

# On Unshifted Weak Object Pronouns in the Scandinavian Languages\*

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## Abstract

I discuss the properties of unshifted weak object pronouns in the Scandinavian languages on the basis of the experimental data of Övdalian non-Object Shift constructions. I propose a hypothesis on unshifted weak object pronouns: the level stress effect occurs on (the series that consists of a sentential adverb and) an unshifted weak object pronoun. The presence or absence of the level stress effect is accounted for in association with that of main verb movement. When a focus-accented main verb moves, an object pronoun directly follows a sentential adverb, which brings about the level stress effect on the former or the combination of the two. When a main verb does not move, its word accent is maintained in situ, which prevents the level stress effect from occurring on the following object pronoun. With the experimental data of the EAST dialect of Swedish, I show that the level stress effect actually occurs in Swedish non-Object Shift constructions. I also suggest the possibility that in the Scandinavian varieties that have level stress Object Shift is optional, as observed in Finland-Swedish.

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## 1. Introduction

Scandinavian languages have a movement phenomenon called *Object Shift OS*, in which a weak, unstressed object pronoun moves across a sentential adverb like the negation (Holmberg 1986).<sup>1</sup> The weak object pronouns, *henne* in Swedish (1a), *den* in Norwegian (1b), *ham* in Danish (1c), and *hann* in Icelandic (1d), all move across the negation.

- (1) a. Jag kysste henne inte [<sub>VP</sub> kysste henne]. (Swe.)  
 I kissed her not  
 ‘I didn’t kiss her.’
- b. Jon sparket den ikke [<sub>VP</sub> sparket den]. (Nor.)  
 Jon kicked it not  
 ‘Jon didn’t kick it.’
- c. Peter mødte ham ikke [<sub>VP</sub> mødte ham]. (Dan.)  
 Peter met him not  
 ‘Peter didn’t meet him.’
- d. Jón keypti hann ekki [<sub>VP</sub> keypti hann]. (Ice.)  
 Jón bought it not  
 ‘Jón didn’t buy it.’

In Danish, Icelandic, and most varieties of Norwegian OS is obligatory in simple tense forms, whereas in most of the Swedish dialects and some of the Norwegian varieties OS is optional (2a). An object pronoun cannot move in, e.g. complex tense forms in which a past participle main verb does not move due to

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<sup>1</sup> In this work the terminology *Object Shift* is used to refer to weak pronoun shift/cliticization only. I do not discuss full NP shift observed in Icelandic in this paper.

the presence of a finite Aux(iliary) verb (2b). The fact that OS can occur only when main verb movement takes place is called *Holmberg's Generalization* (Holmberg 1986).

- (2) a. Jag såg *den* inte.    Jag såg inte *den*.    (Swe.)  
 I saw it not    I saw not it  
 'I didn't see it.'
- b. Jag har inte sett *den*.    \*Jag har *den* inte sett.  
 I have not seen it    I have it not seen  
 'I haven't seen it.'

In Övdalian (or the Älvdalen dialect of Swedish) OS never occurs even when verb movement takes place (Levander 1909, Hellan and Platzack 1999, Garbacz 2009). In (3) a weak object pronoun *mig* does not move across the negation.<sup>2</sup>

- (3) a. An såg it mig.    (Övd.)  
 he saw not me  
 'He didn't see me.'
- b. \*An såg mig inte.  
 he saw me not  
 (Garbacz 2009:64,(10c))

The properties of the weak object pronouns that stay in situ either optionally or obligatorily have not been extensively discussed despite much literature on OS (Diesing 1992, 1997; Holmberg and Platzack 1995; Holmberg 1999; Chomsky 2001; Sells 2001; Vikner 2001; Josefsson 2003; Fox and Pesetsky 2005;

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<sup>2</sup> According to Garbacz (2009:116-118), the negation *inte* changes its form depending on the environments in which it appears. I turn to this point in section 2.

Erteschik-Shir 2005a,b; Broekhuis 2008; among others).

