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.

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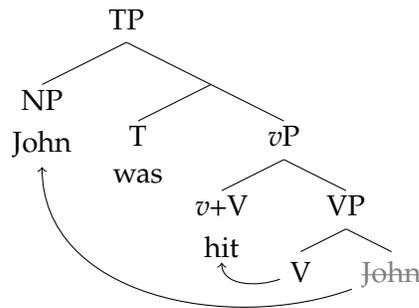
Unlike head movement, here we are moving a phrase (NP): call this *phrasal movement*.

(11) **Move$_{\text{phrase}}(\alpha, \beta)$:** (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 $\overset{\gamma}{\overbrace{\beta \ \alpha}}$ 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 Move$_{phrase}$ steps to build (10):

Lexicon:

- John =

- was =

- v =

- hit =

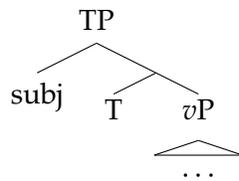1.

2.

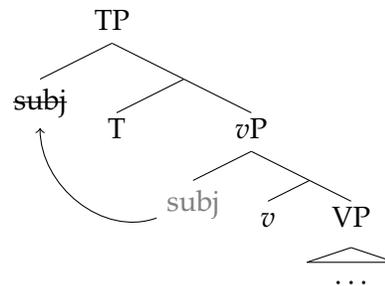3. head-move V to v (unmotivated for now)

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.

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[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 vPs and conjunction of two passive vPs. But only hypothesis (13b) predicts that we can coordinate an active vP and a passive vP.

References

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