

Subjects

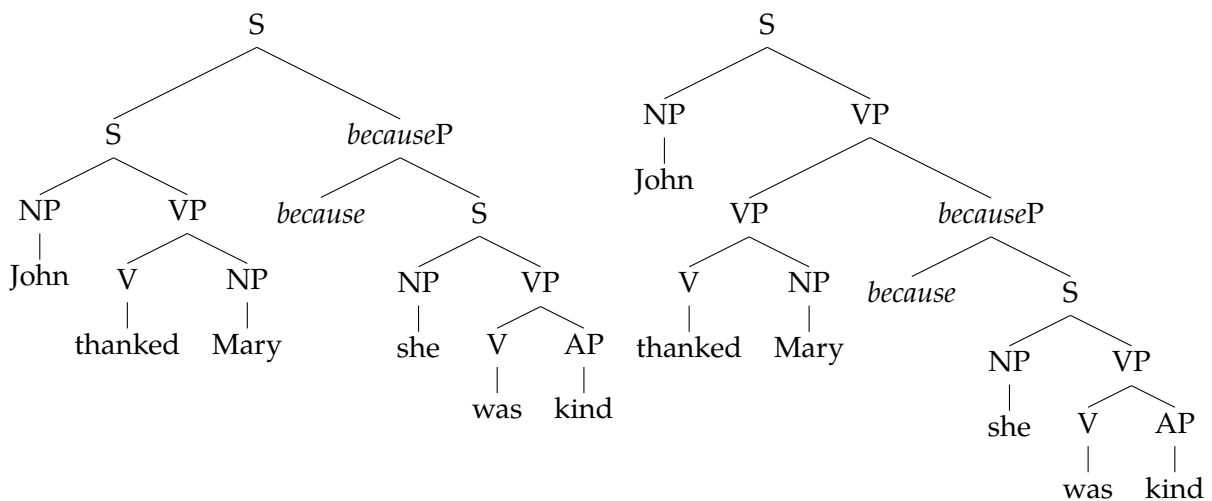
Announcement: Please submit PDFs on Luminus.

Last week: Nine NP asymmetries and ditransitives

NP asymmetries are a useful diagnostic for the height of (constituents containing) NPs. Consider *because* clauses:

- (1) John thanked Mary [*because* she was kind].

Where is the *because* clause? There are (at least) two reasonable options — here illustrated schematically with S = Sentence and without *v*:



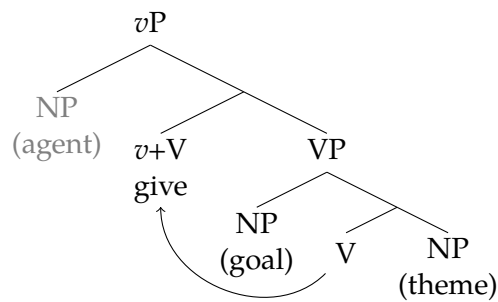
Exercise: Use Binding Condition C to compare these hypotheses. You will have to modify (1) in different ways to check the relationships between different NPs.

- (2) **Uniformity of Thematic Alignment Hypothesis (UTAH from Baker 1988, here from Adger 2003: 138):**

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

- a. Specifier of *vP*: agent
- b. Complement of V: theme (direct object)
- c. Specifier of VP: goal (indirect object)

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



We call this *head movement*.

1 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)

- (3) **They are** sleeping.
- (4) **I am** sleeping.
- (5) * **You am** accusing **me**.

...but not always:

- (6) 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).

- (7) a. **It** will rain.
- b. * The weather will rain.

We call nouns like *it* in (7a) which do not receive theta-roles *expletives*.

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

- (8) 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: 337)

5. Often are more agentive; doing the action. But not always: see (7) but also passives (9) and experiencer subjects (10):

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

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

2 T and the EPP

What exactly is the EPP? It's certainly not a requirement that a verb have an agent (see e.g. (7)).

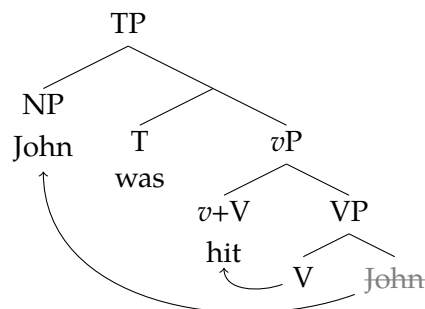
Idea: Subjects are an obligatory specifier of a projection headed by auxiliaries (*do, will, can, have, be, etc.*). Call this T for tense. (Sometimes T is not pronounced... more on that later.)

- (11) **Hierarchy of projections (updated):**

Every clause has $T > v > V$.

But we also want to preserve UTAH: for example, some subjects are themes (9), not agents, and we want them to be Merged as complements to V.

- (12)



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

- (13) **Move_{phrase}(α, β):** (read: 'move β to α 's specifier' or ' α attracts β ')
 If α dominates a maximum projection β , α and β share a feature F, and F is *strong* (marked F*) on α or β or both, then

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



- (14) **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 (12):

Lexicon:

• John = [N]

• was = [T, uN*]

• v = [v]

• hit = [V, uN]

1. Merge(hit, John) yields VP

2. Merge(v , VP) yields v P

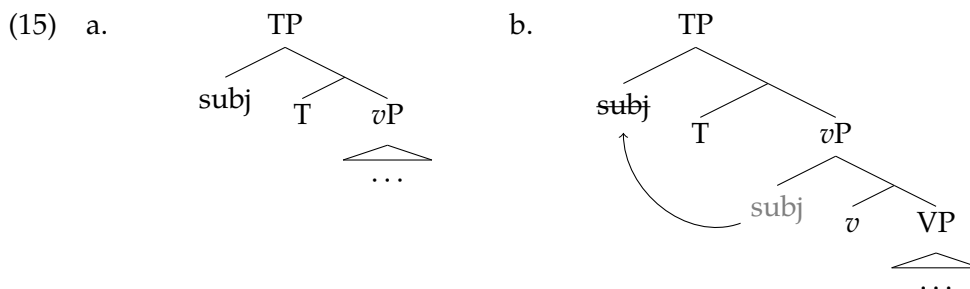
3. head-move V to v (unmotivated for now)

4. Merge(T, v P) yields T[uN*] (T')

5. Move_{phrase}(T, John) yields TP

3 The VP-internal subject hypothesis and three 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.

- (16) a. All the dragons are drinking wine.
 b. The dragons are all drinking wine.

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:

(17) **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 (17a) and (17b) 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...

- (18) *What* did you devour ___ last night?
(19) *John* was arrested ___ last night.
(20) 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.)

(21) **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.

(22) **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 (22) 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:

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

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

Consider the hypotheses in (15). Both hypotheses allow for conjunction of two active *v*Ps and conjunction of two passive *v*Ps. But only hypothesis (15b) predicts that we can coordinate an active *v*P and a passive *v*P.

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