Hosono (2010a,b,c) suggests that the presence or absence of OS is closely related to the intonational properties of the Scandinavian languages. In this paper I discuss the properties of unshifted weak object pronouns in the Scandinavian languages on the basis of the experimental data of Övdalian non-OS constructions. I propose a hypothesis on unshifted weak object pronouns, and show that it can apply to the Scandinavian varieties that have optional OS.

The paper is organized as follows. In section 2 I introduce the intonational properties of Övdalian and the experimental data of Övdalian non-OS constructions. In section 3 I propose a hypothesis on unshifted weak object pronouns: the level stress effect occurs on (the series that consists of a sentential adverb and) an unshifted weak object pronoun. The presence or absence of the level stress effect is accounted for in association with that of main verb movement. I present experimental data of the EAST dialect of Swedish, and show that the level stress effect actually occurs in Swedish non-OS constructions. I also suggest the possibility that in the Scandinavian varieties that have level stress OS is optional, as observed in Finland-Swedish. In section 4 I briefly conclude this paper.

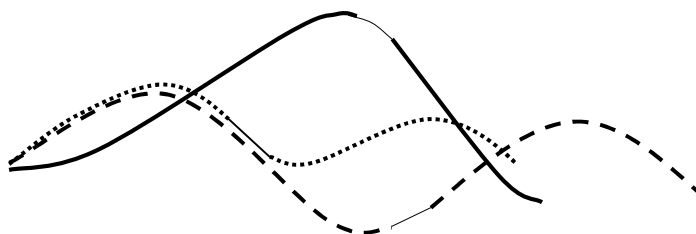
## **2. The Intonational Properties of Unshifted Weak Object Pronouns**

Most of the Swedish dialects maintain a distinction between two word accents, accent 1 and accent 2 (Bruce 1977). Accent 1 is associated with a H(igh) tone, whereas accent 2 is associated with a L(ow) tone. To realize accent 2, a stressed syllable requires another syllable to follow it. This indicates that all

monosyllabic words have accent 1. The Swedish dialects are classified into either the variety in which both accent 1 and accent 2 are single-peaked or the variety in which accent 1 is single-peaked but accent 2 is double-peaked, the latter of which is represented by the EAST dialect (Stockholm Swedish) (Bruce and Gårding 1978). Övdalian is classified into the double-peaked variety. According to Kristoffersen (2008), Övdalian has a complicated word tone melody. The stressed syllable of Övdalian accent 1 words consists of L and the following H. The tone of Övdalian accent 2 disyllabic words is described as L-H-L-H(-L).

A remarkable feature of Övdalian is level stress (Bye 1996, Kristoffersen 2008, among others). Level stress occurs only in the accent 2 disyllabic words that maintain a light root syllable (i.e. have a short vowel), but not in those that have a heavy root syllable (i.e. have a long vowel or a diphthong). It is often observed in sentence-final position. The light root syllable of level stress words sounds like being stressed equally to the second syllable, though it is only the heavy root syllable that receives stress in normal accent 2 words. Accent 2 sounds like level stress also when accent 2 words are shortened due to lack of intonational prominence. Thus, in a light root word *komma* [kʉmo] ‘to come’ the first syllable *komm-* sounds like being stressed equally to the second syllable *-a*, whereas in a heavy root word *skina* [skainɑ] ‘to shine’ only the first syllable *skin-* is assigned a stress. I present the illustration of the pitch contour of level stress words below. Compare it with the pitch contours of accent 1 and accent 2 words.

