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Logophoric pronouns are not obligatorily de se: evidence from Ewe

We present new evidence against the conventional wisdom that logophoric pronouns (LPs) are obligatorily interpreted de se. Castaneda (1968) noted that English has no pronoun *he** that occurs in the scope of an attitude predicate and denotes the attitude holder. Clements (1975) discovered that the West African language Ewe has precisely such a pronoun (1).

1.   Kofi   be   yè   dzo
        Kofi   say   LOG   leave
        'Kofi$_i$ said that he$_{i/*j}$ left.'

Philosophers have noted that *he** is expected to be obligatorily construed de se; from a linguistic point of view, this could be understood as a consequence of obligatory binding of the logophor by an individual abstractor introduced by the attitude predicate (2).

2.   Kofi said [$_{CP}$ $\lambda w_1 \lambda x_2$ [$_{IP}$ w_1 he$^*_{2/*3}$ left]]

If LPs were obligatorily de se, then, they could by analyzed by analogy with PRO. Furthermore, this outcome would support Lewis' view, developed in subsequent work by Chierchia, Percus and Sauerland and others, that the content of attitudes de se is a property rather than a proposition. According to this view, de se attitude reports arise via dedicated LFs involving operator binding as in (2), rather than a de re construal under the acquaintance relation 'SELF'. If so, then we expect to find pronouns that are necessarily construed via such a binding configuration, and hence are obligatorily interpreted de se. LPs seem a good candidate for such an expression. As far as we know, this assumption has never been verified through fieldwork with native Ewe speakers, although there is evidence that Yoruba LPs are obligatorily de se (Anand 2006). This paper remedies this, presenting data showing that Ewe logoporic pronouns can be construed de re. Our evidence comes from the acceptability of attitude reports with LPs in situations where the attitude holder fails to recognize himself (3), and the availability of a strict reading of the LP under ellipsis (4).

3.   *Context:* John has just found an old paper that he wrote, but he doesn't realize that he is the
        author of the paper. He reads it and is impressed by what a good paper it is. He says,
        "Whoever wrote this paper is clever".
        John   be   yè   le   cleva
        John   say   LOG   COP   clever
        'John said that he was clever.'   → *True*
4.   John   xɔse   be   yè   nyi   sukuvi nyoe de.   E
        John   believe COMPL   LOG   COP   student good   3SG

        to   a   tchan
        father ART   also
        'John thinks that he is a good student. His father does too.'
                (i)   His father thinks John is a good student.   *Strict reading*
                (ii)   His father$_i$ thinks he$_i$ is a good student.   *Sloppy reading*

These facts present a puzzle: if logophoric pronouns are not obligatorily bound variables, why is their distribution limited to the scope of attitude predicates? We argue that the notion that LPs are obligatorily bound is in fact reconcilable with their ability to be construed de re if one assumes that de re construals arise via concept generator variables within the DP, which are bound by abstractors over concept generators (Percus and Sauerland 2003). A concept generator is a function from individuals to individual concepts, type $<e,<s,e>>$, and supplies for any individual a suitable concept for that individual, where suitability is defined in terms of acquaintance on the part of the

attitude holder. The LP is a variable that is obligatorily bound by the individual abstractor, as in (2), but if there is a concept generator that takes this variable as its argument, a de re construal is derived.

5a. *De se LF of (3):* John says $[\lambda w_1 \lambda x_2 \, [w_1 \, y\grave{e}_2 \text{ is clever}]]$

5b. $[[5a]]^{c, w} = \forall <w', x>$: it is compatible with what John says in w for John to be x in w', x is clever in w'.

6a. *De re LF of (3):* John says $[\lambda G_1 \lambda w_2 \lambda x_3 \, [w_2 \, [_{DP} G_1 \, y\grave{e}_3 \, w_2] \text{ is clever}]]$

6b. $[[6b]]^{c, w} = \exists G$: Suitable$_w$(John, G) & $\forall <w', x>$: it is compatible with what John says in w for John to be x in w', $G(x)(w')$ is clever in w'.

      Seen in this light, it is no longer surprising that LPs can be construed de re: binding need not result in a de se construal if the introduction of a concept generator is permitted. In fact, the puzzle is no longer why LPs admit both de se and de re interpretations, but rather why PRO only allows a de se interpretation: what prevents the introduction of a concept generator in control cases? We suggest that this constraint is one aspect of the generally more limited interpretive options for PRO: unlike *yè*, its antecedent must be the most local attitude holder in cases of multiple embedding. This in turn can be attributed to the fact that PRO is born without phi-features, whereas *yè* bears [3rd]. Such elements, which also include covert arguments of epistemic *must* and predicates of personal taste (Stephenson 2007) are subject to the conditions of locality and obligatory de se construal; in general it seems that if a bound variable element lacks phi-features, it must receive them in the most straightforward way possible, via binding by the most local suitable operator, without the mediation of a concept generator.

      LPs nonetheless provide evidence for dedicated de se LFs, even if not in the straightforward way anticipated by previous researchers. Our evidence is the (un)availability of Russell ambiguities with comparatives involving *yè*:

7.   John   xɔse   be   yè   koko   wu   yè   nyi
     John   believe COMPL?   LOG   tall   COMP   LOG   COP
     'John$_i$ believes that he$_i$ is taller than he$_i$ is.'
     (i) ✓John has an incoherent belief about his height.
     (ii) *The height John believes himself to be is greater than his actual height.

The unavailability of (ii) cannot be attributed to a general constraint that material that includes *yè* must be construed de dicto: (ii) is available when the attitude predicate is construed in the past rather than the present. This is expected if de se construals arise via dedicated LFs, rather than as a species of de re under the acquaintance relation 'SELF'. Consider the LF that would be needed to derive (ii):

8. [John believes $[\lambda G_1 \lambda w_2 \lambda x_3 \, [\text{-}er \text{ than } w \, [G_1 \, y\grave{e}_3 \, w \text{ is } \text{tall}] \, w_2 \, y\grave{e}_3 \text{ is tall}]]]]$

As shown, *yè* in the *than*-clause cannot be construed de se, since it is required to denote John's counterpart in the actual world rather than his epistemic counterpart in his belief worlds. Given our analysis, the only other option is for a concept generator variable to be supplied, which takes the actual world w as an argument as shown. But this would require the invocation of the 'SELF' acquaintance relation, which is impossible, a dedicated LF being the appropriate way to represent such a notion. Shifting the attitude report to a past time changes this; the 'SELF' acquaintance relation now required has a modal flavor – it picks out the individual that the attitude holder would identify as himself at the present time under ideal circumstances. (This qualification is needed for reasons including the fact that the attitude holder may have died between the time of the attitude and the utterance time.) We argue that this modalized 'SELF' acquaintance relation is available: its effect is different from that derived via a dedicated de se LF, and therefore is not blocked. In sum, the study of logophoricity illuminates the broader question of how best to analyze de se attitude reports, though in a manner somewhat different from what had been anticipated in the absence of fieldwork on this topic.