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# Subject Positions and Ellipsis

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# 1.    Introduction

This paper investigates the syntax of subjects in a special type of e(lliptical)-clause known as the stripping construction. Chao (1987) defines stripping as a type of elliptical construction characterized by the absence of $X^0$ elements in addition to other material. Stripping is closely related to gapping, which is characterized by the absence of the $X^0$ elements alone. This difference is illustrated in (1).

(1)     a. John likes peanuts and [Mary ___ beer].
        b. John likes peanuts. [Mary ___ ] too.

In (1a), the gapping construction, only the verbal head *like* is missing. In the stripping construction (1b), both the verb *like* and the object *peanuts* are missing. For what follows, I will restrict my attention to stripping cases in which only a single argument is present, that corresponding to the lexical subject. I briefly take up the case of objects in section 5.

One of the more interesting facets of stripping constructions like the one in (1b) is the appearance of cross-linguistic structural and case asymmetries involving subjects. These asymmetries involve (i) the surface position of the subject, which may be either Spec,TP or Spec,VP, and (ii) the case of the subject, which may either be nominative or accusative. Through a comparative analysis of three Germanic languages: English, German, and Norwegian, I will show how these asymmetries pose problems for two well-established principles of UG, namely, the case filter and the EPP.[1] I suggest that these problems may be overcome by assuming, as in Chomsky (1995), that (nominative) case

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[1] These three languages are representative of a wider range of languages studied, including Dutch, Swedish, and Danish. Unless otherwise noted, all remarks pertaining to German also apply to Dutch, those pertaining to Norwegian also apply to Swedish, and those pertaining to English also apply to Danish.

Pius Tamanji, Masako Hirotani, and Nancy Hall (eds.), NELS 29: 71-79

and EPP effects reduce to a set of parameters involving the N(ominal)-features of T, which are reset in e-clauses.

## 2.   English and German

One immediate problem arising from considerations of English stripping cases like the one in (1b) is the fact that when the subject is a pronoun, it must appear in accusative rather than nominative case. In German, the exact opposite holds, as the examples in (2) show.

(2)    a. John will leave the party early.  *I/Me too.
       b. John wird die Party frueh verlassen.  Ich/*Mich auch.
          John will  the party early   leave      I      me    also

The contrast between (2a) and (2b) does not appear at first sight to lend itself to a simple explanation. If one assumes that the missing material in the e-clause is deleted at PF (e.g., Chomsky 1995), different scenarios must be proposed in order to account for the German and English data. Of the two, the German facts are the most straightforwardly explained. The subject raises to Spec,TP where it checks the strong N-features of T, which then delete. For English, there are essentially two possibilities: either (i) the lexical subject raises to Spec,TP at PF but does not enter into a checking relation until LF, or (ii) the subject remains caseless (or receives a default case) and does not raise from it's canonical position. There are a number of problems with (i). First, under minimalist assumptions, overt movement is thought to be triggered by the need to check strong features before Spell-Out. If the N-features of T in (2a) are weak, Procrastinate should force the checking operation to take place at LF. Second, even if checking does take place at LF, the derivation should crash since the accusative case of the subject does not match the nominative case assigned by T. The major problem with (ii) involves the EPP. That is, in order to assume (ii) as a possible scenario, it must be conceded that the Spec,TP can be empty in certain situations.

Despite the obvious problems posed for the EPP, I believe that there is reason to conclude that (ii) is the correct scenario for English. Support for this contention comes from comparing the position of German and English e-clause subjects relative to sentential adverbs and NEG particles. It is widely assumed that these elements appear in positions intermediate between the Spec,TP and the Spec,VP, with sentential adverbs like *probably* and *wahrscheinlich* adjoining to T' and NEG particles like *not* and *nicht* heading NegPs between TP and VP (Chomsky 1991, Pollock 1989, Potsdam 1997). As the examples in (3) and (4) show, when either of these elements is present in the e-clause, the German subject must precede it while the English subject must follow it.

