

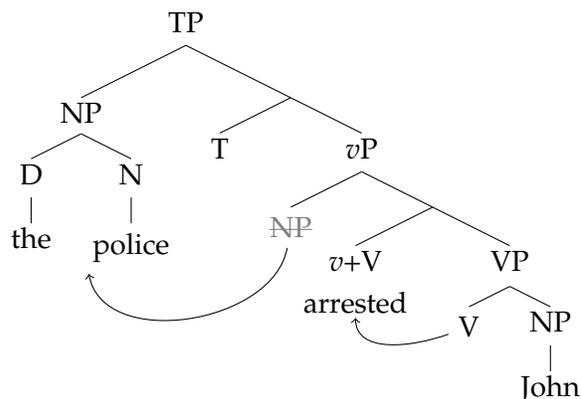
Intransitive subjects

Last week: 5 properties of subjects and 3 arguments for the VP-internal subject hypothesis.

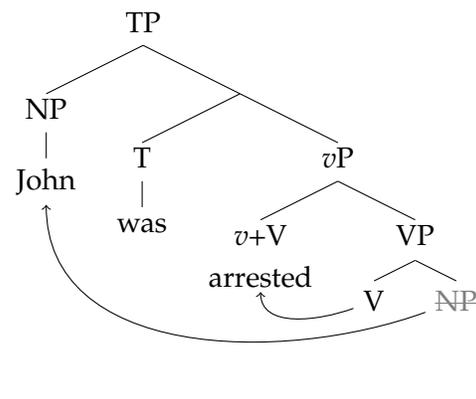
Key concepts to review: Hierarchy of projections, UTAH, EPP

Review

Active transitive:



Passive:



Two kinds of intransitive verbs

Transitive verbs generally have an agent (specifier of vP) which becomes the subject (specifier of TP) and a theme object (complement of V). Intransitive verbs only have one argument.

(1) The Unaccusative Hypothesis (Perlmutter, 1978):

There are two kinds of intransitive verbs:

- unergative: agentive subject, subject is originally the specifier of vP.
"willed or volitional acts; certain involuntary bodily processes"
- unaccusative: non-agentive subject, subject is originally the complement of V.
"predicates whose [arg] is a patient; predicates of existing and happening;" etc.

The idea: Subjects of some intransitive verbs behave like subjects of transitive verbs, while subjects of other intransitive verbs behave like objects of transitive verbs.

7 arguments for the Unaccusative Hypothesis:¹

1. **Causative alternation (Levin and Rappaport Hovav, 1995):**

English has pairs of intransitive and transitive verbs which are the same word, where the subject of the intransitive corresponds to the object of the transitive.

- (2) a. The window broke/opened.
b. She broke/opened the window.
- (3) a. The ship sank.
b. They sank the ship.
- (4) a. The ice melted.
b. We melted the ice.

These intransitives are all unaccusative verbs.

There are also intransitive verbs which do not have matching causative transitive verbs.

- (5) a. The crowd laughed/giggled.
b. *The comedian/joke laughed/giggled the crowd.
- (6) a. The children played/spoke.
b. *The teacher played/spoke the children.

These intransitives are all unergative verbs.

Yaqui/Hiaki (Uto-Aztecan, spoken in Arizona and northern Sonora; Jelinek, 1998) has different suffixes for transitive (-*(t)a*) and intransitive verbs (-*(t)e*). There are many transitive/intransitive verb pairs:

- | | | | | | |
|-----|-------------------|-----------------|---------------------|---------------|--|
| (7) | <u>Transitive</u> | | <u>Unergative</u> | | The subjects of these intransitives correspond to the <u>agent</u> of their corresponding transitives. |
| | chep-ta | 'step on...' | chep-te | 'jump' | |
| | noi-ta | 'take/bring...' | noi-te | 'go/come' | |
| (8) | <u>Transitive</u> | | <u>Unaccusative</u> | | The subjects of these intransitives correspond to the <u>theme</u> of their corresponding transitives. |
| | vee-ta | 'burn...' | vee-te | 'burn' | |
| | kot-ta | 'break...' | kot-te | 'break' | |
| | sip-a | 'cool...' | sip-e | 'become cool' | |

¹Based loosely on notes from Jason Merchant.

