Narrow Scope Wh-Items in Shifty Contexts: A Case of Surprising Non-Quotation in Uyghur

Goals: This paper investigates the distribution of third person subject drop in Uyghur (Turkic) and finds that some Uyghur sentences typically analyzed as quotation exhibit the null subject properties of embedded clauses. I argue that these complements are Force phrases (ForceP) which enforce narrow scope on wh-items while allowing other A′ movement between matrix and embedded clauses.

Background: In languages with indexical shift, it may be difficult to distinguish 'shifty' finite clause complement from a quotation. A common diagnostic of indexical shift is whether or not wh-items within an embedded clause are given wide or narrow scope: wide scope is associated with true indexical shift, while narrow scope is associated with quotations, which are opaque to (even covert) A′ movement. This diagnostic has been used readily to distinguish quotation from non-quotational shifty sentences in Uyghur, a language with mandatory indexical shift in embedded finite clauses (Sudo 2010; Shklovsky and Sudo 2014).

Evidence: While first and second person subjects may freely drop in Uyghur, third person subjects, even when preceded by a context which makes them given, are not allowed to drop in matrix contexts (1). Third person dropping is however mandatory when the subject has a generic reading (2), and optional when the subject is in a finite adjunct clause and coreferent with the subject of the matrix clause (3); these are all common attributes of partial null subject languages (Holmberg 2005; Holmberg et al. 2009). Third person subjects of a complement clause can drop, even when not coreferent with the matrix subject; compare the overt subject (5a) to the null subject (6a).

While both (5) and (6) allow interpretations with wide scoping wh-items, only the sentence with a pronounced third person subject (5) allows a narrow wh-item scope interpretation. This suggests that in these instances, complements with narrow scoping wh-items are opaque to whatever mechanism allows embedded clauses to drop third person subjects, enforcing mandatory third person like in matrix clauses (1). In Uyghur, finite complement clauses may host an accusatively marked subject, (7). Accusative subjects can only exist in embedded contexts (4). Shklovsky and Sudo (2014) argues that the accusative subject is derived from movement of the subject to a position in the CP; typically taken as above indexically shifting monsters; Major (2021) argues that Uyghur allows both raising constructions and proleptic constructions, with the proleptic equivalent having an accusative DP generated in the matrix clause and a resumptive pronoun in the embedded clause which controls agreement (8). Data is collected from a Uyghur speaker in the United States.

While (7) allows both wide and narrow wh-item scoping interpretations, (8) only allows the narrow scope wh-item reading. In an analysis where narrow scope diagnoses quotation, the complement of (8) is understood as necessarily quotational, while (7) may have a wide scoping non-quotational complement (8a), or a narrow scoping quotational complement (8b). However, under this analysis, there is an issue: for (8b), *uni* must be proleptic, as an accusative subject is not allowed in a matrix clause (4), and movement out of a quotation is blocked; however, if this is the case, then the complement of (8b) must have a null third person subject, which is disallowed in matrix clauses as well (1). Thus the ability for (8) to have a narrow scope wh-item interpretation is problematic for this account.

Approach: I argue that ForcePs enforce question interpretation of all internal wh-items which have not yet been closed off. Additionally, in Uyghur, ForcePs enforce overt third person subjects in the CP they immediately take as complements. ForcePs, as a required component of matrix clauses, thus allow the question interpretation of wh-items and enforces the lack of third person subject drop in Uyghur. However, unlike quotations, ForcePs are not opaque to A′ movement. I take (5a–8a) to be instances of (Forceless) CP embedding, and (5b–8b) to be instances of ForceP embedding. The embedded CP in (6b) is immediately dominated by a ForceP and as a result cannot drop third person subjects, leading to its ungrammaticality. For (6a) there is no dominating ForceP and thus the dropped subject is allowed. For (6b), the accusative subject is the result of A′ movement out of the ForceP; this is impossible under the quotation interpretation of (6b), but perfectly allowed through ForcePs. Finally I argue that prolepsis is only possible under quotation; this necessitates that the embedded clause in (8) disallows movement and requires that the sentence be interpreted with narrow scope.

Examples:

(1) *Tursun tünügün bazar-gha bar-d-i. *(U) kim-ni kör-d-i?*
Tursun yesterday store-DAT go-PST-3 3SG.NOM who-ACC see-PST-3
'Yesterday, Tursun went to the market. Who did he see?'

(2) *Yaponiye-de (*ular) Yaponche sözle-y-du.*
Japan-LOC 3PL.NOM Japanese speak-PRES-3
'They (generic) speak Japanese in Japan.'

(3) *Ayishe xoshal i-d-i, chünki (u) nahayiti köp sowghat tapshur-up al-d-i.*
Ayishe happy COP-PST-3 because 3SG.NOM many lot gift submit-CVB take-PST-3
'Ayishe$_i$ was happy because she$_i$ received many gifts.'

(4) **Uni kim-ni kör-d-i?*
3SG.ACC who-ACC see-PST-3
Intended: 'Who did she see?'

(5) *Tursun u kim-ni kör-d-i dé-d-i*
Tursun 3SG.NOM who-ACC see-PST-3 say-PST-3

  a. ✓'Who did Tursun$_i$ say she$_j$ saw?'
  b. ✓'Tursun$_i$ said, 'Who did she$_j$ see?''

(6) *Tursun kim-ni kör-d-i dé-d-i*
Tursun 3SG.NOM who-ACC see-PST-3 say-PST-3

  a. ✓'Who did Tursun$_i$ say she$_j$ saw?'
  b. ✗'Tursun$_i$ said, 'Who did she$_j$ see?''

(7) *Tursun uni kim-ni kör-d-i dé-d-i*
Tursun 3SG.ACC who-ACC see-PST-3 say-PST-3

  a. ✓'Who did Tursun$_i$ say she$_j$ saw?'
  b. ✓'Tursun$_i$ said, 'Who did she$_j$ see?''

(8) *Tursun uni u kim-ni kör-d-i dé-d-i*
Tursun 3SG.ACC 3SG.NOM who-ACC see-PST-3 say-PST-3

  a. ✗'Who did Tursun$_i$ say she$_j$ saw?'
  b. ✓'Tursun$_i$ said, 'Who did she$_j$ see?''

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