

# A Default theory of default case

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English

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## Default Case

- (1) Der Hans, an den erinnere ich mich nicht.  
the-NOM Hans of him-ACC remember I myself not  
'Hans, I don't remember him.' (German, Schütze 2001:224)

## Default Case

- (1) Der Hans, an den erinnere ich mich nicht.  
the-NOM Hans of him-ACC remember I myself not  
'Hans, I don't remember him.' (German, Schütze 2001:224)
- (2) The default case forms of a language are those that are used to spell out nominal expressions (e.g., DPs) that are not associated with any case feature assigned or otherwise determined by syntactic mechanisms. (Schütze 2001)

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English, Danish, Irish (+Italian 2.SG) (Schütze 2001)  
(only pronouns)

# The generalisation

There are no oblique defaults

To derive this, we need two ingredients

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- ▶ A DP leaves syntax without case features
  - ▶ The DP is realised ('spelled out') by the independently existing lexical entries based on 'best fit'
  - ▶ That's all there is to it
- ⇒ The goal is to have no special rule for defaults

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a. NOM = DP + [ K1 ]



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(6) *THE complication:*

The theory only allows NOM/ABS defaults

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(hanging topics)

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(fragment answers)

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- a. **Me**/\*I, I like beans. (hanging topics)
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(coordination)

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- ▶ All of these are strong-pronoun contexts

# Strong vs. deficient in French

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I see Mary

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a. **Je** vois Marie.

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1SG.STRONG 1SG.DEFICIENT I see Mary

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### French 1.SG (Heap et al. 2017)

	DEFICIENT	STRONG
NOM	je	moi
ACC	me	moi
DAT	me	moi



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French 1.SG (Heap et al. 2017)

	DEFICIENT	STRONG
NOM	je	moi
ACC	me	moi
DAT	me	moi

French 3.SG.M (Heap et al. 2017)

	DEFICIENT	STRONG
NOM	il	lui
ACC	le	lui
DAT	lui	lui

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## The standard view

1.SG.

---

NOM

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ACC

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1.SG.	
NOM	I
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## The alternative

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**STRONG** **DEFICIENT**



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- i) Describe what I take to be the default theory of default case
  - ▶ Regular realisation + cumulative decomposition
  - ▶ Consequence: the default is always the unmarked case NOM/ABS
- ii) Argue that apparent ACC-default languages can be reanalysed as NOM-default

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- ▶ A DP leaves syntax without case features
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- (10) The predictions of such theory depend on how we represent case in grammar
- non-decomposable cases (NOM, ACC, GEN) place no restrictions on the value of the default
  - cumulative decomposition restricts default to NOM

## Non-decomposable case (NOM, ACC, GEN)

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(11) Standard paradigm

	1.SG.	FEATURES
NOM	I	1.SG + NOM
ACC	me	1.SG + ACC
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## Non-decomposable case (NOM, ACC, GEN)

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1.SG + NOM	me
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## Testing the limits

(13) Pseudo-English

	3.SG	FEATURES
NOM	he	3.SG + NOM
ACC	him	3.SG + ACC
GEN	his	3.SG + GEN
DAT	hin	3.SG + DAT
DEF	hin	3.SG

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(13) Pseudo-English

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(14) Lexical entries

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- he*  $\Leftrightarrow$  [3.SG.NOM]



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The paradigm generated

FEATURES	
3.SG + NOM	hin
3.SG + ACC	hin
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3.SG + DAT	hin
3.SG	hin

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The paradigm generated

FEATURES	
3.SG + NOM	<del>hin</del> / he
3.SG + ACC	him
3.SG + GEN	his
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3.SG	hin

# The current proposal

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- ▶ Augment the Regular-Realisation approach to Default Case by cumulative decomposition



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- ▶ Augment the Regular-Realisation approach to Default Case by cumulative decomposition
- ▶ This restricts the morphology of the default to the nominative

# Cumulative decomposition

## Cumulative decomposition

- (15) *A constraint on syncretism in case:*  
If one of the two core cases (NOM, ACC) is syncretic with an oblique case, it is the marked core case (ACC).

