

Subjects

1 Notes on argumentation

Consider the two passages below:

Passage 1

Consider the ϕ -features on reflexive pronouns and their antecedents:

- (1) John talks to himself in the mirror.
- (2) They bought themselves new cars.
- (3) We wrote a book about ourselves.
- (4) You tripped over yourself.

These examples show that reflexives and their antecedents must agree in person, number, and gender ϕ -features.

Passage 2

Consider the contrast below:

- (5) I saw myself on TV.
- (6) *I saw themselves on TV.

The contrast between (5) and (6) shows that reflexive pronouns must agree with their antecedents in person features.

This passage is lacking negative data.

This passage is lacking minimal pairs.

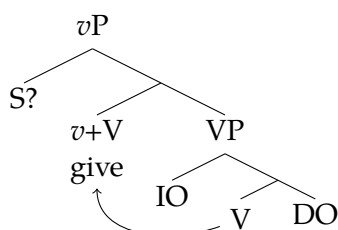
2 Review

Last week: 9 NP asymmetries and ditransitives

- (7) **Uniformity of Thematic Alignment Hypothesis (UTAH Adger, 2003, p. 138, from Baker 1988):**

Identical *thematic relationships* between predicates and their arguments are represented syntactically by identical structural relationships when items are Merged.

Last week we saw a new head, *v*, with verbs like *give* pronounced in the position of *v*.



We call this *head movement*.

3 Five common properties of subjects

1. Controls subject agreement (in English and many other lgs)

2. In nominative case (in English and many other lgs)

(8) **They are** sleeping.

(9) **I am** sleeping.

(10) * You **am** accusing **me**.

...but not always:

(11) I saw [**him** open the door].

3. Every clause has one. (in English and many other lgs)

We call this the *Extra-Peripheral Position* requirement (EPP).

(12) a. **It** will rain.

b. * The weather will rain.

We call nouns like *it* in (12a) which do not receive theta-roles *expletives*.

4. Reflexives only allow subject antecedents. (in Mandarin and many other lgs)

(13) Zhang San_i yijing tongzhi Li Si_j ziji_{i/*j}-de fenshu le.

Zhang San already inform Li Si self-GEN grade LE

'Zhangsan_i already told Lisi_j his_{i/*j} grade.'

(Huang et al., 2009, p. 337)

5. Often are more agentive; doing the action. But not always: see (12) but also passives (14) and experiencer subjects (15):

(14) **John** was hit (by a car).

(15) **John** will feel old.

4 T and the EPP

What exactly is the EPP? It's certainly not a requirement that a verb have an agent (see e.g. (12)).

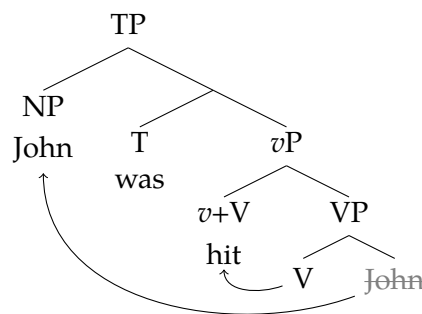
Idea: Subjects are an obligatory specifier of a projection headed by auxiliaries (*do, will, can, have, be, etc.*). Call this T for tense. (Sometimes T is not pronounced... more on that in a few weeks.)

(16) **Hierarchy of projections (updated):**

Every clause has $T > v > V$.

But we also want to preserve UTAH: for example, some subjects are themes (14), not agents, and we want them to be Merged as complements to V.

(17)



Unlike head movement, here we are moving a phrase (NP): call this *phrasal movement*.

(18) **Move_{phrase}**(α, β)

(read: ' β moves to α 's specifier' or ' α attracts β ')

If α is a projection with a feature F, β a maximal projection with a matching feature F, and α contains β , and F is *strong* (marked F*) on α or β or both, then

- check the strong features F* on α and/or β : $\neg F^*$;
- mark β in α as deleted: $\neg\beta$ (call this a *trace*); and
- return γ where the label $\gamma = \alpha$.



(19) **Extra-Peripheral Position (EPP):**

T has a strong uninterpretable N feature: [uN*].

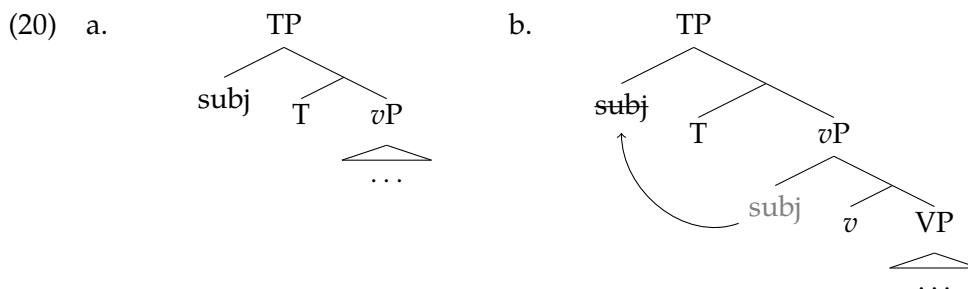
Exercise: Give the lexical items and the order of Merge and Move_{phrase} steps to build (17):

