Subject: Where are you from?

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The subject has been considered a linguistic universal, even though it is very difficult to give a universal definition of subject (Keenan 1976). In the clause structure, subjects seem to have an outstanding position as compared with other arguments. In the Government and Binding framework, this is described as the Extended Projection Principle (EPP), the requirement that clauses have a subject. In the Minimalist approach the EPP is described as "mysterious", which "has been an annoying problem ever since it was originally formulated" (Chomsky 2008: 156). Not a few researchers argue that the EPP should be removed from Universal Grammar (cf. Grohmann e al. 2000; Bever 2009). Despite this, EPP-like phenomena exist in Modern English and this must be explained too.

I propose that the notion of subject is not universal; 'subject' is not necessary a priori. It emerged as the result of the functional category emergence of T or I or vP, or whatever it may be, in English. 'Subject' is a syntactic device which was introduced late in the historical development of language to satisfy structural requirements. My claim is that subjects were originally adjuncts and outside the argument structure. Later, they have been integrated into the argument structure. In Present-day English (PDE), subject has become obligatory due to fully-developed functional systems. Meanwhile, Japanese has very limited functional systems and then Japanese has no EPP. My claim is mainly based on the three pieces of evidence: Old English (OE), Japanese and much earlier language like Sanskrit.

The notion of subject is neither semantically nor syntactically necessary: it is not always associated with 'agent' semantically (*'John is tall'*). It is not always defined morphologically. If we consider languages like Hindi-Urdu, agreement with a predicate verb is not enough to define subjecthood. The verb in Hindi-Urdu agrees either with the 'subject', or with the 'direct object', or with neither. In many languages like Chinese, Japanese, Sinhala and so on, verbs agree with no NP.

What about case marking? Case marking is not working for identifying subjecthood either. Nominative case marking is used not only for the subject NP/DP of finite verbs but for a complement of a copula verb in PDE. In Japanese, the nominative case marking (i.e. *–ga*) seems to have multiple functions including a subject, a possessor of a subject, an adjunct and the predicate of a stative predicate (Vermeulen 2002). In the Minimalist approach, the relation between the EPP and nominative case is obscured and the EPP is dissociated from the notion of structural case and/or agreement (cf. Chomsky 1995). In Japanese, nominative *ga-* marking takes place in a way independent of the functionary category T. (Fukui 1995). Then, the attempt to reduce the EPP to case/agreement is not working. In PDE, subject is a purely syntactic element which is not always associated with a particular theta-role.

However, the empirical basis of the EPP in PDE is well-established due to the facts of mandatory presence of subjects, the presence of expletive subjects without semantic content.

(1) a. It is raining./ b. There lived a king in this castle.

Meanwhile, researchers have tried to give a rationale for the EPP; in Chomsky (1995) the EPP is implemented as a universally present strong D feature of T; in Chomsky (2000, 2001) the EPP is modified as a feature requiring an overt element in the Spec position of a functional projection T. In the former version, the EPP is dissociated from the notion of structural case and/or agreement. However, the most fundamental question of why UG should have such a requirement remains as a mystery. So, some researcher like Bever (2009) insists that the EPP cannot be given a grammatical account and rather should be understood as part of a more general theory of learning. The EPP is often used in a descriptive way and remains stipulative.

In OE, there are no syntactic phenomena involving the EPP and syntactic subjects. The presence of impersonal construction with no subject is decisive as shown in (2) to (3):

(2) Longað   hine   hearde
desires-3sg   him-Acc.   grievously   (ASPoeticR 271)
"He feels discontent."
(3) norþan sniwde
' it snowed from the north'   (Seafarer 31)

In (2), the impersonal construction contains an accusative NP *hine* 'him' and verb, but no subject NP. In (3), there is no nominal element in the clause. These facts suggest the absence of T projection, since these entire operations target [Spec, TP].

In addition, I point out the absence of unaccusative constructions in OE. The Unaccusative Hypothesis presupposes the suppression of an external argument. The subject of unaccusatives lacks agentivity. The deep object or expletive *there* can move into the empty subject position. However, in OE 'unaccusative' verbs did not occur in expletive *there* constructions (cf. Breivik 1983). If a verb lacks agentivity semantically, this situation was better expressed by subjectless impersonal constructions. Indeed, many of PDE unaccusative verbs/predicates were impersonal predicates in OE: *gelimpan* 'happen', *þyncan* 'seem', *god beon* 'be good', etc.

Drawing on Pāṇini's Kāraka theory, I claim that the nominative marked NP was outside the projection of V. The nominative case was the unmarked, neutral case, which was not related to any particular theta role. In Sanskrit, the agentive theta role is primarily expressed by the instrumental case (*trtiya*) not by the nominative case (*prathama*). The nominative marked NP was an optional adjunct (cf. Thieme 1956).

The EPP in PDE appeared due to the emergent TP in English. Before the emergence of TP, they are not observed in languages. Thus, the subject phenomenon is a good example of parameterized functional category systems and the resultant language variation.

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