and theta-role by the same category.

The general framework will be that of government-binding (GB) theory, as presented in Chomsky(1981) and related work. By "Case" I mean "abstract case" in the sense of GB theory. Theta-roles (as used in GB theory, henceforth th-roles) are roles like Agent, Theme, Goal, etc. If (3) is on the right track, the cnpros will provide evidence regarding dependency relations, especially Case- and th-relations, in various syntactic constructions, since for every position where a cnpro is possible, we will know that Case and th-role are assigned to that position by the same category.

Following Kayne(1984) I assume phrase structure is strictly binary branching. This greatly reduces the number of possible phrase structures, giving a more constrained, and hence more explanatory theory (cf. also Holmberg(1985)). Binary branching is not crucial, though, in that hypothesis (3) can be maintained also in a framework permitting multiple branching.

Case is assigned by certain lexical heads to NPs they govern. The only Case relevant in the present context is objective Case, which is assigned by transitive V and P. A lexical head H always governs its sister. Moreover H can govern a left-peripheral category (the specifier) inside its sister constituent. The definition of govern is given in (5):

(5) A governs B iff A is a lexical head, A commands B, and there is no lexical head C which commands B but not A.

We assume the "classical" definition of command: A commands B iff the first branching node dominating A also dominates B. In Hoekstra(1984: 78) for a refinement of this definition. Th-role assignment is subject to a stricter condition in that the assigner and the assignee must be sisters (cf. Chomsky 1981: 56ff.):

(6) A th-role is assigned by an argument-taking category A to an argument (e.g. a referential expression) B iff A and B are sisters.

The standard cases are assignment of a th-role by a verb to its object, and by a predicate (typically UP) to the subject (see esp. Marantz(1984: 23ff.) on subject role assignment).

We can now define "True Object" in configurational terms as follows:
Since the preposition AT in (1b) assigns both Case and th-role to its object, the object may be a cnpro.

An interesting question is whether all (Swedish) prepositions assign th-role, or whether there are some true dummy Case-markers among them? The cnpros should provide some insight into this issue. In particular the prepositions found in nominal and adjectival constructions like destruction of the city, and proud of John, etc. are generally believed, within GB theory, to be pure dummy Case-markers, inserted because N and A do not assign Case (see, however, Zubizarreta(1985)). My investigation so far indicates that there is a difference between prepositions in various constructions regarding the possibility of a cnpro object, though perhaps not quite as expected given standard GB theory.

(10a) Maria talar inte med jag. ("Maria doesn't speak to me")

b. Titta på jag!

(10b) Maria speaks not with I

look at I

c. en kusin till jag

cousin to I ("a cousin of mine")

d. Jag är inte rädd för du.

I am not afraid of you (case-neutral)

e. ?äsymna av jag

the sight of I

f. Puppställen av jag

the discovery of I

g. Uit med du?

out with you (case-neutral)

The fact that (10a,4) are not very good may indicate that the prepositions in these constructions are primarily Case-markers. On the other hand, the fact that they are not completely ungrammatical seems to indicate that even these prepositions do play some role in th-role assignment (as argued by Zubizarreta(1985) for English of). The low acceptability may be due, at least partly, to the fact that such nominalizations are not normally used in the dialects in question. (10a) is interesting. According to Baker(1985: 446ff.) instrumental with (in Swedish med) is a dummy Case-assigner. This preposition also turns up in the construction UL med dössanen. "Out with the referee!". Med med laisen. "Down with the czar!" etc., where plausibly it is truly a dummy Case-assigner. The fact that a cnpro is excluded from this construction is evidence that prepositions do, in fact, assign a dummy Case-assigner: The object is Case-marked but not th-marked by med, hence it is not a True Object. (The construction is well formed with a cased pronoun: UL med dössanen)

3.1. Consider now some contexts where cnpros do not occur, starting with the small clauses, first (2b), repeated here:

(2b) Dom ansvar jag galen.
they consider I crazy

The NP in the string ansa NP AP is uncontroversially assigned Case by ansa (hence the object form of a pronoun in this position). It is, however, not assigned th-role by ansa, but rather by the AP, while ansa assigns a th-role to the small clause (NP AP). This is shown clearly by the fact that (11) is ungrammatical:

(11) #omn anser mej,
    they consider me

It is ungrammatical because ansa cannot assign a th-role to the NP object mej, which is therefore left without a th-role, violating the th-criterion (Chomsky 1981: 36) for some equivalent condition.