(4) Pitch contours of level stress words and accent 1 and accent 2 disyllabic words in Övdalian<sup>3</sup>:



—— : (vowel of) accent 1; - - - : (vowel of) accent 2;

..... : (vowel of) level stress; thin line: consonant

(From Kristoffersen 2008:138, Fig.20)

According to Kristoffersen (2008), duration of the final vowel of a level stress word is longer than that of its first vowel in sentence-final position due to general lengthening. Intensity does not differ between the first syllable of a level stress word and its final syllable in sentence-final position.<sup>4</sup> Kristoffersen argues that the perceptual peculiarity of level stress is caused by the difference in timing of the H peak. In heavy root syllables of accent 2 words H occurs early associated with accent (i.e. LH\*L-). But in light root syllables H occurs later due to their short vowels (i.e. L\*HL-). This causes the latter to be heard like accent 1 that consists of L and the following H. The occurrence of another H peak on the second syllable, however, causes the entire light root word not to be heard like a normal accent 1 word. The result is that the series of the first and second syllables of level stress words are interpreted as the combination of independent

<sup>3</sup> The accent 1 word is *skenet* [stʃ:neð] ‘the shine’, the accent 2 word *skina* [skainɑ] ‘to shine’, and the level stress word *komma* [kʉmo] ‘to come’.

<sup>4</sup> According to Kristoffersen, vowel quantity (i.e. tense-lax) does not differ between the first and final vowels in such words as *fara* [fʉrɑ] ‘to go’, which I leave aside here.

accent 1 syllables (Kristoffersen 2008:148).

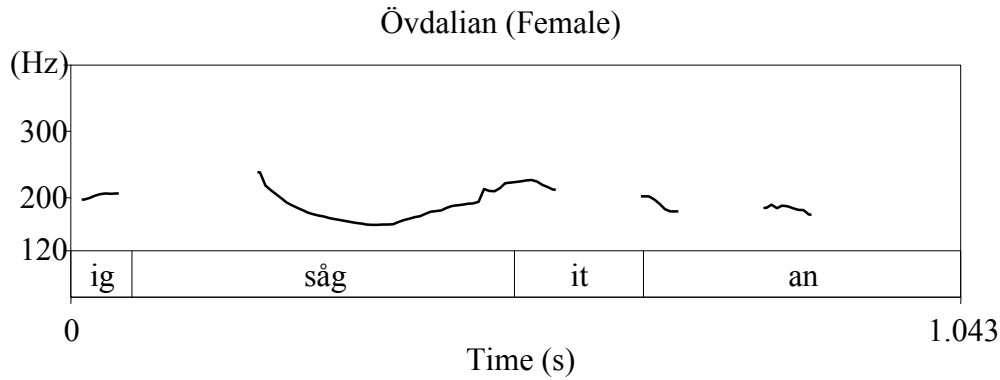
I make a brief statement on the negation *inte*, a typical diagnosis of the presence or absence of OS. It is an accent 2 word and normally appears in a sentence-medial position in Övdalian (Garbacz 2009). It is reduced to either *int* or *it*, with the final vowel [e] dropped. The latter form *it* cannot be stressed.

I present the experimental data of simple tense forms and complex tense forms of Övdalian non-OS constructions.<sup>5</sup> In all cases a main verb is focus-accented. I mention the pitch properties of each construction mainly focusing on those of the negation and the following object pronoun. The pitch pictures of simple tense forms with monosyllabic weak object pronouns are illustrated in (5). In (5a), which has an accent 1 verb, pitch peak comes on the main syllable of *it*. Pitch falls from that syllable but keeps its height. Pitch contour shows a slight wave of fall-rise-fall on the main syllable of *an* in sentence-final position. In (5b), which has an accent 2 verb, pitch rises (or maintains the pitch level in some cases) on the main syllable of *it*. The pitch level is kept until the main syllable of *en*, and pitch lowers sentence-finally.

