

# **Subjects Workshop**

## Ghent, Belgium

### **Important dates**

Abstract submission deadline: 1 May 2012

Notification: 1 July 2012

Conference: 18-19 October 2012

### **Invited speakers**

Anna Cardinaletti

Jim McCloskey

Dominique Sportiche

### **Theme description**

Although the notion of subject is shared across frameworks the concept is notoriously difficult to define (Keenan 1976 and much subsequent work). There is, however, a tacit consensus in the linguistics literature that subjects stand apart from other arguments, being associated with a distinct set of syntactic properties, proto-typically including the following:

- the subject is 'uniquely' identified: every clause has one subject;
- the subject seems obligatory: non-pro drop languages employ expletive subjects where there is no lexical subject;
- the subject typically agrees with the finite verb;
- the subject is hierarchically the highest nominal in the clause;
- extraction of /from subjects is highly restricted (Ross 1967);
- subjects may/must be null in imperatives and in infinitivals;
- in V2 languages, subject initial V2 sentences are shown to differ from non subject initial V2 sentences (Cardinaletti 1997; Zwart 1997a, 1997b);
- subjects are typically topics.

Further research has revealed that the subject properties listed above are not always linked to one particular position in the clause. With the articulated structures of the IP domain (Pollock 1989) came the need to distinguish subject positions (Bobaljik and Jonas 1996). Accumulating evidence led to the VP-internal subject hypothesis (Sportiche 1988; Koopman & Sportiche 1991; Kuroda 1988; Kitagawa 1986; McCloskey 1997), according to which the subject is merged in a VP-internal thematic position and moved to its canonical position, SpecIP, due to some formal requirement. The recent cartographic approach to clause structure has led to a further diversification of subject positions, such as AgrCP, SubjP, AgrP and FinP, with various implementations (Shlonsky 1994; Cardinaletti 1997, 2004; Cinque 1999, 2004; Rizzi 2004, Rizzi & Shlonsky 2005; Ledgeway 2010).

In this workshop, we would like to examine the above-mentioned subject properties and their repercussions for the architecture of the clause. Specifically, we invite abstracts addressing questions including, but not limited to, the following:

1. To what extent is the concept 'canonical subject position' valid and what are its defining properties? Do 'non subjects' ever occupy this position?
2. Is there a unique subject position, or are there several subject positions, each associated with a different property? If so, how can we define these positions and how do they explain the properties listed above?
3. Postverbal subjects in SVO languages exhibit properties that are different from preverbal subjects in these languages and also from postverbal subjects in VSO languages, such as definiteness, focus, Case and agreement (Milsark 1974; Fassi-Fehri 1993; Zubizarreta 1998). How can we best account for these differences; for example, are they linked to distinct positions?

4. There are also several questions that surround the nature of the movement to the subject positions that have been identified. For instance:
  - is the movement to each of these positions triggered by a different feature?
  - how does the movement proceed? For example, does it move through every specifier position on the way, or just via the phase-edge?
  - some argue that movement of a subject is triggered by the EPP. Can the EPP be understood in terms of more fundamental properties of grammar?
5. There is empirical evidence that in some languages clauses may have more than one subject. This is illustrated by 'possessor raising' or so-called 'broad subjects' in languages such as Hebrew, Hungarian, Japanese and Korean (Heycock 1993; Doron & Heycock 1999, 2010; Landau 2011; Vermeulen 2005; Yoon 2009). What distinguishes the subject positions in these languages from the position(s) in languages that allow only a unique subject?
6. With the development of the concept 'small clause' came the proposal that units other than full clauses may also have subject positions (Stowell 1983; Szabolcsi 1983). Do these positions differ from subject positions in full clauses, and if so, in what respect?
7. It has been proposed that clauses cannot occupy the canonical subject position (Koster 1978). Can subjects be of a category other than DP? If so, what consequences does this have for the theories of Case and agreement?

### Abstract Guidelines

Abstracts are invited for a 30-minute presentation followed by 15 minutes of discussion. An author may submit at most one single and one joint abstract. Abstracts should be anonymous, and at most 2 pages in 12-point font with 1" margins, including data and references. They should be submitted via e-mail to to [gist6@ugent.be](mailto:gist6@ugent.be) as both pdf and Word files.

### Organising Committee

Lobke Aelbrecht	Anne Breitbarth
Liisa Buelens	Vicki Carstens
Lieven Danckaert	Karen De Clercq
Tijs D'Hulst	Liliane Haegeman
Will Harwood	Eric Lander
Rachel Nye	Amélie Rocquet
Aleksandra Vercauteren	Reiko Vermeulen

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