(3)    a. John will leave the party early. [not me]
       b. *John wird die Party frueh verlassen. [nicht ich]
       c. *John will leave the party early. [me not]
       d. John wird die Party frueh verlassen. [ich nicht]

(4)    a. John will leave the party early. [probably me too]
       b. *John wird die Party frueh verlassen. [wahrscheinlich ich auch]
       c. *John will leave the party early. [me probably too]
       d. John wird die Party frueh verlassen. [ich wahrscheinlich auch]

The judgments given for these examples (and for those to follow) are intended to reflect the most natural or least marked ordering, which I will assume is the basic order. Alternative word orders are possible if heavier stress and intonation patterns are employed. I assume that the more marked orders derive from topicalization or scrambling type operations which

displace the arguments from their base generated positions. For example, *ich nicht* is the most natural order for subject pronouns in German relative to NEG particles. The alternative order *nicht ich* is possible only with contrastive stress on *ich*, as a correction. Thus, I will assume that it derives from an operation which postposes the subject pronoun.[2]

If one takes the position of adverbs and NEG particles in (3) and (4) as a diagnostic for NP movement in the e-clause, it is clear from these examples that German subjects raise to Spec,TP, crossing both adverbs and NEG particles, while English subjects remain in situ. The positional contrast correlates with the aforementioned differences in case. Thus, German subjects must appear in nominative case AND precede both sentential adverbs and NEG particles, whereas English subjects must appear in accusative case AND follow both sentential adverbs and NEG particles.[3]

## 3. Norwegian

The English and German data discussed in section 2 appear to illustrate a rather interesting correlation between e-clause subject positions and morphological case among the Germanic languages. However, these are not the only two possibilities. Norwegian exhibits a different pattern, which is best described as a split between English and German. First, as (5) shows, Norwegian e-clause subjects must always appear in nominative case, never accusative.

(5)     John vil  forlate selskapet  tidlig. Jeg/*Meg også.
        John will leave  party-DET early    I/me     too

Second, when sentential adverbs (e.g., *sannsynligvis*, 'probably') or NEG particles (e.g., *ikke*, 'not') are present, Norwegian e-clause subjects must always follow them. This is illustrated in (6) and (7) below.

(6)     a. John vil  forlate selskapet  tidlig. [ikke jeg]
        b. *John vil  forlate selskapet  tidlig. [jeg ikke]

(7)     a. John vil  forlate selskapet  tidlig. [sannsynligvis jeg ogs]
        b. *John vil  forlate selskapet  tidlig. [jeg sannsynligvis ogs]

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[2]A similar situation holds for English, where *probably me* is the most natural order for subject pronouns relative to sentential adverbs. The alternative is possible only if there is rising intonation on *me*, followed by a significant pause before *probably*. A response such as this might be given in a dialogue like the following, where the speaker is contrasting himself with *John*:

        (i)     a. Would you have left the party early if you were John?
                b. Me? Probably!

As with the German example, I assume that the marked order is derived, in this case by preposing the subject pronoun.

[3]Some English speakers find stripping constructions to be acceptable with nominative pronouns, as in the following examples:

        (i)     a. John will leave the party early. I too.
                b. John will leave the party early. Not I.

I find these cases to be quite marginal, if not ungrammatical. To the extent that a nominative pronoun is acceptable in such constructions, it seems to require an emphatic or contrastive stress.

As the above data suggests, Norwegian patterns with German in the case-marking facts and with English in the positional facts. That is, Norwegian e-clause subjects must appear in nominative case AND follow both sentential adverbs and NEG particles. Assuming that nominative case must be checked structurally, this suggests that e-clause subjects in Norwegian raise to Spec,TP at LF.