2. Impersonal passives:

(What is a passive?) Some languages allow passivization of intransitive verbs, with an expletive subject. First, Dutch (Perlmutter, 1978):

(9) Unergative 'dance':

- a. De jonge lui dansten hier veel.
the young people danced here a.lot
- b. Er wordt hier door de jonge lui veel gedanst.
there is here by the young people much danced
≈ 'There is a lot of dancing here by young people.'
literally: 'There is danced here a lot by young people.'

(10) Unaccusative 'die':

- a. In dit ziekenhuis sterven de patienten dikwijls.
In this hospital die the patients often
- b. *Er wordt in dit ziekenhuis door de patienten dikwijls gestorven.
there is in this hospital by the patients often died

In Yaqui/Hiaki (Jelinek, 1998), some intransitive verbs can be passivized with the passive morpheme *-wa*, just like transitives: (Note: *-wa* can trigger raising of the preceding vowel.)

(11) Transitive 'kill':

- a. 'ume 'o'ow-im 'uka maaso-ta me'-a-k
the.PL man-PL the.ACC deer-ACC kill-TR-PERF
'The men killed the deer.'
- b. 'u maaso me'-a-wa-k
the deer kill-TR-PASS-PERF
'The deer was killed.'

(12) Unergative 'dance':

- a. 'ume 'o'ow-im pahko-po ye'-e-ka
the.PL man-PL ceremony-at dance-INTR-PERF
'The men danced at the ceremony.'
- b. pahko-po yi'-i-wa-k
ceremony-at dance-INTR-PASS-PERF
'People danced at the ceremony.'
roughly literally: 'It was danced at the ceremony.'

(13) Unaccusative 'burn':

- a. 'u kari vee-te
DET house burn-INTR
'The house is burning.'
- b. *vee-ti-wa
burn-INTR-PASS
Int.: 'There's something burning.'

3. Postverbal subjects:

In some SVO languages, the EPP is not as strict, allowing (some) subjects to be postverbal.

First, Hebrew indefinite subjects (Shlonsky, 1987); data from Reinhart and Siloni 2005:

- (14) Subject of passive:
Ne'ecru shlosa xayalim ba-hafgana.
were.arrested three soldiers in-the.demonstration
'Three soldiers were arrested at the demonstration.'
- (15) Subject of unaccusative:
Hit'alfu shlosa xayalim ba-hafgana.
fainted three soldiers in-the.demonstration
'Three soldiers fainted at the demonstration.'
- (16) Subject of unergative:
*Radku shlosa yeladim ba-mesiba.
danced three boys in-the.party
Intended: 'Three boys danced at the party.'

We observe the same in Mandarin. Data below is from Li and Thompson 1981: 517–518; Travis (1984: 99) observes that the verbs in (17) are unaccusatives.

- (17) Unaccusatives:
- a. Jìn-lái-le / chū-lái-le / lái-le yī-ge kèrén.
enter-come-PERF / exit-come-PERF / come-PERF one-CL guest
'A guest entered/came out/came.'
- b. Táolè sān-zhī yáng.
escape-PERF three-CL sheep
'Three sheep escaped.'
- c. Dào-le yī-pí huò.
arrive-PERF one-CL merchandise
'A shipment of merchandise arrived.'
- (18) Unergatives:
- a. *Tiào-le yī-zhī xīshuài.
jump-PERF one-CL cricket
- b. *Pá-le yī-tóu lǎohǔ.
climb-PERF one-CL tiger
- c. *Fēi-le yī-zhī niǎo.
fly-PERF one-CL bird

4. Japanese floated numerals (Miyagawa, 1989):

- (19) Object of transitive:
 Gakusei-ga hon-o [VP hon-ya-de yon-satu kat-ta.
 students-NOM book-ACC book-store-at 4-CL(book) buy-PAST
 'The students bought four books at the book store.'
- (20) Subject of transitive:
 ?* Gakusei-ga hon-o [VP hon-ya-de yo-nin kat-ta.
 students-NOM book-ACC book-store-at 4-CL(person) buy-PAST
 'Four students bought books at the book store.'
- (21) Subject of unaccusative:
 Gakusei-ga (san-nin) [VP ofisu-ni (san-nin) ki-ta.
 student-NOM (three-CL) office-LOC (three-CL) come-PAST
 'Three students came to the office.'
- (22) Subject of unergative:
 Gakusei-ga (san-nin) [VP geragera-to (*san-nin) wara-tta.
 student-NOM (three-CL) loudly (three-CL) laugh-PAST
 'Three students laughed loudly.'

