Subjects

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)

   (1) **They are** sleeping.

   (2) **I am** sleeping.

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

   ...but not always:

   (4) 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).[1]

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

   b. * The weather will rain.

   We call nouns like *it* in (5a) which do not receive theta-roles *expletives*.

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

   (6) 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 (5) but also passives (7) and experiencer subjects (8):

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

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

[1] Classically, this is called the *Extended Projection Principle* (EPP) requirement, but I adopt the term Extra-Peripheral Position as it is more transparent.

2 T and the EPP

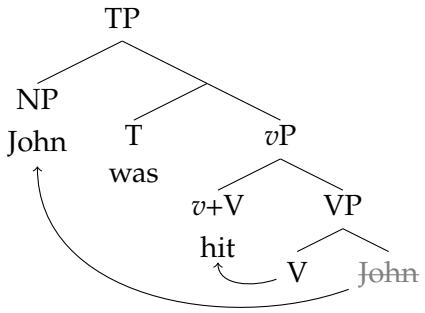
What exactly is the EPP? It's certainly not a requirement that a verb have an agent (see e.g. (5)).

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.)

(9) **Hierarchy of projections (updated):**
Every clause has T > *v* > V.

But we also want to preserve UTAH: for example, some subjects are themes (7), not agents, and we want them to be Merged as complements to V.

(10)



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

(11) **Move$_{\text{phrase}}$(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

a. check the strong features F* on α and/or β: ~~F*~~;

b. mark β in α as deleted: ~~β~~ (call this a *trace*, often indicated by *t*); and

c. return $\begin{array}{c}\gamma\\ \beta\quad\alpha\end{array}$ where the label $\gamma = \alpha$.

(12) **Extra-Peripheral Position (EPP):**
T has a strong uninterpretable N feature: [uN*].

Exercise: Give the lexical items and the order of Merge and $\text{Move}_{\text{phrase}}$ steps to build (10):

Lexicon:

- John =
- was =
- v =
- hit =

1.

2.

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

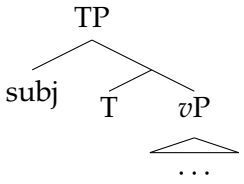
4.

5.

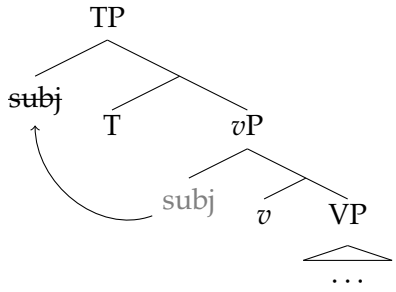
3 The VP-internal subject hypothesis and three arguments

Two approaches to (agentive) subjects:

(13) a.



b.



The idea that all subjects start within vP and move to Spec,TP (specifier of TP) is called the *VP-internal subject hypothesis*.[2]

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

[2]Warning: "VP" here refers to the idea of a lower verbal projection; strictly speaking, the subject in (b) originated in vP, not VP.

1. Quantifier float (stranding):

   A quantifier can be "stranded" in lower positions.

   (14) 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:

   (15) **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 (15a) and (15b) are agents.

3. Coordinating actives and passives:

   First, a minor detour...

   (16) *What* did you devour ___ last night?

   (17) *John* was arrested ___ last night.

   (18) 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.)

   (19) **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.

(20) **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 ___]]?

The examples in (20) 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:

(21) ✓ John will close the deal and be promoted.

(22) ✓ At least one person will confess and be arrested.

Consider the hypotheses in (13). Both hypotheses allow for conjunction of two active *v*Ps and conjunction of two passive *v*Ps. But only hypothesis (13b) predicts that we can coordinate an active *v*P and a passive *v*P.

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