If one takes the position that the case of the e-clause subject is not checked structurally in English, the three way contrast between English, German, and Norwegian may be accounted for by assuming that German e-clause subjects raise to Spec,TP before Spell-Out, Norwegian e-clause subjects raise to Spec,TP at LF, and English e-clause subjects remain in Spec,VP. In the next section, I will offer a theoretical explanation of these facts within the minimalist framework of Chomsky (1993, 1994, 1995).

## 4. E-clauses and Spec,TP

Given the facts discussed to this point, there are two important questions regarding the structure of e-clauses which must be addressed: (i) for both English and Norwegian, why is the Spec,TP allowed to remain empty at PF, in apparent violation of the EPP, and (ii) for English only, why does the lexical subject appear in accusative case, in apparent violation of the case filter? As an answer to the first question, I propose that TP does not license a Spec position at PF in Norwegian or at PF/LF in English. I suggest that this derives from the Spec,TP parameter of Bobaljik and Jonas (1996) and Jonas and Bobaljik (1993), which states that some languages, including English and Norwegian, do not license Spec,TP before Spell-Out. The Spec,TP parameter was originally proposed in order to account for an apparent correlation between overt object shift and the possibility of licensing multiple subject constructions (specifically, transitive-expletive constructions or TECs), an observation originally due to Bures (1993). As Bobaljik and Jonas note, if a given language allows TECs, it will also show evidence of overt object shift. Of immediate interest is the fact that the languages which fall into this category are the same ones that require their subjects to precede sentential adverbs and NEG particles in e-clauses (i.e., German, Dutch). Alternatively, if a language does not license TECs, it will also not allow overt object shift. Languages of this type are the same ones that require their subjects to follow sentential adverbs and NEG particles in e-clauses (i.e., English, Swedish, Norwegian, Danish).

Unlike Bobaljik and Jonas (1996), I assume a non-Agr-based theory of clause structure, essentially that of Chomsky (1995), with TP serving as the only relevant functional projection. In Chomsky (1995), the Spec,TP parameter is reformulated within a theory of multiple specifiers, the claim being that languages like English and Norwegian license at most one Spec,TP while languages like German may license two. Chomsky argues that the possibility of licensing a second Spec,TP is a parameterized property of T. The relevant parameters involve the strength of T and whether or not it will permit an unforced violation of Procrastinate, where an unforced violation is one which is not required for convergence. These parameters are given in (8) from Chomsky (1995: 375).

(8)     a. T is strong.
        b. T tolerates a single unforced violation of Procrastinate.

If a language does not select either of the above options, it will be a non-EPP or VSO language. If a language selects option (8a) but not (8b), it will be an EPP language (English and Norwegian). In this case, the strong N-features of T may be checked by raising the lexical subject or by inserting an expletive. If a language selects both option (8a) and option (8b), it will be a double-EPP or multiple subject language (German). Option (8b) is formalized to capture the fact that the multiple subject possibility is optional. As with

English and Norwegian, the strong N-features of T may be checked by raising the lexical subject or by inserting an expletive. Once checked, the N-features of T may delete or they may not. If they do not delete, they may be checked a second time (but must subsequently delete). Since expletives are merged directly into Spec,TP, (8) bars derivations with two expletives in the same clause. That is, given (8b), at least one of the operations must involve the raising of a lexical NP, presumably the subject. If the expletive is merged into the derivation before raising the lexical subject, the result will be ill-formed since the expletive will not c-command it's associate at LF. Hence, raising must precede the merger of the expletive.

There are a number of problems with Chomsky's approach. First, it requires arbitrary stipulations about the number of times the N-features of T may be checked before they must be erased. Second, it is unable to sufficiently rule out derivations in which two lexical NPs occupy the two Specs,TP. Finally, since T is always strong in languages that license multiple subjects, it poses problems for the use of Procrastinate, which is defined in terms of weak features only.