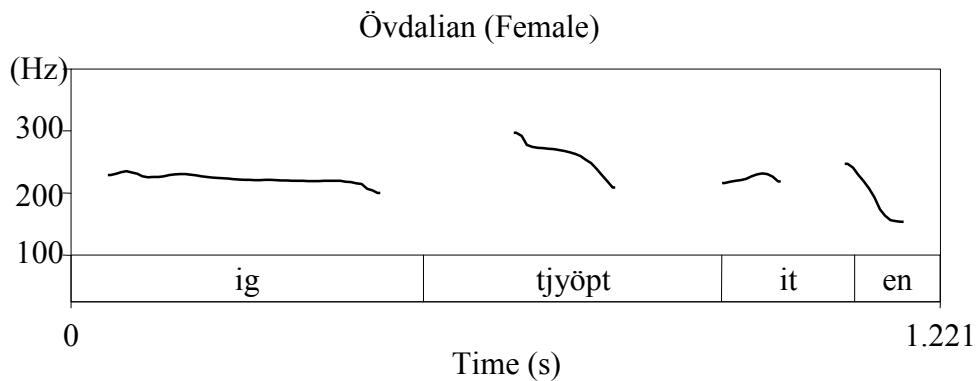
- (5) a. Ig såg it an.  
 I saw not him  
 ‘I didn’t see him.’

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<sup>5</sup> See Hosono (2010c) for the details of the procedures of the experiment and the materials actually used.



- b. Ig tjyöpt it en.  
 I bought not it.  
 ‘I didn’t buy it.’

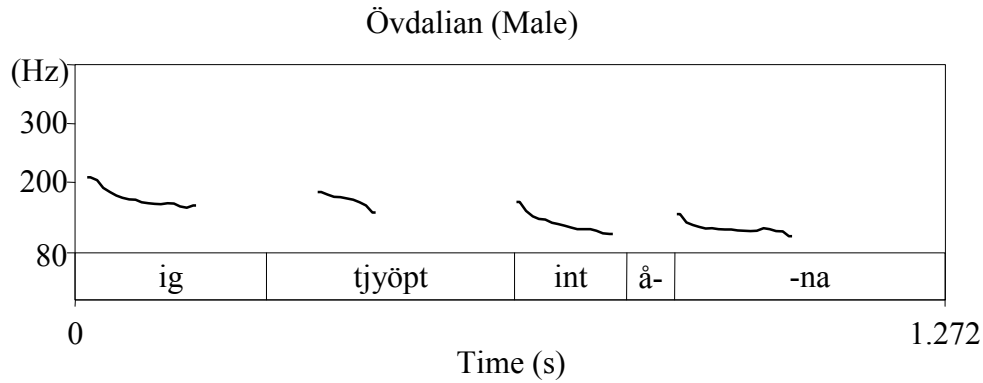


The pitch pictures of simple tense forms with disyllabic weak object pronouns are illustrated in (6). The disyllabic object pronoun *åna* is an accent 2 word. The first pattern is (6a). Pitch slightly rises on the main syllable of *int* and falls from it. The first syllable *å-* of *åna* is always dropped when it is weak. Pitch contour shows a little wave of fall-rise-fall on the second syllable *-na* of *åna*. The second pattern is (6b). Pitch falls from the main syllable of a main verb to that of *it*. Pitch slightly rises and falls on the first syllable *å-* of *åna*. Pitch contour shows a mini-wave of fall-rise-fall on the second syllable *-na* of *åna*.

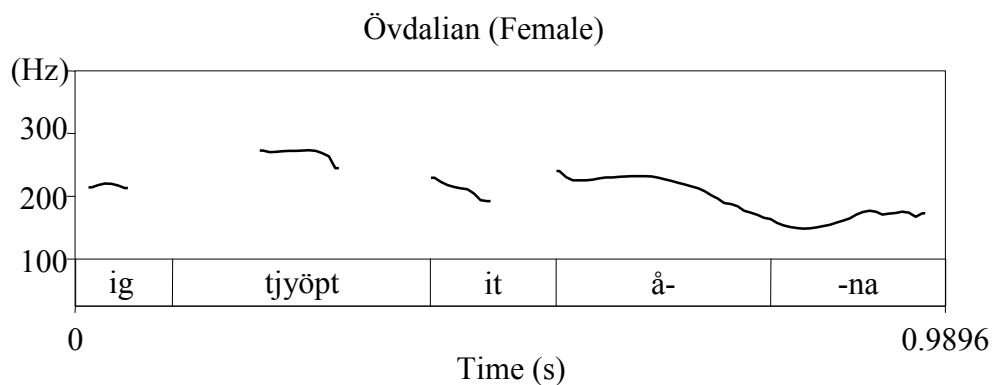


- (6) Ig t̥jyöpt̥ int/it åna.  
 I bought not it  
 ‘I didn’t buy it.’

a.

