Focus-marked anaphor and the binding thory

Benjamin I. Mmadike and Davidson U. Mbagwu
Department of Linguistics
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka
Anambra State, Nigeria

Abstract
Anaphors in focus-marked position in [Spec, CP] seem to be structurally superior to their antecedents. To verify this, we examined a sample of focus-marked reflexive anaphors in Igbo. However, using the reconstruction analysis, we claim that despite its seemingly superior structural position, the [Spec, CP] anaphor is m-commanded by its antecedent.

1.0 Introduction

In this study, an anaphor is a nominal expression which lacks independent reference. It however derives its reference from another nominal expression, its antecedent. The binding theory is one of the modules of the principles and parameters framework which is adopted here. This module is responsible for determining the relationship between at least two linguistic elements, (cf. Chomsky, 1981 &1986). The module is formulated in terms of the s-structure configurational relationship of government and m-command. A focus-marked anaphor is one that is moved into a position such that its information content is made more prominent.

This paper investigates instances where the reflexive anaphor in Igbo occurs in a focus construction. In a focus-marked position, such an anaphor is structurally higher than its antecedent which it appears to m-command. We therefore examine whether this seemingly superior structural position restrains the binding of the focus-marked anaphor.

There are four sections in this study. The first is the introduction, while the second section outlines the focus construction involving anaphors and their antecedents. In the third, antecedent-anaphor relations in focus construction will be described. The fourth section is the conclusion.

2.0 Anaphor in focus-marked position

There are instances where the reflexive anaphor occurs in [Spec, CP] position. An anaphor in such a position is said to be focus-marked. Focus-marking refers to the placement of a constituent in the foreground of attention. According to Yiman (1988), the term, focus

> is used in relation to the semantic (structural) representation of a sentence.... The focus is the part which carries the information which the speaker believes to be new to his addressee. The presupposition constitutes the part which he assumes to be shared both by him and the addressee, and on which they agree as to its truth or falsity.

In probably all languages, various constituents can be selected for attention or focus-marked by means of a number of devices. The cleft construction is one of such mechanisms. In clefting, the focus-marked constituent is moved into initial position in [Spec, CP].

In Igbo, the focus-marked constituent is usually preceded by an expletive subject, 'Ọ' (it) plus 'bụ' (be). When the object of the verb is focused, the presupposed constituent is introduced by the complementizer, 'kà' (that) as in 1b. This complementizer is however, absent when the subject of the sentence is under focus; 1c illustrates this.

1a. Àda$_i$ zùrù ònwe yā$_i$ nà kọlēèji.
Ada train-past self her college
"Ada sponsored herself through college."

1b. Ọ bụ̀ ònwe yā$_i$ [kà Àda$_i$ zùrù $_t$ nà kọlēèji]
It be her self that Ada train-past$_t$ at college
"It was herself that Ada sponsored through college."

1c. Ọ bụ̀ Àda$_i$ [$_t$ zùrù ònwe yā$_i$ nà kọlēèji].
It be Ada t train-past self her at college
"It was Ada who sponsored herself through college."

In focus-marked position, the anaphor m-commands its antecedent structurally. The converse is the case when the anaphor remains in situ, (cf. 1a).

To determine the relationship between the anaphor in [Spec, CP] position and its antecedent in [Spec, IP], we need to examine the implications of their structural positions. In addition, the relationship between the focus-marked anaphor and its trace will be considered. Examples 1b-c above and the b in 2-6 illustrate the cleft construction in Igbo.

2a. Ụnụ$_i$ mèbọ́rọ̀ ònwe ụnụ$_i$ n'ọ̀hà.

You-pl disgrace-past self you-pl in public
"You disgraced yourselves in the public."
b. Ọ bụ ònwe ụnụ$_i$[kà ụnụ$_i$ mèbọ̀rọ̀ $_{ti}$ n'ọ̀hà].
It be self you-pl that you-pl disgrace-past $_t$ in public
"It was yourselves that you disgraced in public."
3a. Òbi$_i$ hụ̀rụ̀ ònwe yā$_i$ n'anya.
Obi see-hab self him in eye.
"O loves himself."
b. Ọ bụ ònwe yā$_i$ [kà Òbi$_i$ hụ̀rụ̀ $_{ti}$ n'anya].
It be self him that Obi see-hab $_t$ in eye
"It is himself that Obi loves."
4a. Ị$_i$ gà-edufū onwe gi$_i$.
You-sg aux lead-loss self you-sg
"You will mislead yourself."
b. Ọ bụ ònwe gi$_i$ [kà Ị$_i$ gà-èdufū $_{ti}$]
It be self you-sg that you-sg aux lead loss $_t$
"It is yourself that you will mislead."
5a. Anà m$_i$ àkparị onwe m$_i$.
Part-aux I insult self me
"I am insulting myself."
b. Ọ bụ ònwe m$_i$ [kà m$_i$ nà-àkparị $_{ti}$]
It be self me that I aux insult $_t$
"It is myself that I am insulting."
6a. Ha$_i$ nà-àta onwe ha$_i$ ahụhụ.
They aux inflict self them suffering
"They are inflicting punishment on themselves."
b. Ọ bụ ònwe hā$_i$ [kà ha$_i$ nà-àta $_{ti}$ ahụhụ.
It be self them that they aux inflict $_t$ suffering
"It is on themselves that they are inflicting punishment."