Hence NP in ansa NP AP is not a True Object, and therefore cannot be a cpnro. Given binary branching the structure must be (ansa NP AP) -- an analysis which can also be supported by independent evidence (see e.g. Stowell 1983).

In the same way we can explain why (2bii) and (2biii) are ill formed:

(2bii) Mon gørde jeg læsset.
    she made I sad

(2biii) Mon sig jeg komma.
    she saw I come

The NP in the strings gørre NP AP, and mej NP mej is assigned Case by the verb, as shown again by the object case form: gørre mej, casanda, mej mej komma. It is not assigned th-role by the verb, though, but by respectively the AP and the verb. Hence it is not a True Object, and cannot be a cpnro. This is perhaps less obvious in the case of mej, since this verb may assign a th-role to an NP object, as in Mon stræg mej "she gave me". (In this case a cpnro is indeed OK: Mon stræg I mej.) But in the construction cas mej NP mej se rather assigns a th-role to NP mej; what is seen is an event specified by NP mej. This is not wholly uncontroversial: one may argue about the exact thematic relation between mej and NP in the construction cas mej NP mej. Given that hypothesis (3) is not motivated, the fact that NP in this construction cannot be a cpnro provides an argument in favor of the view that the verb does not assign a th-role directly to the NP.

3.2. Consider now the double object construction (2c):

(2c) Mon gav jeg boken.
    she gave I the book

According to Kayne (1984:ch.9) and Czepucha (1985) the verb assigns Case only to the second object, while the dative object gets Case from a phonetically empty preposition. The structure of mej NP mej, following Kayne, is (12) (p = empty P):

(12)

The preposition can be empty only when it is governed by the verb (the EDP) in (12) it is governed by virtue of being the head of a governed PP. In other contexts it must be phonetically realized, typically in ge boked at NP. This will explain, for instance why the dative object cannot be Heavy NP Shifted: You cannot Heavy NP Shift the object of a preposition.

(13a) #Hon gav mej, gave the book the man with the green overcoat.
    Monica med den grøne kaken

(b) #Jag tror på mej, I believe in firmly.
    jag tror på en framtid utan krig.
    I believe in a future without war.

The empty preposition is plausibly purely a dummy Case-marker, lacking any semantic properties. Thus the dative object will not qualify as a True Object, since its Case-marker does not assign the th-role to it.

Postulating an empty preposition in the double object construction may not, in fact, be crucial to predicting the cpnro facts. Consider how the dative object is assigned a th-role. While it may seem that the verb assigns a th-role to the dative object as well as to the "accusative" object, this is in fact not the case, but rather the accusative object is crucially involved in th-role assignment to the dative object. This is shown by the fact that the accusative object cannot be left out: Mon gav mej "She gave me", while the dative object can, marginally, in certain contexts, be left out. Compare (14a,b):

(14a) -- Vad gav hon mej? -- (#) Hon gav en bok.
    -- what did she give you? She gave a book.

(b) -- Vem gav hon en bok? -- (#) Hon gav mej,
    -- who did she give a book? She gave me

We have an explanation for this asymmetry if the accusative object is required for th-role assignment to the dative object (but not vice versa). Assume the dative object gets Case from the verb ge, with no intervening preposition. It still follows that the dative NP cannot be a cpnro, since the Case-assigner, the verb, does not assign a th-role to it -- or at any rate, since it seems quite clear that the verb is also involved in th-role assignment to the dative NP, the Case-assigner is not capable of assigning a th-role to the dative NP alone, without the support of an accusative NP.

3.3. Consider now the reflexive construction (2a):

(2a) Jag rakade jag,
    I shaved I

The reflexive object is Case-marked by the verb, as indicated by the form sej, mej, djej, etc.: all of these are object forms (the third person form sej is a special reflexive form, the first and second person forms are homonyms of the pronoun object forms). But as for th-role, the most plausible analysis is that the reflexive object does not bear a th-role at all. This is quite obvious in cases like Ansa sej "regret", sola sej "behave", and other so-called inherently reflexive verbs: in

"regret", sola sej "behave", and other so-called inherently reflexive verbs: in
sej ‘behave’, and other so called inherently reflexive verbs: in e.g. (15) there is only one th-role involved, an experiencer type of role.

(15) Jag ångrade mej, I regretted self

I would claim it is the case also with optionally reflexive verbs like bräna mej ‘burn oneself’, låta mej ‘let oneself’, gåa mej ‘shave’, and so on (cf. Holmberg 1984b).

