

# Accented Pronouns and Violated Expectations

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## 1 Introduction

### Two Observations:

- Pronouns must have a contextually GIVEN antecedent to be felicitous:
  - (1) \*(John likes Mary.) He<sub>J</sub> bought her<sub>M</sub> a present.
- GIVEN items are often deaccented:
  - (2) John wanted to buy some MILK, but the store was out of COW's milk, so he bought some SOY milk.
  - (3) # John wanted to buy some MILK but the store was out of cow's MILK, so he bought some soy MILK.

**Naive Prediction:** Pronouns should not bear accent.

**However:** Since at least Akmajian and Jackendoff (1970) we've known both that pronouns do occasionally bear accent, and that this sometimes has an effect on coreference:

- (4) John hit Bill, and then he<sub>J/#B</sub> hit Frank.
- (5) John hit Bill, and then HE<sub>B/#J</sub> hit Frank

### Previous accounts:

- Accent on Pronouns = Complementary Referential Preferences based on grammatical role of the antecedent (Kameyama 1996)
- Accent = Marks non-GIVEN-ness (Schwarzschild 1999)

However, neither GIVEN-ness nor grammatical role will work to explain the contrasts in (6-7):

- (6) CONTEXT: John can be a bit of a jerk, and Bill sometimes takes things too personally.
  - a. John insulted Bill and he<sub>B/?J</sub> felt sad.
  - b. John insulted Bill and he<sub>J/#B</sub> felt guilty.
- (7)
  - a. John insulted Bill and HE<sub>J/?B</sub> felt sad.
  - b. John insulted Bill and HE<sub>B/#J</sub> felt guilty.

### Contrast with:

(8) John saw Bill across the street and he<sub>J/B</sub>/#HE waved. (Beaver 2004)

The accentual possibilities in (6-8) are not captured either by the grammatical roles of the antecedents or by GIVEN-ness. The crucial differences here seem to be based on our expectations: (7) contrast with our expectations of who should feel sad or guilty; on the other hand, we have no expectations about who will wave in (8).

#### **This Talk:**

- Suggest that the distribution of accented pronouns like those in (7) is predictable based on the presence of a Violated Expectation coherence relation
  
- Propose the beginnings of an account for this descriptive generalization based on the interpretation of Focus
  
- Discuss how this approach captures data that is problematic for other accounts

## 2 Violated Expectations and Accent

### 2.1 Violated Expectations

Relationship between two clauses:

(9) Infer  $P$  from the assertion of  $S_1$  and  $Q$  from the assertion of  $S_2$ , where normally  $P \rightarrow \neg Q$ . (Hobbs 1979)

Textbook example:

(10) John is a Republican but he's honest. (Lakoff 1971)  
SPEAKER PRESUPPOSES: Republicans are dishonest.

### 2.2 Accent on Violated Expectations

**Generalization:** Accent falls on elements that violate expectations:

- (11) a. John is a Republican but he's HONEST.  
b. # John is a Republican but HE's honest.
- (12) John is a Republican but he PAYS his taxes.
- (13) John is a Republican but his investments AREN'T primarily composed of off-shore accounts.
- (14) John is a Republican, but he cares for people OTHER than himself.

### 3 Linking Violated Expectations to Focus

Accent in Violated Expectation = roughly the same meaning as “instead”:

- (15) John went shopping. vs.  
 (16) JOHN went shopping (instead)

**Above:**

- Both sentences assert the same thing (the proposition expressed by (15)).
- (16) presupposes that someone else was expected to go.

- (17) John went SHOPPING (instead)

- (17) presupposes that John was expected to do something else.
- *instead* associates with Focus.

#### 3.1 Expressing the presupposition and the assertion associated with “instead” (à la Rooth (1992))

**Assumption:** Violated Expectations require the presence of a covert *instead* operator, defined as follows:

If  $\alpha$  = a sentence of the form [ ...  $XP_F$  ... ]:

- (18)  $\llbracket \alpha \rrbracket^F$  = A set of propositions formed by replacing the Focus-marked element XP with its same-typed alternatives, the Focus Semantic Value of  $\alpha$

- (19)  $\llbracket \alpha \rrbracket^\circ$  = The Ordinary Semantic Value of  $\alpha$  (ie, the proposition it would express without Focus)

- (20)  $\llbracket \textit{instead } \alpha \rrbracket = \exists p, p' \in \llbracket \alpha \rrbracket^F \textit{ such that } \textit{expected}(p) \wedge \neg \textit{expected}(p') \wedge p' = \llbracket \alpha \rrbracket^\circ . \llbracket \alpha \rrbracket^\circ$

→ Analogous to the Exhaustivity operator, *O*, a covert counterpart of “only” that generates scalar implicatures (Chierchia et al. 2008).

For the sentence in (7a), repeated here as (21):

- (21) John insulted Bill and  $HE_{J/\#B}$  felt sad.  
 $\llbracket \text{JOHN}_F \textit{ felt sad} \rrbracket^F = \text{John felt sad, Bill felt sad, Frank felt sad...}$   
 $\llbracket \text{JOHN}_F \textit{ felt sad} \rrbracket^\circ = \text{John felt sad.}$

What we expect: Bill should feel sad.  
 What we don't expect: John feeling sad.