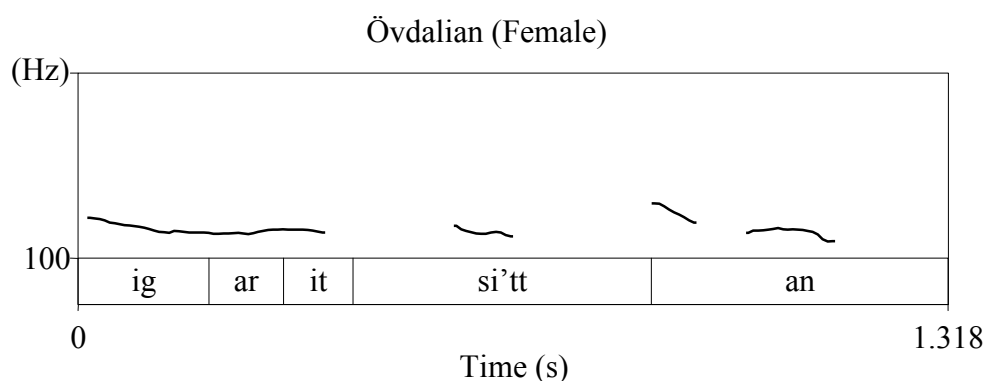


b.



The pitch picture of complex tense forms is illustrated in (7). Pitch level is maintained until *it*. Pitch falls and rises inside the main syllable of *si'tt* that has accent 1. Pitch falls finally on the main syllable of *an*.

- (7) Ig ar̥ it si'tt an.  
 I have not seen it  
 ‘I haven’t seen it.’



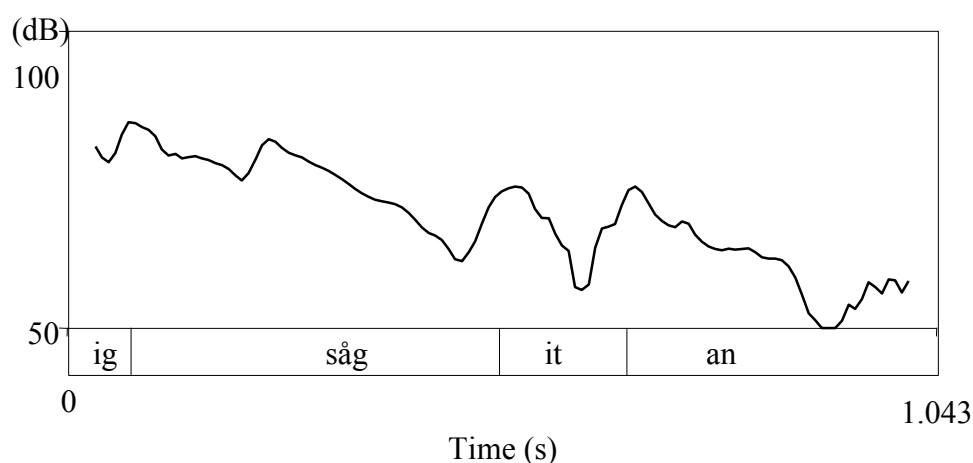
### 3. Level Stress Effect on Unshifted Weak Object Pronouns

In non-OS simple tense forms an object pronoun follows the negation that has accent 2 and is located sentence-finally. Duration of the main syllable of monosyllabic object pronouns *an* and *en* is long (5a-b). Duration of the second syllable *-na* of a disyllabic object pronoun *âna* is long too when its first syllable *â-* is dropped after the negation (6a). Due to those long syllables the object pronouns are assigned a slight prominence though they are unstressed.