Structurally the reflexives mej, mej, etc. are clefts on the verb (cf. Holmberg 1984b). This is shown, for instance, by the following facts:

(16)a. Han påstod mej vara för ung.
be claimed self to be too young he claimed me to be too young

b. Han påstod mej vara för ung.
be claimed self to be too young he claimed me to be too young

The Act (= ECM) construction is impossible in Swedish with verbs like påstå ‘claim’, tro ‘believe’, säga ‘say’ except when the "subjective" is a reflexive. This can be explained as follows: These verbs are incapable of assigning Case down into an embedded S, hence (16a) whose structural description is (17a) is ruled out by the Case Filter (i.e., the condition that every phonetically realized NP should have Case; cf. Chomsky 1981: 49). (16b) with the structural description (17b) is not ruled out by the Case Filter because the reflexive is a cleft on the verb, the verb need not assign Case down into S, but instead assigns its Case to the cleft.

(17)a. Han ( påstod ( mej vara för ung))
UP S

b. Han ( påstod mej) ( e vara för ung)
UP V S

Thus the reflexive construction has the structure (17b), and the reflexive is not a True Object, hence cannot be a cnp.

3.4. Consider now the construction (24), repeated here:

(24) Hon kysste jag aldrig. / OK Hon kysste mej aldrig.

she kissed I never

The cnp is OK if it follows the sentence adverb:

(18) Hon kysste aldrig jag.

To understand how the word order where the object precedes the sentence adverb is generated we need to discuss briefly the structure of the main clause in Swedish: The structure of (19a) is (19b) (irrelevant details omitted) cf. Platzack (1985, to appear), Holmberg (1982b, forthcoming) ( x = trace or verb):

(19a) Hon kysste aldrig Johan.

The main clause word order is the result of an obligatory movement of the finite verb to C, the complementizer position, and optional movement of a phrasal category. In this case the subject NP, to the so called XP-position, to the left of C. These two movements give the typical Germanic verb second main clause word order.

Now in a case like (19), where the verb moved to C is the main verb, the object, provided it is an unexpanded and weakly stressed pronoun, is moved leftwards around sentence adverbs, being adjoined to the predicate. Let us call this rule Object Shift.

(20)

Crucially this movement is possible only when the main verb is in C, hence not in embedded clauses or in main clauses containing an auxiliary verb.

(20a) *...att hon honom aldrig kysste e, that she him never kissed
b. Hon har honom aldrig kysste e,

she has him never kissed

In embedded clauses C is occupied by a complementizer, blocking movement of the verb to C. In main clauses containing an auxiliary verb, the auxiliary verb will occupy C, blocking movement of the main verb. In both cases Object Shift is also blocked; see Holmberg (1984a, 1985b, and esp. forthcoming) on the properties of Object Shift.

How is the shifted object pronoun assigned Case in (20)? There are two possibilities: either it is assigned Case by the fronted verb, or else the pronoun is able to satisfy the Case Filter by virtue of its case morphology. The latter hypothesis is explored in Holmberg (1985a and forthcoming). Under this hypothesis (24) is ill-formed with a cnp because the cnp does not have case morphology. Let us here consider the alternative that the shifted pronoun is assigned Case by the fronted verb. By our definition of government in (5) the fronted verb in (20) governs the shifted object, since the latter is not c-commanded by any other lexical head. On this account the verb can assign Case to the shifted object. (The verb and the shifted object are not, however, adjacent, being separated by the subject, which may be lexically filled, as in kysste Honom honom aldrig. We can thus not maintain that Case-assignment requires adjacency between assigner and assignee (cf. Stowell 1981),
under this analysis of Object Shift.)

The shifted object cannot, however, be assigned a th-role by the fronted verb since the two are not sisters. The object th-role must be assigned by the verb trace to the object trace. The shifted object is associated with a th-role by virtue of being coindexed with the trace (being member of a chain including the trace).

We can derive this result without making direct reference to the stipulation that role assigner and -assignee must be sisters: By standard assumptions th-relations (which arguments are assigned their roles by which predicates) are exhaustively determined at d-structure (deep structure). D-structure is, indeed, primarily a representation of th-relations (cf. Chomsky (1981: 394f.)). If so, a head moved out of its d-structure position cannot assign a th-role from its derived position. In particular, the verb in C in (20) cannot th-mark the shifted object. The relevant th-relation is represented at this level of representation (s-structure), by the verb trace and the HP trace (we say that the verb trace assigns the th-role in s-structure). Case-relations, on the other hand, by standard assumptions, are established only at s-structure. On this account the verb in C may well assign Case to the shifted object.