(Baerman et al. 2005, Caha 2009, 2013, Harðarson 2016, McFadden 2018, Bergsma 2019, Smith et al. 2019, Zompì 2019, Davis 2021)

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- (16) Patterns of syncretism

	NOM	ACC	OBL
allowed	A	A	B

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- (16) Patterns of syncretism

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A \*ABA constraint (Bobaljik 2012)



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## (17) Cumulative Case Decomposition

- NOM = DP + [ K1 ]
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## Deriving \*ABA

(18) An ABA paradigm

	FEATURES	$\phi$
NOM	[ K1 ]	<i>ey</i>
ACC	[ K1 K2 ]	<i>bee</i>
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(19) a.  $bee \Leftrightarrow \phi + [K1, K2]$

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- (19) a.  $bee \Leftrightarrow \phi + [K1, K2]$   
b.  $ey \Leftrightarrow \phi + [K1, K2, K3]$

(20) The paradigm generated

	FEATURES	$\phi$
NOM	[ K1 ]	—
ACC	[ K1 K2 ]	<i>bee</i>
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## Deriving \*ABA

(18) An ABA paradigm

	FEATURES	$\phi$
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## A default theory of default case

(22) Placing the DEFAULT case in the case paradigm

FEATURES

---

DEF	$\phi$
NOM	K1 $\phi$
ACC	K2 K1 $\phi$
OBL	K3 K2 K1 $\phi$

---

## A default theory of default case

(22) Placing the DEFAULT case in the case paradigm

	FEATURES	ALLOWED AAB...
DEF	$\phi$	$\alpha$
NOM	K1 $\phi$	$\alpha$
ACC	K2 K1 $\phi$	$\beta$
OBL	K3 K2 K1 $\phi$	...

## A default theory of default case

(22) Placing the DEFAULT case in the case paradigm

	FEATURES	ALLOWED AAB...	DISALLOWED ABA...
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NOM	K1 $\phi$	$\alpha$	$\beta$
ACC	K2 K1 $\phi$	$\beta$	$\alpha$
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## A default theory of default case

(22) Placing the DEFAULT case in the case paradigm

	FEATURES	ALLOWED AAB...	DISALLOWED ABA...	DISALLOWED AB...A
DEF	$\phi$	$\alpha$	$\alpha$	$\alpha$
NOM	K1 $\phi$	$\alpha$	$\beta$	$\beta$
ACC	K2 K1 $\phi$	$\beta$	$\alpha$	...
OBL	K3 K2 K1 $\phi$	...	...	$\alpha$

# The result

- ▶ We have a theoretically minimal and empirically restrictive theory of the default

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- ▶ We have a theoretically minimal and empirically restrictive theory of the default
- ▶ It only allows NOM/ABS to be the default

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# The Default is nominative also in English

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## The alternative

	1.SG. DEFICIENT	1.SG. STRONG
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- ▶ Comparative evidence: All English default-case environments are strong-pronoun environments in French



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- ▶ Comparative evidence: All English default-case environments are strong-pronoun environments in French
- ▶ Discuss some English-internal evidence

# The default environments in English

## The default environments in English

(23) Default English (Schütze 2001)

- a. **Me**/\*I, I like beans. (left dislocation)
- b. Who wants ice cream? – **Me**/\*I. (fragment answers)
- c. She likes rice, and **him** beans. (gapping)
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- e. **Her** and Sandy went to the store yesterday.  
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## Left dislocation

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'Me, I see Mary.'

(25) Me / **\*I**, I like beans.  
**STRONG** **DEFICIENT**

## Fragment answers

(63) Default English (Schütze 2001)

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(26) Qui viendra avec nous? — **Moi**. / **\*Je=**  
who come-FUT.3SG with us I.STRONG I.DEFICIENT  
'Who will come with us? – Me.' (Heap et al. 2017:184)



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(27) Who wants ice cream? – Me / \*I.  
**STRONG DEFICIENT**

# Gapping

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Jean like the physics and me.DEFI me.STR the chemistry  
'Jean likes physics and me chemistry.' (Kayne 2000:169)

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## Pronoun modification

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## Interim summary

All English default case environments are strong-pronoun environments in French.