Lexicon:

- | | | |
|--------------------|---|--------------------|
| • John = [N] | 1. Merge(hit, John) | yields VP |
| • was = [T, uN*] | 2. Merge(v, VP) | yields vP |
| • v = [v] | 3. head-move V to v (unmotivated for now) | |
| • hit(V) = [V, uN] | 4. Merge(T, vP) | yields T[uN*] (T') |
| | 5. Move _{phrase} (T, John) | yields TP |

5 The VP-internal subject hypothesis and four arguments

Two approaches to (agentive) subjects:



The idea that all subjects start within *vP* and move to Spec,TP (specifier of TP) is called the *VP-internal subject hypothesis*.¹

See McCloskey (1997) for history and more details on the following arguments.

1. Quantifier float (stranding):

A quantifier can be “stranded” in lower positions.

- (21) a. *All the dragons have died out.*
 b. *The dragons have all died out.*

Hypothesis: the stranded *all* in (b) reflects an earlier position for the NP *all the dragons* from which *the dragons* moved.

2. Transitive expletive constructions:

In some languages, expletives can satisfy the EPP, leaving an indefinite subject lower:

(22) **Transitive expletives in Germanic (Dutch; Koster and Zwart, 2000):**

- a. *Er heeft iemand een huis gekocht.*
 there has someone a house bought
 ‘Someone bought a house.’
- b. *Er danste iemand.*
 there danced someone
 ‘Someone danced.’

It is important for this argument that the subjects in both (22a) and (22b) are agents.

¹Warning: “VP” here refers to the idea of a lower verbal projection; strictly speaking, the subject in (b) originated in *vP*, not VP.

3. Coordinating actives and passives:

First, a minor detour...

- (23) *What* did you devour ___ last night?
- (24) *John* was arrested ___ last night.
- (25) a. * *What* did John eat [[an apple] and [___]]?
b. * *The newspaper*, [[John read ___] and [Mary read a book]].

What's the generalization here? (Notice that conjunction always takes two conjuncts of the same size: NP & NP, TP & TP, etc.)

(26) **The Coordinate Structure Constraint (CSC)** (Ross, 1967)

In a coordinate structure [= conjunction], no conjunct may be moved, nor may any element contained in a conjunct be moved out of that conjunct.

(27) **Apparent counterexamples to the CSC:**

- a. *Who* does [[John like ___] and [Mary hate ___]]?
- b. *What furniture* did you say we [[need to buy ___] but [can't afford ___]]?
- c. *Had* [the general ___ paid attention] and [the troops ___ been in place]...

The examples in (27) illustrate a systematic counterexample to the CSC: *Across The Board (ATB) movement* of a single constituent from both conjuncts at the same time does not violate the CSC.

Now consider:

- (28) ✓ John will close the deal and be promoted.
- (29) ✓ At least one person will confess and be arrested.

Exercise: Where are the brackets here for the two conjuncts?

Consider the hypotheses in (20). Both hypotheses allow for conjunction of two active *v*Ps and conjunction of two passive *v*Ps. But only hypothesis (20b) predicts that we can coordinate an active *v*P and a passive *v*P.

4. VSO languages:

Irish is a VSO language. Based on just the first sentence, we could imagine a number of ways that we could analyze it.

- (30) Phóg Máire an lucharachán
kissed Mary the leprechaun
'Mary kissed the leprechaun.'

When there is an overt auxiliary (T), though, the verb is pronounced after the subject.

- (31) Tá Máire ag-pógail an lucharachán
is Mary PROG-kiss the leprechaun
'Mary is kissing the leprechaun.'

(32) **Constituency tests on VP:**

- a. Tá Máire [ag-pógail an lucharachán] agus [ag-goidú a ór].
is Mary [PROG-kiss the leprechaun] and [PROG-steal his gold]
'Mary is kissing the leprechaun and stealing his gold.'
- b. Is [ag-pógáil an lucharachán] atá Máire ____.
It-is [PROG-kiss the leprechaun] that.be Mary
'It's kissing the leprechaun that Mary is.'

So the VP is a constituent. We can show that the subject is part of *v*P using *v*P ellipsis, which cross-linguistically targets a sub-TP constituent:

- (33) John didn't come home this year, but he will ____ next year.

(34) **Irish VP ellipsis includes the subject:**

- Ní tháing muid 'na bhaile anuraidh, ach tiocfaidh ____ i mbliana.
NEG came we home last year but come.FUT this year
'We didn't come home last year but [we will come home] this year.'

So *v*P includes the subject, with the verb moving up to T. Irish does not have the EPP requirement, so the subject does not move to Spec,TP.

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