In order to rule out (26) with a cpnro we need to specify that a moved head H is not "the same category" in the sense of the definition (4) of "True Object", as the trace of H or the corresponding unmoved head H' in d-structure. It then follows that an object moved by Object Shift is not a True Object, since it is Case-marked by the verb in C, but th-marked by the trace of the verb.

4. As shown in (21) you can topicalize a cpnro:

(21) JAG Gillar hon men hon gillar inte D.U.
I likes she but she likes not you
"Me she likes (but she doesn't like you)."

This indicates that condition (3) (A cpnro must be a True Object) applies not to s-structure, but to a more abstract representation, where topicalized phrases are in d-structure position. This representation cannot be d-structure, since Case is not assigned in d-structure (morever that would allow (22) with a cpnro). Within a model such as in Chomsky (1981) ("the T-model" grammar) it would apply in a representation following "HRP restriction", a rule of the LF (lexical), cf. Chomsky (1981: 176f.) component which, effectively, puts back moved wh-phrases and topics into their d-structure position.

Reconstruction is independently required to account for examples like (22) (cf. Riemsdijk and Williams (1981), Longobardi (1985)):

(22a). Varandra vet jag att dom gillar (men gillar dom oss)?
each other I know that they like (but do they like us)

The reciprocal varandra is interpreted here as bound by dom "they". But binding requires that the binder c-commands the binder. Apparently conditions on binding treat the topolicalized reciprocal as if it were in d-structure position. This can be expressed by having conditions on binding apply after Reconstruction -- to the same level of representation as condition (3). Within the "L-model" grammar outlined in

The NP and the PP form a small clause (SC). This is surely not the standard analysis of this construction. It can, however, be supported by independent evidence. First, the PP may contain a possessive reflexive whose antecedent is the NP, as in (26):

(26) Hon lade boken på sin plats.
she put the book in its(REFER) place

If the complement to littra "put" is a SC, this instance of the possessive reflexive conforms to the general pattern according to which the antecedent of a reflexive is a subject. (26) contrasts with, for instance, (27a, b):

(27a). Jag skjutsade Erik till jobbet, i sin bil.
I drove E. to work in his(REFER) car

b. Vi upplyste Mariam en sin rättigheter.
we informed M. about her(REFER) rights
Second, compare lying NP PP with a construction where lying NP does not take a PP complement. One such construction is lying NP in the sense 'put NP to bed'. Following Kayne(1981), it is lying NP that is indicative of a SC complement. The contrast between (28c,4) is indicative of a SC complement.

(28a) Man bör lägga barnen före klockan 8.
you should put the children to bed before 8
b. Man bör lägga pennan på bordet.
you should put the pen on the table.
c. Barnens läggning bör ske före 8.
the children's putting-to-bed should occur before 8
d. Pennans läggning på bordet bör ske omhelsligt.
the pen's putting on the table should occur at once.

(28c) may be inelegant, but (28d) is unacceptable. Following Kayne(1981) I assume the reason why (28d) is ill formed is that a noun, e.g. a nominalized form like läggning, cannot govern down into an SC; basically only verbs can do this (cf. fn. 7).

(29b) the structural description of the NP in (28d), therefore violates the ECP (the principle which requires an empty category to be properly governed) cf. Chomsky(1981: 250). In (29a), the structural description of the NP in (28c), there is no SC, so the ECP can be satisfied.

The analysis required to rule out a CNP from the lying NP PP construction is motivated by independent considerations. This provides additional confirmation for the proposed theory of CNPs, and indicates how we can make use of CNPs in the analysis of sentence structures.

4. Not surprisingly the CNPs are regarded very much as a "substandard" phenomenon among educationalists in Northern Sweden. Indeed, superficially it looks like a prime example of "language degeneration", as it entails loss of a morphological distinction made in the standard language, in cases like (1a,b),

What has not been noticed, apparently, is that the CNP phenomenon also entails addition of a morphological distinction not found in standard Swedish (or any other Germanic language, as far as I know), that is the morphological distinction between True Objects and other objects.

Footnotes

1. I am using standard Swedish in the examples, except for the object pronoun, because (a) there is no Northern Swedish written standard, and (b) other features of the dialects in question are, as far as I can see, irrelevant to the case-neutral pronoun.