## Phonology (Quinn 2005: 74-5)

- ▶ English deficient pronouns are able to undergo phonological reduction

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- ▶ pronouns premodified by adjectives cannot be phonologically reduced

(36) a. [Poor [hɪm]] never got a word in edgeways.  
b. \*[Poor [ɪm]] never got a word in edgeways.

- ▶ coordinated pronouns cannot be reduced

(37) a. Rob saw [əm] in the library. (them)  
b. \*Rob saw [[əm] and [əs]] in the library. (them and us)  
c. Rob saw [[ðem] and [ʌs]] in the library.

# It

- ▶ Cardinaletti (1999:60): *it* is a deficient pronoun. As such, it cannot occur in left-dislocated positions:

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- Well, that movie, I think it's the best movie ever made.
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- ▶ the inanimate weak pronoun *it* is also excluded from coordination regardless of case (Cardinaletti and Starke 1999:217):

(41) \*It and the other one are nice.

# Conclusions

Phonological reduction and *it* strengthen the comparative evidence for the deficient-strong distinction.

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What case does *me* realise?

# What case does *me* realise?

## English pronominal paradigm

			1SG
			STRONG
DEF		$\phi$	<i>me</i>
NOM	K1	$\phi$	<i>me</i>
ACC	K2 K1	$\phi$	<i>me</i>

# What case does *me* realise?

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- ▶ There are reasons to think that the default-case environments are a mixed bag



# The default environments in English

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(coordination)

In German, only (hanging-topic) left dislocations are a default-case environment:

- (42) **Der** **Hans**, **an den** erinnere ich mich nicht.  
the-NOM Hans of him-ACC remember I myself not  
'Hans, I don't remember him.' (German, Schütze 2001:224)

## Fragment answers

(43) Fragment answers in German (Frazier 2007)

- a. Wer hat Hans geschlagen? – Ich/\*Mich.  
**who.NOM** has Hans hit-INF – **I.NOM**/I.ACC  
'Who hit John? Me.'

## Fragment answers

(43) Fragment answers in German (Frazier 2007)

- a. Wer hat Hans geschlagen? – Ich/\*Mich.  
**who.NOM** has Hans hit-INF – **I.NOM**/I.ACC  
'Who hit John? Me.'
- b. Wen hat Hans geschlagen? – Mich/\*Ich.  
**who.ACC** has Hans hit-INF – **I.ACC**/I.NOM  
'Who did John hit? Me.'

## Pronoun modification

(44) Pronoun modification, German

- a. {**Wir** / \***uns**} Linguisten sind ein verrückter Haufen  
we us linguistics are a crazy bunch

# Pronoun modification

(44) Pronoun modification, German

- a. {**Wir** / \***uns**} Linguisten sind ein verrückter Haufen  
we us linguists are a crazy bunch
- b. Das Leben kann für {\***wir** / **uns**} Linguisten sehr  
the life can for we us linguists very  
schnelllebig sein.  
fast-paced be  
'Life can be very fast-paced for us linguists.'

# Gapping

- (45) Ich sehe dich und **du** **mich**  
I.NOM see you.ACC and you.NOM me.ACC  
'I see you and you me.'

## It's not just German

Norris (2018): “Schütze (2001) provides a number of environments where he argues default case is present, but I believe only one of them is revealing for Estonian: hanging topics.”