Intensity of the main syllable of object pronouns is almost at the same degree as that of the main syllable of the negation. This is illustrated in (8). Intensity of the main syllable of *an* (the fourth peak) is at the same degree as that of the main syllable of *it* (the third peak).

- (8) Ig såg it an.  
 I saw not him  
 'I didn't see him.'

## Övdalian (Female)



Duration of the main syllable of the negation, on the other hand, is quite short, and in most cases pitch does not fall from it to a considerable degree. This indicates that the H peak comes on the main syllable of the negation in a later timing than it comes on that of normal accent 2 words. Even in the cases like (6a) in which pitch appears to fall from the main syllable of the negation early, the pitch contour of the second syllable *-na* of *åna* is fall-rise-fall. The pitch contour of the main syllable of monosyllabic object pronouns is fall-rise-fall too, as illustrated in (5a). This indicates that those syllables start from L as in the accent 1 contour. All of these facts indicate that the effect that occurs on level stress words described in the previous section is brought about on the series that consists of the negation and the following object pronoun. In (6b) in which the first syllable *å-* of *åna* is not dropped, duration of the second syllable *-na* is as long as that of the first syllable, which gives the second syllable a slight prominence. The pitch contour of the second syllable is fall-rise-fall, i.e. an accent 1-like contour. These properties make the object pronoun like a level stress word. Then, I propose a hypothesis on unshifted weak object pronouns:

## (9) Unshifted Weak Object Pronouns in the Scandinavian Languages:

The level stress effect occurs on (the series that consists of a sentential adverb and) an unshifted weak object pronoun.

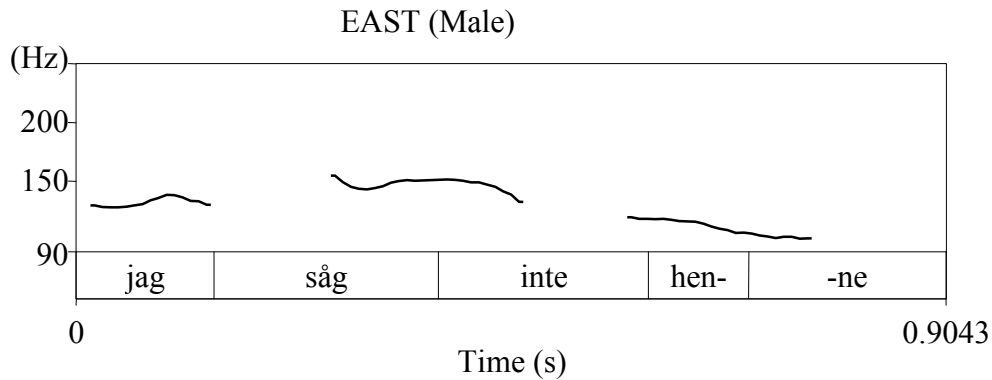
In non-OS simple tense forms a main verb carries the focus of a sentence and is focus-accented. The form of the negation that has accent 2 must be reduced to either *it* or *int*. Due to the weakness and short duration, the H peak comes on its main syllable in a late timing, which makes it sound like a light root. The following object pronoun is also a weak sentential element, but due to the long duration of its main syllable (or the second syllable when the first one is dropped) it is assigned a slight prominence. These situations yield the environment in which both the negation and the following object pronoun are heard at the same degree of stress, which brings about the effect that occurs on level stress words on the combination of the two. In the case in which the first syllable *â-* of *âna* is not dropped after the negation (6b) the first vowel is like a light root due to the weak status of the object pronoun; the second vowel is slightly prominent due to its long duration. Thus, they are heard at the same degree of stress, which brings about the level stress effect on the object pronoun.