5. Italian *ne*-cliticization (Burzio, 1986): (also, French *en*)

Ne is a clitic meaning 'of them,' which attaches to the verb.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>(23) <u>Object of transitive:</u>
 Giovanni ne inviterà due.
 Giovanni NE will.invite two
 'Giovanni will invite two of them.'</p> | <p>(25) <u>Subject of unaccusative:</u>
 Ne arrivano molti.
 NE arrive many
 'Many of them arrive.'</p> |
| <p>(24) <u>Subject of transitive:</u>
 *Ne esamineranno il caso molti.
 NE will.examine the case many
 Int.: 'Many of them will examine the case.'</p> | <p>(26) <u>Subject of unergative:</u>
 *Ne telefonano molti.
 NE call many
 Int.: 'Many of them call.'</p> |

6. Resultatives (Levin and Rappaport Hovav, 1995):

Direct object restriction: A "resultative phrase" may describe the result state of a VP-internal NP, but not of the agent or of PP complements.

- (27) He shot them *dead*. (They end up dead, not *him*.)
- (28) The floor was swept *clean*.
- (29) The river froze *solid*. / The bottle broke *open*.
- (30) They laughed *(themselves) *helpless*.

7. Adjectival participles:

English adjectival past participles can only describe objects of transitive verbs and subjects of unaccusative verbs (Levin and Rappaport Hovav, 1986):

- (31) Objects of transitives: unemployed man, uneaten food
- (32) Subjects of transitives: *uneaten children (intended: children who have not eaten)
- (33) Subjects of unaccusatives: unfallen leaves, unsunken ship
- (34) Subjects of unergatives: *unworked man, *unrun jogger

Un- is used here to ensure that the forms have become adjectives.

Similarly for Japanese *-kake* participles (Kishimoto, 1996). Aspectual suffix *-kake* \approx 'just started, not complete':

- (35) Objects of transitives:
 - a. nomi-kake-no biiru
drink-KAKE-GEN beer
'the half-drunk beer'
 - b. yomi-kake-no zasshi
read-KAKE-GEN magazine
'the half-read magazine'
- (36) Subjects of transitives:
 - a. *yomi-kake-no Masao
read-KAKE-GEN Masao
Intended: 'Masao, who has only partially read'
- (37) Subjects of unaccusatives:
 - a. kare-kake-no hana
wither-KAKE-GEN flower
'a flower that is almost completely withered'
 - b. obore-kake-no suiei-senshu
drown-KAKE-GEN swimming-athlete
'a swimmer who has almost drowned / is drowning'
- (38) Subjects of unergatives:
 - a. *hataraki-kake-no roodoosha
work-KAKE-GEN worker
'the worker, who has only partially worked'
 - b. *hashiri-kake-no rannaa
run-KAKE-GEN runner
'the runner, who has only partially run'

References

- Burzio, Luigi. 1986. *Italian syntax: A Government-Binding approach*. Springer.
- Jelinek, Eloise. 1998. Voice and transitivity as functional projections in Yaqui. In *The projection of arguments*, ed. Miriam Butt and Wilhelm Geuder, 195–224. CSLI Publications.
- Kishimoto, Hideki. 1996. Split intransitivity in Japanese and the unaccusative hypothesis. *Language* 72:248–286.
- Levin, Beth, and Malka Rappaport Hovav. 1986. The formation of adjectival passives. *Linguistic Inquiry* 623–661.
- Levin, Beth, and Malka Rappaport Hovav. 1995. *Unaccusativity: At the syntax-lexical semantics interface*. MIT Press.
- Li, Charles N., and Sandra A. Thompson. 1981. *Mandarin Chinese: A functional reference grammar*. University of California Press.
- Miyagawa, Shigeru. 1989. *Structure and case marking in Japanese*. Academic Press.
- Perlmutter, David M. 1978. Impersonal passives and the unaccusative hypothesis. In *Proceedings of the 4th annual meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society*, ed. Jeri et al Jaeger, 157–189.
- Reinhart, Tanya, and Tal Siloni. 2005. The lexicon-syntax parameter: Reflexivization and other arity operations. *Linguistic Inquiry* 36:389–436.
- Shlonsky, Ur. 1987. Null and displaced subjects. Doctoral Dissertation, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
- Travis, Lisa deMena. 1984. Parameters and effects of word order variation. Doctoral Dissertation, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.