## The distribution of case in German

German  
construction

---

DEF hanging topics

---

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NOM subject fragment answers  
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# Taking stock

## English pronominal paradigm

		1SG	1SG
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This analysis explains three puzzles:

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- ▶ Why we find 'default ACC' only in pronominal languages



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This analysis explains three puzzles:

- ▶ Why we find 'default ACC' only in pronominal languages
- ▶ Why all default-case constructions with default ACC are strong-pronoun environments
- ▶ Why the ACC default appears in so many environments compared to NOM default

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## A default theory of default case

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- ▶ Apparent default ACC is found in some lgs that only have case on pronouns



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The main idea is to say nothing about default case

- ▶ DPs may have or lack various features (ANIM, CASE)
- ▶ When DPs lack case, they get realised by the best matching lexical item
- ▶ If cumulative decomposition is adopted, the theory predicts that the default is universally NOM/ABS
- ▶ Apparent default ACC is found in some lgs that only have case on pronouns
- ▶ There is a way of analysing these languages as having a default NOM

## A default theory of default case

The main idea is to say nothing about default case

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  - ▶ Apparent default ACC is found in some lgs that only have case on pronouns
  - ▶ There is a way of analysing these languages as having a default NOM
- ⇒ It's the NOM of a strong pronoun, syncretic with weak ACC

Thank you!

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**Appendix**

# Semi-strong

(46) de Hoop 2004

- a. Paul called Jim a Republican. Then he insulted him.
- b. Paul called Jim a Republican. Then HE insulted HIM.

(47) J(e) {\*seulement la} ai aide {seulement elle}

I only her have helped only her (C&S 1999)

- (48) a. Only I love my sister
- b. \*Only me love(s) my sister
- c. \*only 'im (Parrott 2021)
- d. Who can do this? – Only me.

## English pronominal paradigm

		1SG	1SG	1SG
		DEFICIENT	SEMI-STRONG	STRONG
DEF	$\phi$	—	—	<i>me</i>
NOM	K1 $\phi$	I	I	<i>me</i>
ACC	K2 K1 $\phi$	<i>me</i>	<i>me</i>	<i>me</i>

## Mad magazine

Schütze (2001:211) also discusses the so-called Mad-Magazine sentences as a case of left dislocation, see (49).

(49) What?! Him/\*He wear a tuxedo?! Never.

(50) Akamajian (1984:8-9)

a. { Him / \* $\underset{\wedge}{I}m$  } get a job? Never.

b. Speaker A: At last I see the book<sub>i</sub> - it<sub>i</sub>'s on the table.  
Speaker B: Oh? \*It<sub>i</sub> (be) on the table?! We must be blind.

(51) It rain on her birthday? Never! (Siegel 1987:62)

## \*Me arrived

- (52) Choice of a pronoun (Cardinaletti & Starke 1999:153)  
Choose the most deficient form possible.
- (53) French (Kayne 2000:167)
- a. \*Moi        vois Marie  
      I.STRONG see Marie
  - b. Moi,        je        vois Marie  
      I.STRONG I.WEAK see Marie
- (54) Doubling Requirement  
Strong pronouns in French must be doubled by a weak pronoun.
- (55) a. \*Me arrived.  
      b. Me, I arrived

## cross-paradigm syncretism

- (56) Assumption 1: strong has an extra feature
- (57) Assumption 2: The Superset Principle (Vanden Wyngaerd 2018:289)  
A lexical entry L may spell out a syntactic node SN iff the features of L are a superset of the features dominated by SN.
- (58) The rules for 1.SG pronouns
- $me \Leftrightarrow [K2, K1, \phi, STR]$
  - $I \Leftrightarrow [K1, \phi]$
- (59) Rule competition

		[ $\emptyset$ ]	[STR]
DEF	$\phi$	—	<i>me</i>
NOM	K1 $\phi$	<i>I / me</i>	<i>me</i>
ACC	K2 K1 $\phi$	<i>me</i>	<i>me</i>



(60) Danish vs. Oslo Norwegian

- a. Men **mig**, jeg dyrker en anden sport.  
but me, I practice an other sport  
'But me, I practice a different sport.' (Dan)
- b. **Jeg** / \*meg, **jeg** vet det ikke  
I me, I know it not  
'Me, I don't know that.' (Oslo)