It is predicted that when a weak object pronoun does not directly follow a sentential adverb like the negation, the level stress effect does not occur. This is attested by the case of complex tense forms (7) in which a weak object pronoun follows a past participle. Pitch falls and rises inside the main syllable of a monosyllabic accent 1 past participle *si'tt* and falls again on the main syllable of *an*. The accent 1 of the past participle is maintained, and the entire pitch contour from the past participle to the object pronoun looks like that of a disyllabic accent 1 verb as illustrated in (4). Note that the absence of the level

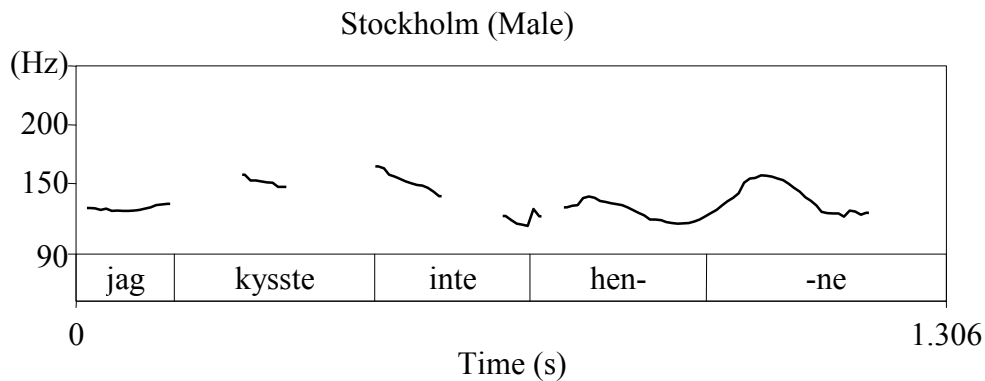
stress effect in complex tense forms is derived from the fact that the past participle does not move. On the other hand, the presence of the level stress effect in simple tense forms is derived from the fact that due to movement of a main verb from the position between the negation and an object pronoun to a higher position, the series that consists of the latter two appears. Thus, in the same way that the presence or absence of OS is accounted for in association with that of main verb movement (i.e. Holmberg's Generalization), the presence or absence of the level stress effect is also accounted for in association with that of main verb movement. When a focus-accented main verb moves, an object pronoun directly follows a sentential adverb, which brings about the level stress effect on the former or the combination of the two. When a main verb does not move, its word accent is maintained in situ, which prevents the level stress effect from occurring on the following object pronoun.

Another prediction is that the level stress effect occurs on the relevant sentential element(s) also in the Scandinavian varieties that have optional OS. Josefsson (2003) argues that unshifted weak object pronouns are acceptable for most of Swedish speakers, and concludes that OS is optional in Swedish. I present the data of the EAST dialect. In polarity-focus (10a), in which an object pronoun is old information, the unshifted object pronoun *henne* is weak. Duration of its first syllable *hen-* is relatively short. Pitch does not fall from that first syllable to a considerable degree, which indicates that H comes on it in a later timing than usual. This data shows that the level stress effect actually occurs on unshifted weak object pronouns in Swedish non-OS constructions. Compare (10a) with contrastive-focus (10b), which illustrates a double-peaked picture of the contrastively focused unshifted object pronoun *henne*. Duration of its first syllable *hen-* is long and H comes on its center.

- (10) a. Jag såg inte henne.  
 I saw not her  
 ‘(Did you see Anna? – No,) I didn’t see her.’



- b. Jag kysste inte HENNE.  
 I kissed not her  
 ‘I didn’t kiss HER (, but kissed Lena).’