I suggest that these problems may be overcome by assuming, as in Groat (1995), that expletives do not check the strong N-features of T, but instead render them legitimate (or weak) at PF. These features must still be checked at LF in order to ensure convergence, however. Furthermore, assuming that the expletive is an illegitimate LF object, it must be eliminated as well. Both of these requirements can be met by assuming that the lexical subject raises to Spec,TP by means of substitution at LF, eliminating the expletive and checking the weak N-features of T. Procrastinate prevents this operation from applying before Spell-Out in languages like English and Norwegian, which only select option (8a) above. For languages like German, which also select (8b), raising of the lexical subject is permitted before Spell-Out. Note that while expletives are illegitimate LF objects, they are legitimate PF objects. Consequently, raising before Spell-Out cannot involve substitution. This forces T to license a second Spec at PF. There are now two possible derivations. In the first, the expletive is merged with T, weakening it's strong N-features. The lexical subject then raises to a higher Spec,TP and checks the weak N-features of T. This derivation produces exactly the wrong result, namely, a configuration in which the expletive is c-commanded by it's associate:

(9)   a. $[_{TP}$ T[strong] $[_{VP}$ NP V ]]
      b. $[_{TP}$ exp T[weak] $[_{VP}$ NP V ]]  Exp-insertion (weakens N-features of T)
      c. $[_{TP}$ NP$_i$ $[_{TP}$ exp T[0] $[_{VP}$ t$_i$ ]]]  NP checks weak N-features of T

Given (9c), it is impossible for the lexical subject to raise further at LF and eliminate the expletive. Hence, there will be an illegitimate object at LF and the derivation will crash. Note that raising the lexical subject to a lower Spec would violate the strict cycle, which is not possible before Spell-Out.

The only alternative is to assume that the lexical subject raises to Spec,TP first. I further assume that the lexical subject may check either strong OR weak N-features. If it is able to check strong N-features, no expletive will be required. If it is only able to check weak N-features, raising will violate Procrastinate and an expletive will need to be introduced into the derivation in order to weaken the strong N-features of T. The lexical subject will then be able to check the resulting weak N-features. At LF, the expletive is eliminated by raising the lexical subject to the higher Spec,TP.

(10)   a. $[_{TP}$ T[strong] $[_{VP}$ NP V ]]
       b. $[_{TP}$ NP$_i$ T[strong] $[_{VP}$ t$_i$ V ]]  Raising (violates Procrastinate)
       c. $[_{TP}$ exp $[_{TP}$ NP$_i$ T[weak] $[_{VP}$ t$_i$ V ]]]  Exp-insertion (weakens N-features of T)

    d. [TP exp [TP NP$_i$ T[0] [VP t$_i$ V ]]]  NP checks weak N-features of T
    e. [TP NP$_i$ [TP t$_i$ T[0] [VP t$_i$ V ]]]  NP replaces expletive via substitution at LF

    The proceeding account offers a number of significant advantages over Chomsky's original proposal. First, it does not need to rely on stipulations about the number of times the N-features of T may be checked before having to delete. Strong features may either be checked or weakened. Weak features can only be checked. Once checked, all features must delete. Second, it only allows derivations in which the outer Spec,TP is occupied by an expletive and the inner Spec,TP is occupied by the lexical subject, it's associate. Derivations with two expletives are disallowed since expletives cannot check weak features, only weaken strong ones. Consequently, the weak N-features of T will go unchecked at LF. Derivations involving two lexical NPs are ruled out since NPs may only check features, not weaken them. The N-features of T, whether strong or weak, may only be checked once in the course of a derivation. Raising a second NP into the checking domain of T would be a vacuous operation since only one of the NPs can check it's features.

    Returning now to the stripping cases discussed earlier, I propose that in e-clauses T is subject to the following condition:

(11)    T has n-1 positive settings relative to the parameters in (8).

