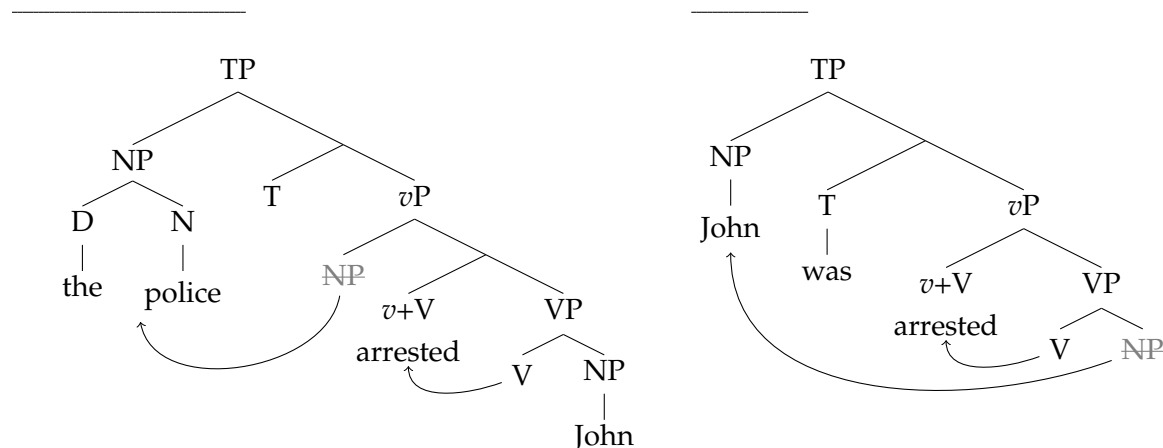


# Intransitive subjects

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



## 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:

- \_\_\_\_\_ agentive subject, subject is originally the specifier of  $vP$ .  
"willed or volitional acts; certain involuntary bodily processes"
- \_\_\_\_\_ 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:<sup>1</sup>

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 \_\_\_\_\_ 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 \_\_\_\_\_ 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) Transitive \_\_\_\_\_ The subjects of these intransitives  
chep-ta 'step on...' chep-te 'jump' correspond to the \_\_\_\_\_ of their  
noi-ta 'take/bring...' noi-te 'go/come' corresponding transitives.
- (8) Transitive \_\_\_\_\_ The subjects of these intransitives  
vee-ta 'burn...' vee-te 'burn' correspond to the \_\_\_\_\_ of their  
kot-ta 'break...' kot-te 'break' corresponding transitives.  
sip-a 'cool...' sip-e 'become cool'

---

<sup>1</sup>Based 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) \_\_\_\_\_
- 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) \_\_\_\_\_
- 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) \_\_\_\_\_
- 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) \_\_\_\_\_
- 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) \_\_\_\_\_
- 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) \_\_\_\_\_  
Ne'ecru shlosa xayalim ba-hafgana.  
were.arrested three soldiers in-the.demonstration  
'Three soldiers were arrested at the demonstration.'

(15) \_\_\_\_\_  
Hit'alfu shlosa xayalim ba-hafgana.  
fainted three soldiers in-the.demonstration  
'Three soldiers fainted at the demonstration.'

(16) \_\_\_\_\_  
\*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) \_\_\_\_\_  
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. Táó-le 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) \_\_\_\_\_  
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) \_\_\_\_\_  
 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) \_\_\_\_\_  
 ?\* 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) \_\_\_\_\_  
 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) \_\_\_\_\_  
 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) _____<br/>         Giovanni ne inviterà due.<br/>         Giovanni <i>NE</i> will.invite two<br/>         'Giovanni will invite two of them.'</p>         | <p>(25) _____<br/>         Ne arrivano molti.<br/> <i>NE</i> arrive many<br/>         'Many of them arrive.'</p>      |
| <p>(24) _____<br/>         *Ne esamineranno il caso molti.<br/> <i>NE</i> will.examine the case many<br/>         Int.: 'Many of them will examine the case.'</p> | <p>(26) _____<br/>         *Ne telefonano molti.<br/> <i>NE</i> call many<br/>         Int.: 'Many of them call.'</p> |

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

\_\_\_\_\_ : 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) \_\_\_\_\_ unemployed man, uneaten food  
(32) \_\_\_\_\_ \*uneaten children (intended: children who have not eaten)  
(33) \_\_\_\_\_ unfallen leaves, unsunken ship  
(34) \_\_\_\_\_ \*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) \_\_\_\_\_  
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) \_\_\_\_\_  
a. \*yomi-kake-no Masao  
read-KAKE-GEN Masao  
Intended: 'Masao, who has only partially read'
- (37) \_\_\_\_\_  
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) \_\_\_\_\_  
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 Sioni. 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.