**Result:** Accent on “he” referring to John.

**On the other hand,** for (8), repeated here as (22):

- (22) John saw Bill across the street and  $he_{J/B/HE}$  waved.

What we expect: ??  
 Result: No accent possible.

## 4 Predicted Distribution of Accented Pronouns due to Violated Expectations

Deriving accent based on Violated Expectations better accounts for data that was problematic for Pronoun-Specific theories of accented pronouns, which suggest that accented and unaccented pronouns simply have “complementary referential preferences,” and semantic theories that derive accent in general based on GIVEN-ness.

### 4.1 Problems for Pronoun-Specific Theories

#### 4.1.1 Accent is not due to ambiguity

Unambiguous pronouns must occasionally bear accent, which is not predicted by theories that suggest that the function of pronominal accentuation is to disambiguate reference:

CONTEXT: John is a heavy-weight boxer and Mary is a 90-lb model.

(23) John pushed Bill and HE<sub>J</sub> fell.

(24) John pushed Mary and HE<sub>J</sub> fell. (Kehler 2005)

**Expectation:** The person who is pushed will fall.

#### 4.1.2 Missing Generalization: Noun Phrases with the same referents get the same accent

(25) John pushed Mary and Mary fell.

(26) John pushed Mary and JOHN fell. (Kehler 2005)

#### 4.1.3 Some accented pronouns are still ambiguous

Complementary Preferences suggest that the reason for accenting is to disambiguate vs. the unaccented pronoun. However, it is possible to construct ambiguous accented pronouns:

(27) John asked Bill to get a glass of water for Mary and ...

a. she/#SHE drank it.

b. HE<sub>J/B</sub>/#he drank it.

(28) John asked Mary to get a glass of water for Bill and ...

a. SHE/#she drank it.

b. HE<sub>J/#B</sub>/he<sub>B/#J</sub> drank it.

(29) Mary asked John to get a glass of water for Bill and ...

a. SHE/#she drank it.

b. HE<sub>J/#B</sub>/he<sub>B/#J</sub> drank it.

**Expectation:** The recipient of the water will drink it, not the person issuing the request or the person fulfilling it.

#### 4.1.4 Any other non-expected alternative may receive accent

Theories based on Complementary Preferences will fail to account for the placement of accent below:

CONTEXT: I'm explaining to you how my apartment is a rickety death-trap.

- (30) I pushed my roommate and...  
a. # the clock fell.  
b. the CLOCK fell.

**Expectation:** My roommate will fall.

## 4.2 Problems for Semantic Theories of accent placement (as well)

### 4.2.1 Pronouns are only marked accentually when they are the CAUSE of the violated expectation (because some other alternative was expected)

Based either on GIVEN-ness or on Complementary Preferences, it is impossible to explain the contrast below – the subject John is GIVEN in either case:

- (31) John went on a rampage with a super-soaker, but  
a. HE got wet.  
→ Alternatives: {Someone else got wet, John got wet...}  
  
b. # he got WET.  
→ Alternatives: {John got wet, John got hurt, John got rich ....}

**Expectation:** Someone else gets wet.

**# Expectation:** John has some property other than wetness.

→ Accent on “he” referring to John; no accent on “wet.”

Contrast this with:

- (32) John was walking down the street and....  
a. # HE tripped.  
→ Alternatives: {Someone else tripped, John tripped.....}  
  
b. he TRIPPED.  
→ Alternatives: {John tripped, John kept on walking, John bought a sandwich...}

**Expectation:** John will keep on walking.

**# Expectation:** Someone else will trip.

→ Accent on “trip”; no accent on “he” referring to John.

### 4.2.2 Expectations are context-sensitive, and so is accent

John and Mary have the same GIVEN-ness and the same grammatical roles below:

CONTEXT: John and Mary are a heteronormative couple shopping for clothes.

- (33) John and Mary picked out a dress together, and she/#SHE tried it on.  
(34) John and Mary picked out a dress together, and HE/#he tried it on.

**Expectation:** Heteronormative women try on dresses.

→ No accent on “she”; accent on “he”

**Changing the context changes the accent:**

CONTEXT: We know that John is a drag performer, and Mary hates wearing feminine clothes.

- (35) John and Mary picked out a dress together, and he/SHE tried it on.

**Expectation:** Drag performers need to try on dresses.

→ No accent on “he”; accent on “she”

## 5 Conclusions

- Some accented pronouns arise because they violate expectations
- Accent in these cases can be linked to Focus in that it expresses something similar to the Focus-sensitive operator “instead”
- This more successfully accounts for the distribution of accented pronouns and other nominal expressions:
  - Not all ambiguous pronouns are accentable
  - Not all accented pronouns would have been ambiguous
  - Moves towards a unifying analysis for this kind of accented noun, pronoun, as well as other parts of speech

**Remaining issues:**

What is the difference in distribution between overt and covert “instead”?

What explains the contrast below in (36-37)?

- (36) John pushed Bill and HE<sub>J</sub> fell.  
(37) ?# John pushed Bill and HE<sub>J</sub> fell instead.

Put another way, why do Violated Expectation coherence relations need to be marked with accent, rather than an overt “instead”?

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