As formulated, (11) effectively reduces the maximal number of Specs,TP by one in the e-clause. For languages that have a positive setting for (8a) but a negative setting for (8b), T must be reset from [+strong] to [-strong]. Consequently, lexical subjects in these languages cannot raise to Spec,TP overtly, as is the case in both English and Norwegian. For languages that have a positive setting for both (8a) and (8b), like German, it should be possible in principle to reset either parameter. If (8b) is reset, lexical subjects will still be forced to raise overtly to Spec,TP since T is still [+strong]. If (8a) is reset, raising should be optional. Since raising is obligatory in German e-clauses, it is clear that (8b) is the parameter that needs to be reset. Note that this option actually makes the most sense under a theory of grammar driven by economy considerations. Given such an approach, if there is a choice between any two options, the most economical option should be selected over the least economical. Parameter (8a) requires an alternation in the valence of the N-features assigned from the numeration. Parameter (8b) only requires disallowing an unforced violation of Procrastinate. Since resetting (8a) would result in more work for the computational component of the grammar, the most economical option would be to reset (8b). Assuming that this holds for languages like German, the present account correctly predicts that the lexical subject must always raise to Spec,TP in the e-clause to check the strong N-features of T.

    The final problem involves the case of the e-clause subject, which is nominative in German and Norwegian but accusative in English. Here the German facts need no explanation. The N-features of T (which include nominative case features) are strong and must be checked before Spell-Out, which forces overt raising of the lexical subject. Since T has only negative settings for (8) in English and Norwegian, overt movement is not permitted. As mentioned above, (8a) is reset from [+strong] to [-strong]. There are two possibilities resulting from this operation. T may either have weak N-features or be featureless. If T has weak N-features, a checking operation is required at LF. If T is featureless, no checking operation is required. I suggest that the case contrast between English and Norwegian may be accounted for by assuming that T has weak N-features in Norwegian e-clauses and no N-features in English e-clauses. This being the case, the lexical subject must raise covertly to Spec,TP in Norwegian, licensing it's nominative case.

No raising takes place in English, however. Instead, the lexical subject receives a default accusative case (Zhang 1991).[4]

## 5.    Objects

To this point, I have only considered stripping cases in which the lexical subject is the only surviving constituent. Other possibilities exist, however, including cases in which only the object survives deletion. In English and Norwegian, objects have the same ordering as subjects relative to the position of sentential adverbs and NEG particles. This is shown in (12) for English and (13) for Norwegian.

(12)    a. John will invite Mary to the party. *I/me too.
        b. John will invite Mary to the party. [not me]
        c. *John will invite Mary to the party. [me not]
        d. John will invite Mary to the party. [probably me too]
        e. *John will invite Mary to the party. [me probably too]

(13)    a. Jon  vil  invitere Mari  til selskapet.  *Jeg/Meg også.
           John will invite   Mary to party-DET     I/me  too
        b. Jon  vil  invitere Mari  til  selskapet. [ikke meg]
        c. *Jon  vil  invitere Mari  til  selskapet. [meg ikke]
        d. Jon  vil  invitere Mari  til  selskapet. [sannsynligvis meg også]
        e. *Jon  vil  invitere Mari  til  selskapet. [meg sannsynligvis også]

This ordering is expected, since, as hypothesized in section 4, the N-features of T are weak in Norwegian and absent in English. In Norwegian, Procrastinate bars the raising of any NP before Spell-Out to check the weak N-features of T. In English, raising is bared altogether. The N-features of T include $\phi$-features like agreement, as well as nominative case features. The N-features of V, on the other hand, include accusative case features. Objects, as these examples show, must appear in accusative case. Thus, objects may properly check the N-features of V, but not those of T. Whether this occurs before Spell-Out or at LF in languages like English and Norwegian has been the subject of much debate in the literature. Many believe that this operation is covert, citing contrasts between these languages and languages like German and Icelandic, which seem to provide stronger empirical support for overt object shift (Brannigan 1992, Bobaljik and Jonas 1996). Others, however, argue that object shift also applies overtly to languages like English (Johnson 1991, Koizumi 1993, Lasnik 1995, Pesetsky 1989). While technically irrelevant for present concerns, I will adopt this latter line of analysis and assume that objects in these