In 1-6 above, the a sentences represent the sources of the derived forms in b. For the purpose of illustration, we label-bracket examples 2a and b as 7a and b respectively. Our discussion on the focus-marked constituents will be illustrated on the basis of 7b. This discussion is generalized across the rest of the clefted sentences in 1-6.

7a. [Ụnụ$_i$ [mèbọ̀rọ̀ [ònwe ụnụ] [n'ọ̀hà]]]
IP VP
b. [Ọ [bụ [ònwe ụnụ]$_i$ [kà [ụnụ$_i$ [mèbọ̀rọ̀ $_{ti}$ [n'ọ̀hà]]]]]]
IP$_i$ VP$_{ti}$ CP IP VP PP

The object trace in 7b is the NP-trace of the focus-marked reflexive anaphor, "ònwe ụnụ" in [Spec, CP]. The displaced reflexive has not violated the subjacency condition, since it has crossed only one bounding node, IP. There is also no ECP violation as the object trace is properly licensed by the verb, "mèbọrọ". Thus, the b sentences in 1-6 are grammatical.

Focus-marked anaphor and antecedent relations

It is important to consider whether the reflexive anaphor in [Spec, CP] is constrained by principle A of the binding theory, as in 8.

8. An anaphor must be bound in a local domain, (cf. Chomsky, 1995:95).

What comes to mind is how to establish a binding relation between the displaced reflexive anaphor in [Spec, CP] and the antecedent in subject position in the derived structure. This derived structure is not peculiar to Igbo. Analogous data occur in other languages like English.

9a. John$_i$ likes himself$_i$

b. Himself$_i$, John likes $_i$

(cf. Lasnik and Uriagereka, 1988:157)

It appears that the [Spec, CP] m-commands the subject-NP position in 7b. This is because the [Spec, CP] occurs in a structurally higher position than the subject position. This view is a misrepresentation of the two structural positions. Ordinarily, the m-command relation here appears not to be clear. For this, 7b in the analysis is assumed to be derived from 7a. It is argued that the subject position [Spec, IP] m-commands the [Spec, CP] position in the focus-marked construction, 7b. Based on the analysis, we claim that the binding requirements to be fulfilled by the constituents in subject and [Spec, CP] positions in 7b have already been satisfied in 7a, with IP as the local domain for the anaphor. Within this domain, there is an m-commanding antecedent, "ụnụ", for the anaphor, and the verb, 'mèbọrọ' as the governor. Principle A of the binding theory is therefore satisfied.

The reconstruction analysis is based on the assumption that the anaphoric relation in 7a is superimposed on 7b. It is for this reason that Belletti and Rizzi (1988) have come to regard Principle A of the binding theory as an 'anywhere' principle rather than one to be satisfied only at the level of s-structure. According to them, the s-structure is an arbitrarily chosen level. They claim that Principle A should equally be applicable at the level of d-structure even when the "application of move-α destroys a well-formed binding configuration by extracting... an anaphor from the c-domain of its antecedent".

With regard to the trace of the reflexive anaphor in 7b, this trace is encoded with all the syntactic properties of its antecedent, 'ònwe ụnụ' with

which it forms a chain. The trace of the focused reflexive anaphor transmits all the encoded properties, viz, θ role, m-command, and AGR requirements to its displaced antecedent, 'ọnwe ụnụ' in [Spec, CP] through the chain transmission mechanism, (cf. Williams, 1986; Haegeman, 1991:288). The m-command relation between the [Spec, CP] and object NP-trace in 7b is explicitly captured in Williams (1986) as follows:

10. X m-commands Y iff X m-commands Y or the trace of a phrase that contains Y.

Based on the formalization in 10, we assert that in 7b the subject position, [Spec, IP] m-commands the derived [Spec, CP] position. In addition, the reflexive anaphor in [Spec, CP] does not counter-exemplify Principle A of the binding theory. The [Spec, CP] reflexive anaphor is bound to its antecedent in subject position via the trace of the reflexive anaphor.

3.0 Conclusion

The paper has examined the binding relations between the focus-marked anaphor and its antecedent. A focus-marked anaphor in [Spec, CP] seems to be structurally higher than its antecedent. We have relied on the reconstruction analysis and the chain transmission mechanism to arrive at the conclusion that the subject position, [Spec, IP] actually m-commands the derived [Spec, CP] position.

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