		DANISH		OSLO NORWEGIAN	
		1.SG	1.SG.STR	1.SG	1.SG.STR
DEF	$\phi$	—	<i>mig</i>	—	<i>jeg</i>
NOM	K1 $\phi$	<i>jeg</i>	<i>mig</i>	<i>jeg</i>	<i>jeg</i>
ACC	K2 K1 $\phi$	<i>meg</i>	<i>mig</i>	<i>meg</i>	<i>meg</i>

(61) The rules for Oslo Norwegian pronouns

- a. *meg*  $\Leftrightarrow$  [K2, K1,  $\phi$ , STR]  
b. *jeg*  $\Leftrightarrow$  [K1,  $\phi$ , STR]

(62) The rules for Danish 1.SG pronouns

- a. *mig*  $\Leftrightarrow$  [K2, K1,  $\phi$ , STR]  
b. *jeg*  $\Leftrightarrow$  [K1,  $\phi$ ]

# Variation

- (63) The default accusative in English
- Who wants to try this game? – **Me**/**\*I**
  - Me**/**\*I**, I like beans.
  - She likes rice, and **him**/**he** beans.
  - Us**/**we** linguists are a crazy bunch.
  - Her**/**She** and Sandy went to the store yesterday.

- (64) Io e te / \*tu andremo insieme a Roma.  
I.SUBJ and you.OBJ you.SUBJ go.FUT.1.PL together to Rome
- (65) a. Chi è colpevole? – Tu / \*te  
who is guilty – you.STRONG.NOM you.STRONG.ACC  
b. Chi inviterà? – Te / \*tu  
who he.will.invite – you.ACC.STRONG you.NOM.STRONG
- (66) Tu / \*te, sono sicuro che non ho mai scritto a te.  
you.NOM youACC, I am sure that I have never written to you
- (67) Tu / \*te, credo che non abbiano mai parlato di te.  
you.NOM youACC, I think that they have never talked of you
- (68) [ conj [2.sg]] = e.te
- (69) Pietro e probabilmente tu siete stati invitati  
Peter and probably you.NOM are been invited
- (70) a. Io e te / \*tu...  
I.NOM and you.ACC you.NOM  
b. Tu / ?te e io andremo insieme a Roma.  
you.NOM you.ACC and I.NOM go together to Rome

## Danish vs. Oslo Norwegian

- (71) Danish weak object shift (Andréasson 2008:28-9)
- a. Agnes søgte efter David, men hun så ham ikke.  
Agnes look-PST after David but she see-PST him not  
'Agnes was looking for David, but she didn't see him.'
  - b. David så Agnes, men hun så ikke ham.  
David see-PST Agnes, but she see-PST not him  
'David saw Agnes, but she didn't see him.'
- (72) Norwegian weak object shift
- a. Gigi lettet etter Tarald, men hun så ham ikke.  
Gigi look-PST after Tarald but she see-PST him not  
'Gigi was looking for Tarald, but she didn't see him.'
  - b. Tarald så Gigi, men hun så ikke ham.  
Tarald see-PST Gigi, but she see-PST not him  
'Tarald saw Gigi, but she didn't see him.'

## Danish vs. Oslo Norwegian

(73) Danish coordinated or modified pronouns do not shift  
(Engels & Vikner 2014:17)

- a. Hvorfor læste Petter {\*den her} aldrig {den her}  
Why read Petter this here never this here  
'Why did Petter never read this here?'
- b. Han så {\*dig og hende} ikke {dig og hende}  
he saw you and her not you and her  
samman.  
together.'  
'He never saw you and her together.'

(74) Oslo Norwegian

- a. Hvorfor leste Petter {\*den her} aldri {den her}  
Why read Petter this here never this here  
'Why did Petter never read this here?'
- b. Han så {\*deg og henne} ikke {deg og henne}  
he saw you and her not you and her  
sammen

## Danish vs. Oslo Norwegian

(75) Danish strong vs. weak NOM (Hansen & Heltoft 2011:439-40)

- a. **dig** **og Bente** bør absolut også deltage  
you.ACC and Bente should absolutely also participate  
'You and Bente should definitely also participate.'
- b. vil **du** ikke have en kop kaffe?  
will you not have a cup coffee  
'Won't you have a cup of coffee?'