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[4]The situation involving stripping is only a subset of a wider range of cases in which matrix subjects surface with accusative case in English. So-called Mad Magazine Sentences (Akmajian 1984, Zhang 1991) and Acc-*ing* clauses (Reuland 1983) are two other types of constructions which illustrate this phenomenon:

   (i)       a. What! *I/Me, worry?!
             b. I don't remember [*he/him reading the letter]

One of the generalizations about unlicensed accusative subjects in English is that they surface only in non-finite environments, that is, environments in which structural case assignment/checking is impossible. This has led many to conclude that the subjects of such constructions bare a special type of default accusative case (Zhang 1991). Given the framework being assumed here, it is unclear exactly how a theory of default case would be formulated. One alternative would be to assume that default accusative case is licensed not in the syntax, but at the discourse level. In support of this claim, it should be stressed that these subjects are always focused and many times bare odd intonation patterns that are dependent on discourse factors for interpretation. As a result, there would be no need for subjects of this kind to enter a derivation with formal case features.

Ralph C. Blight

languages raise to Spec,VP before spell-Out. This entails that the N-features of V are strong. Subjects, I will assume, are merged in a higher Spec,VP, which is a θ-position. (14) shows the structure of VP at the point in the derivation where VP is to be merged with T.

(14)     [VP SUBJ [VP OBJ$_i$ V t$_i$ ]]

After Spell-Out, the subject and verb are deleted in the PF component of the grammar. In Norwegian the N-features of T are weak and must be properly checked at LF. Since this can only be accomplished by raising an NP with matching case features into the checking domain of T, only the subject qualifies.

Unlike English and Norwegian, the N-features of T are strong in German. As a result, they must be checked before Spell-Out to ensure convergence at PF. As with Norwegian, T may only be properly checked by raising an NP with compatible case features into it's checking domain. As (15) shows, objects in German must appear in accusative case. Consequently, they cannot properly check the N-features of T.

(15)     ... dass John Maria zur party eingeladen hat und nicht *ich/mich.
          that   John Mary to party   invited     had and not     I/me

Given this fact, only the subject can check the strong N-features of T, which it must do before Spell-Out. Since the case of the object is accusative in German, the present theory predicts that objects should obligatorily follow both sentential adverbs and NEG particles. As the examples in (16) show, this prediction is confirmed.

(16)     a. ... dass John Maria zur party eingeladen hat und nicht mich.
          b. *?... dass John Maria zur Party eingeladen hatte und mich nicht.

As with English and Norwegian, the object raises overtly to Spec,VP to check the strong N-features of V. The subject also raises overtly to check the strong N-features of T. The subject and verb then delete at PF.

## 6.    Conclusions

In this paper, a special type of e(lliptical)-clause, known as the stripping construction, was investigated. A cross-linguistic comparison between English, German, and Norwegian revealed certain structural and case asymmetries involving subjects in these constructions. In German, e-clause subjects must appear in nominative case and precede both sentential adverbs and NEG particles. In Norwegian, e-clause subjects must appear in nominative case and follow both sentential adverbs and NEG particles. In English, e-clause subjects must appear in accusative case and follow both sentential adverbs and NEG particles. These differences were explained by assuming that German e-clause subjects raise overtly to Spec,TP, which is licensed at PF, to check the strong N-features of T. Whereas the N-features of T are strong in German e-clauses, they are weak in Norwegian e-clauses and absent in English e-clauses. Consequently, Norwegian e-clause subjects must raise covertly to Spec,TP, which is only licensed at LF, to check the weak N-features of T. English e-clause subjects, on the other hand, remain in situ in Spec,VP, where they are marked with a default accusative case.

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