2. The cnpro phenomenon discussed here should be distinguished from the use of the subject forms of the third person singular masculine and feminine pronouns in object position (han, hon, instead of ingen, ingen), which is common in parts of Sweden, and apparently is presently gaining ground in other parts. As far as I know there are no special contextual restrictions on han and hon in object position, in these dialects. It is simply the substitution of an object form which happens to be a homonym of the subject form for another object form. There are still separate subject and object pronoun paradigms, although several forms are homonyms. In the case of the cnpro there is only a single case-neutral paradigm.

3. Not surprisingly there are certain dialectal differences regarding the distribution of the cnpro. I have my data principally from one informant, so the theory to be presented is a theory of one particular dialect where cnpros are used.

4. In the present context we may disregard government by a coindexed antecedent cf. Chomsky(1981: 250). Standard cases of government into a sister constituent include so called exceptional Case-marking and small clauses: consider him to be a spy, where him is the subject of the embedded S, yet is governed and Case-marked by consider. In Chomsky(1981) this government into a sister constituent is excluded if it is a maximal category. The infinitival complement of consider is taken to be S, where S is non maximal. In Chomsky(1982) S and small clauses are taken to be maximal categories, and government into maximal constituents is recognized.

5. This is suggested by the fact that it permits idiomatic interpretation of the dative object, contrasting in this respect with the overt preposition:

(1a) give John the finger
b. ??give the finger to John (idiom interpretation)

(11a) ge Johan en känsla
give J a boost ("make a sarcastic remark at/about J")
b. ??ge en känsla åt Johan

In and At block the Idiom interpretation by assigning a regular Recipient role to the dative object. The empty preposition, apparently, does not interfere with th-role assignment, and thus permits the Idiom interpretation.

6. The role of the dative NP is not exactly the same in e.g. give NP NP as in show NP NP.

7. Plausibly Målat etc. cannot Case-mark the embedded subject because they cannot govern it. This implies that government is more restricted than claimed by the definition (5). The categorial properties of the sister constituent (e.g. if it is S or SC) make a difference, and so do categorial and lexical properties of the governing head. For instance, it will be assumed below (following Kayne(1981)) that nouns never govern down into a SC complement. The only Swedish verbs which can govern and Case-mark the subject of an infinitival clause.
are anaph and loria.

4. In the terms of Hellan (this volume) the antecedent should “predication-command” the reflexive.

References


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CHILDREN'S INTERPRETATION OF REFLEXIVE VERSUS NON-REFLEXIVE PRONOMS IN SWEDISH

1. Introduction

1.1. Background and motives for the present study

This paper deals with children's comprehension of reflexive and non-reflexive pronouns in Swedish. An experiment was conducted utilizing children of two ages, 7 and 10 years, as subjects. The experimental materials were Swedish sentences, each of which involved two proper names and a pronoun, reflexive or non-reflexive, referring to one of the individuals denoted by the proper names.

The children showed their interpretation of the test sentences by acting out the content of each sentence with the help of two dolls and some other objects.

The experiment was partly motivated by two recent Dutch studies on children's interpretation of reflexive vs non-reflexive anaphoric pronouns (Deutsch, Koster & Koster, 1984; Corver, 1985). Corver's study, which also used an acting-out technique, was replicated in Swedish as part of the present study, to permit a cross-language comparison of the pronoun acquisition process.

1.2. Theoretical foundations for the Dutch studies

The term anaphora refers to the feature of natural language that a term, such as a pronoun (the anaphor), is co-referential with another word in the utterance (the antecedent), and can't be interpreted other than in light of this relation. In the Chomskyan tradition, a difference is made between bound and free anaphors. The theoretical literature also makes this distinction between reflexive and non-reflexive pronouns: the reflexive pronouns are called bound anaphors, and non-reflexive pronouns are seen as free anaphors. Resolution of bound anaphors is generally assumed to be dependant on syntactic structure: a bound anaphor must find its antecedent within the sentence in which it occurs, whereas a free anaphor can be co-referential either with a word in the same sentence, or with something elsewhere in the discourse (or in the real-world situation where it is used). This quality of bound anaphor resolution, that it can disclose a person's grammatical analysis of a sentence, has brought many studies on child language to focus on children's acquisition of anaphora (see Jakubowicz, 1984; Lust, 1981; Solan, 1981).

The studies mentioned above by Deutsch, Koster and Koster and by Corver make the general assumption that the resolution of bound anaphora is dependant on syntactic structure. Both studies assume Jan Koster's analysis of