(76) Oslo Norwegian

- a. **Du** / \***deg** **og Gigi** bør absolutt også  
you.NOM you.ACC and Marit should absolutely also  
delta  
participate  
'You and Gigi should definitely also participate.'
- b. **Du** bør absolutt også delta  
you.NOM should absolutely also participate  
'You and Gigi should definitely also participate.'

## Danish vs. Oslo Norwegian

(77) Danish strong vs. weak NOM

- a. **dem her** ser da meget bedre ud  
them here look PARTICLE a lot better out  
'These here look much better, don't they?' (Ørsnes 2002:337)
- b. **de** er sjaskvåde, mine sko  
they are wet my shoes  
'My shoes, they are wet.' (Hansen & Heltoft 2011:439)

(78) Oslo Norwegian

- a. **han** / \***ham** som snakker så mye kom først til  
he.NOM he.ACC who talks so much came first to  
festen  
the.party  
'Him who talks a lot arrived to the part first.'
- b. **han** kom først til festen  
he.NOM came first to the.party  
'He arrived to the part first.'

## Danish vs. Oslo Norwegian

(79) Hvem vil have is? – Mig / \*Jeg  
Who wants have ice.cream me I  
'Who wants to have ice cream? – Me.' (Danish)

(80) Oslo Norwegian

a. Hvem vil ha is? – Jeg / \*Meg  
Who wants have ice.cream I me  
'Who wants to have ice cream? – Me.'

b. Hvem bet Gigi? – Meg / \*Jeg  
Who bit Gigi I me  
'Who did Gigi bite? – Me.'



## Danish vs. Oslo Norwegian

- (81) a. Peter tror [han vinder]  
Peter thinks he wins  
'Peter thinks he is going to win.'
- b. { ham / \*han } tror Peter [e vinder]  
him he thinks Peter wins  
'he is the one of whom Peter believes that he is going to win'
- (82) Oslo Norwegian (based on Taraldsen 1981:379)
- a. De hadde trodd han ville komme for sent  
they had though he would arrive too late
- b. { han / \*ham } hadde de trodd e ville komme for  
he him had they though would arrive too  
sent  
late  
'It was him who they though would come too late.'

## Danish vs. Oslo Norwegian

### (83) Danish

- a. Men **mig**, jeg dyrker en anden sport.  
but me, I practice an other sport  
'But me, I practice a different sport.'
- b. **dig**, du kan gå din vej  
you.ACC, you.NOM can go your way  
'As for you, you can go your own way.' (Ørsnes  
2002:334)
- c. **ham**, han er en skat  
him, he is a treasure  
'Him, he is a treasure.' (Jensen 2019:77)

### (84) Oslo Norwegian

- a. **Jeg** / \*meg, **jeg** vet det ikke  
I me, I know it not  
'Me, I don't know that.'
- b. **Han** / \*ham, **han** er jo en verre slyngel  
He him he is though a worse scoundrel

(85) Norwegian 1st person pronouns (strong and weak)

		DANISH		OSLO NORWEGIAN	
		1.SG	1.SG.STR	1.SG	1.SG.STR
DEF	$\phi$	—	<i>mig</i>	—	<i>jeg</i>
NOM	K1 $\phi$	<i>jeg</i>	<i>mig</i>	<i>jeg</i>	<i>jeg</i>
ACC	K2 K1 $\phi$	<i>mig</i>	<i>mig</i>	<i>meg</i>	<i>meg</i>

(86) The rules for Oslo Norwegian pronouns

- $meg \Leftrightarrow [K2, K1, \phi, STR]$
- $jeg \Leftrightarrow [K1, \phi, STR]$

(87) The rules for Danish 1.SG pronouns

- $mig \Leftrightarrow [K2, K1, \phi, STR]$
- $jeg \Leftrightarrow [K1, \phi]$

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