Another prediction is that in the Scandinavian languages/dialects that have level stress a weak object pronoun can remain unshifted. This is attested by Finland-Swedish, which has level stress (Kristoffersen 2008) and in which OS is optional (Anders Holmberg, p.c.). Kristoffersen states that the way of realizing level stress in Finland-Swedish differs from Övdalian. Contrary to the late H timing in Övdalian, the H peak comes on the stressed syllable of level stress

words in an earlier timing than it comes on that of accent 2 heavy root words in Finland-Swedish.<sup>6</sup> Unlike Övdalian, Finland-Swedish does not maintain the difference in word accent (Bruce and Gårding 1978). This suggests that regardless of whether the relevant Scandinavian variety maintains the difference in word accent or not, the possibility for a weak object pronoun to remain unshifted is derived from the property that the level stress effect is brought about. Aside from the Swedish varieties, an object pronoun can stay in situ in Falster-Danish (Broekhuis 2008). OS is optional also in the Ærø/South Fyn dialect and the Femø Island dialect of Danish (Erteschik-Shir 2005a,b).<sup>7</sup> Though detailed intonational properties of these dialects are not clear, a possibility is that the Scandinavian varieties that have optional OS are correspond to those that have level stress. I leave this investigation for future research.

Hosono (2010b) argues concerning Swedish OS that since a main verb carries the focus of a sentence and is focus-accented in the OS construction in the unmarked case, an object pronoun moves and causes downstep to prevent an additional focal H contour that could produce the focusing effect on a sentential element other than the main verb, e.g. a sentential adverb like the negation, from arising. This argument is closely related to the claim here. The sentential element on which the level stress effect occurs either is reduced or lacks intonational prominence. Pitch level is not maintained until such a less

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<sup>6</sup> Recall the cases like (6a) in which pitch appears to fall from the main syllable of the negation *int* early. They are interpreted in such a way that the H peak comes early on the main syllable of the negation, which is quite a similar situation in Finland-Swedish. This suggests the possibility that it is not the late H timing as claimed by Kristoffersen but the shortness of the vowel of a stressed syllable and the low prominence of that syllable that are primary factors in bringing about the level stress effect.

<sup>7</sup> The Ærø dialect has the kind of tone as in Swedish (Erteschik-Shir 2005a:71).

prominent sentential element. This is illustrated in (10a), in which pitch peak comes on the main verb *såg* and pitch gradually lowers until the object pronoun *henne*. This contrasts (10b), in which pitch level is maintained and the pitch peak comes on the focused object pronoun *henne* in most cases. Thus, in the Swedish varieties in which the level stress effect occurs downstep has already occurred from a focus-accented main verb, which does not force an object pronoun to move. In those varieties in which the level stress effect does not occur, on the other hand, the focal H contour can always occur, which makes OS obligatory.

In a series of papers Hosono (2010a,b,c) suggests that both OS and non-OS are caused by the interaction between syntactic word order, the information structure of an entire sentence, and the intonational properties of the Scandinavian languages. This applies to the account of unshifted weak object pronouns too. A main verb carries the focus of a sentence and is focus-accented in the non-OS construction in the unmarked case. When the main verb moves from the position between a sentential adverb like the negation and an object pronoun to a higher position, the object pronoun directly follows the sentential adverb. This environment brings about the level stress effect on the former or the combination of the two. Thus, the properties of unshifted weak object pronouns are accounted for in terms of the interaction between the three components given above. Hosono also suggests that OS in the Scandinavian languages/dialects is a purely phonological movement. In the same way, obligatory or optional non-OS is purely phonological, since the possibility for weak object pronouns to remain unshifted depends on the occurrence of the level stress effect.



#### 4. Conclusion

In this paper I have discussed the properties of unshifted weak object pronouns in the Scandinavian languages on the basis of the experimental data of Övdalian non-OS constructions. I proposed a hypothesis on unshifted weak object pronouns: the level stress effect occurs on (the series that consists of a sentential adverb and) an unshifted weak object pronoun. The presence or absence of the level stress effect was accounted for in association with that of main verb movement. When a focus-accented main verb moves, an object pronoun directly follows a sentential adverb, which brings about the level stress effect on the former or the combination of the two. When a main verb does not move, its word accent is maintained in situ, which prevents the level stress effect from occurring on the following object pronoun. With the experimental data of the EAST dialect of Swedish, I showed that the level stress effect actually occurs in Swedish non-OS constructions. I also suggested the possibility that in the Scandinavian varieties that have level stress OS is optional, as observed in Finland-Swedish.

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