Universal definition of subject

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Functional labels

Grammatical function

- Subject (SUBJ)
- Object (OBJ)
- Indirect Object (OBJ2)
- Object of Preposition (POBJ)
- Possessor (POSS)

◆□ → ◆□ → ◆ ■ → ◆ ■ → ● ● つへで Linguistics 503 San Diego State University Defining subject

Keenan (1975)

- Define a set of BASIC CLAUSES: roughly sentences which do not presuppose understanding of a simpler sentence to be understood.
- Identify properties of subjects of basic clauses.
- Avoids a lot of problems introduced by potentially "derived" constructions like passives, focus constructions (*it*-clefts), existential (*there*-clause) sentences, and embedded subjects.

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Summary

- 30 properties identified.
- We discuss a subset here.
- In the set of properties of properties of properties discovered.
- We'll look at how the syntactic tests decide subjecthopod for some ergative languages.
- SUBJECT is a cluster concept (Keenan, while for Comrie: a prototype concept)

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Indispensability

A non b-subject can be eliminated from a sentence and the result is still a complete sentence.

- a. John ate the hot dog.
- b. John ate. [= John ate something (nonspecific)]
- c. * ate the hot dog. [\neq Someone ate the hot dog.]

Tongan (Churchward 1953) Ergative

- a. Na'e tamate'i 'e Tevita 'a Koliate killed Erg. David Abs. Goliath "David killed Goliath"
- b. Na'e tamate'i 'a Koliate killed Abs. Goliath
 "Goliath was killed" [nonspecific interpretation]

Autonomous reference

The reference of a b-subject must be determinable by the addressee at the moment of utterance. It cannot be dependent on the reference of other NPs which follow it.

- a. John admires himself.
- b. * He -self admires John.

Taga	log: Comple	x voice	e system	, variou	is issues, bu	it VOS	
a.	sinampal hit-pass? "The woma	Agt	man	Subj			
b.		ng Agt	lalake man	ang	kaniyang	sarili self	

Other VOS

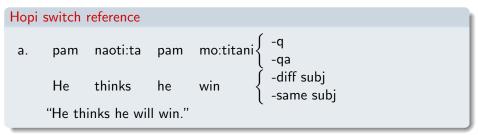
Malagasy

- a. manja tena Rabe respect self Rabe "Rabe respects himself."
- b. *manaja an-dRabe tena / ny tena-ny respect acc-Rabe self / the self-his "He-self respects Rabe."

Possible necessary condition for subjects: They are controllers of reflexives.

Switch reference

Head marking version of reflexives: Verb-internal markers which indicate that the subject of a dependent clause is same/different from the subject of another clause.



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Shared NP in clause coordination

- a. Fred_i praised Mona_j and \emptyset_i criticized Alice.
- b. * Fred_i praised Mona_j and Alice criticized \emptyset_j .
- c. Fred_i praised \emptyset , and Alice criticized \emptyset , Mona_j.

Kate Ergative Anderson (1975)

Last clause-case marking

- a. vale-la nana na-la be? guy fo-ve? come-past taro-Abs eat-past pig-Abs. sleep lie-3sgpast The pig came, ate taro, and lay down to sleep.
- b. vale-la be?-ko nana taro na-ve?
 come-past pig-Erg. taro-Abs eat-3sgpast
 The pig came and ate taro.

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Controlled position in Control structure/Raising

- a. Fred_i tried [$_{\rm S} \emptyset_i$ to examine the doctor.]
- b. * Fred_i tried [s the doctor to examine \emptyset_i .]
- c. Fred_i tried [$_{s} \emptyset_{i}$ to be examined by the doctor.]
- d Fred_i seems [$_{s} \emptyset_{i}$ to be laughing.]

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Maori raising

Sinclair (1976)

- i patua a Hone Rewi. а. kaore е Rewi hit Abs. John Erg. not "Rewi did not hit John" b. Rewi. kaore Hone i patua а е
 - Abs. John hit Erg. Rewi not "Rewi did not hit John"

Equi in Basque

Anderson (1975)

nahi du dezan egin a. desire he-Aux-it do he-Aux(subjunct)-iit 'He_i wants him_i to do it.' * 'He; wants to do it.' b. nahi dut egin desire I-Aux-it do 'I want to do it.' ikhusterat joan С. da see-infinitive-to go he-Aux 'He_i has gone to see him. * 'He_i has gone for him_i to see him_i.'

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Addressee of imperatives

- a. \emptyset buy the car from John.
- b. * John sell the car to \emptyset .

Maori passive imperative (Hale 1968)

a. tua-ina te raakau raa (ke te toki) fell-passive the tree yonder (with this axe) "be-chopped down (by you) the tree there" = "Chop down the tree there (with this axe)."

Sinclair (1976) argues this is not a passive, but an anti-passive, in a language which is making the transition to ergative.

Other properties of b-subjects

- Controllers of verb agreement (where there is agreement) always include subjects.
- Referentiality: default topic; personal pronouns, proper names, and demonstratives can always be subjects; default is to be definite, and in some languages must be (Philippine and Bantu)
- Over the leftmost occurring NPs
- Ormally the Agent, if there is one [Ergative languages?]
- Solution to the second second
- Subjects are always among the NPs that can be relativized.

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Some properties are hierarchical

SubjThe boy [who gave the book to the man]ObjThe book [that the boy gave t to the man]PObjThe man [that the boy gave the book to t]

In Malagasy, only subjects can be relativized.

The NPs which can be relativized always **include** subjects (other hierarchical properties, controllers of reflexives, verb agreement,lack of case marking)

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References

Coding properties

How is subjecthood coded?

- Position
- Oase marking
- Verb agreement



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Behavior and control properties

How referentially prominent is the subject?

- Deletability (non specific object deletion, imperative deletion)
- Ontrol of reflexives
- Ontrollee in control constructions
- Verb agreement

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Semantic/discourse properties

- Agency
- Q Autonomous existence
- Oefiniteness
- Opicality



Prototype theory (Comrie)

- Subject is "defined" as the intersection of topic and agent (Grammaticalized topic: Givon)
- Of course this is not a necessary and sufficient condition, so a prototype analysis is necessary.
- Derived subjects might be in various ways less subjectlike than b-subjects

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