BEYOND CODING AND CONTROL:

LEAKAGE, CATEGORIZATION AND BLOCKING IN THE DEFINITION OF THE ENGLISH SUBJECT[1]

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I. INTRODUCTION

Having aligned itself with logic, traditional grammar has defined the clause as a sequence of two compulsory parts: the entity about which something is predicated and what is predicated about that entity. In this vein, Aarts and Aarts (1988: 136), for instance, define the clause as consisting of subject and predicate. Let us consider three examples:

> (1)
> a. The moon rose
> b. Many students enjoyed the concert
> c. The board has appointed Mr. Smith chairman in the meeting

In (1.a) the constituent *The moon* is the subject and the constituent *rose* the predicate. The same applies to (1.b) and (1.c), where the constituents *Many students* and *The board*, on the one hand, and the constituents *enjoyed the concert* and *has appointed Mr. Smith chairman in the meeting*, on the other, are the subject and the predicate respectively. However, even simple instances like (1.b) and (1.c) are not without problems when analysed non-intuitively. The first question concerns the formal and functional criteria that allow for a definition of the subject; to this question we devote the remainder of this paper. The second question posed by these examples relates to the unity of the second immediate clause constituent: the intransitive construction in (1.a) causes no problem, but there is no general agreement as to whether the predi-

cate of (1.c) can be broken down into two immediate clause constituents, the verb phrase and the adverbial; moreover, some linguists would not admit either the direct object of (1.b) or that of (1.c) as formatives of the verb phrase. Although the predicate is not the topic of this paper, we will say only in passing that both syntactic (Givón 1995: 219) and semantic evidence (van Valin 1990: 195) favour a distinction between central constituents like the direct object, which belong in the verb phrase, and peripheral constituents, such as certain adverbials, which are not part of the verb phrase.

## 2. FORM AND FUNCTION IN THE DEFINITION OF THE SUBJECT

When coming to grips with the notion of subject, it is difficult to resist the temptation to quote Sapir's remark:[2]

> There must be something to talk about and something must be said about this subject of discourse once it is selected. This distinction is of such fundamental importance that the vast majority of languages have emphasized it by creating some sort of formal barriers between the two terms of a proposition. . . . No language wholly fails to distinguish noun and verb, though in particular cases the nature of the distinction may be an elusive one. (1921: 119)

Almost a century before Sapir wrote this, Humboldt had already stated that several linguistic phenomena that directly relate to the notion of subject, such as case, voice and category, have a universal character. Bloomfield (1933: 173), though admitting the relevance of the subject, rejected the notional definition provided by Sapir and took the line that the function of subject is determined by its position or, in other words, by the privilege it has of appearing in a certain position of a given construction like agent-action.

Drawing on this concept of function, classical generative grammar, as devised in Chomsky (1965), stood committed to the view that syntactic functions must be defined in configurational terms, that is, in a purely structural way: the subject is the noun phrase directly dominated by (*directly depending on* or *being an immediate constituent of*) the node sentence, whereas the direct object is the noun phrase directly dominated by the node verb phrase. This kind of definition is illustrated by example (2):[3]

(2)
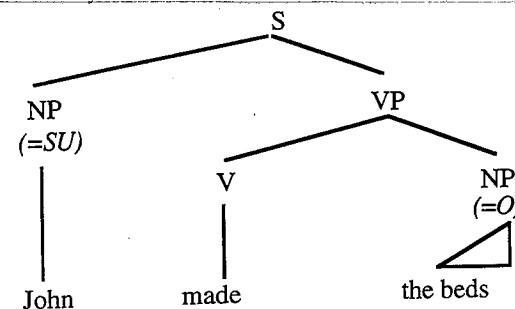
In *John made the beds* the noun phrase *John* is an immediate constituent of the sentence, whereas the noun phrase *the beds* directly depends on the verb phrase *made the beds*. The definitions of subject and object based on direct dominance are based on this fact. Although these definitions raise some problems, which were soon identified in Chomsky's (1970) paper on nominalizations, the revisions of the Chomskian model carried out in the 1970s and 1980s did not change this approach substantially. As Marantz (1984: 292) has remarked, grammatical relations are still defined by means of the concept of structural relation, independently of the assignment of semantic functions and the complementation of the verb: a given constituent bears a certain function by being inserted into a certain structural position.

In his doctoral dissertation, Dik (1968: 144) criticised the definition of grammatical relations accepted by distributional syntax, since such definition is restricted to the notion of position; he also criticised the definition of grammatical relations offered by Chomsky, because it relies only on formal aspects, thus neglecting the function of the constituents. Coming very close to Foley and van Valin (1984: 108), Dik (1989: 71) defines syntactic function assignment as a choice of perspective or point of view.[4] For example, in (3.a), the event is presented from the point of view of the participant *John*; whereas in (3.b), the same event is rendered from the perspective of the participant *Mary*:

(3)
a. **John** saw Mary
b. **Mary** was seen by John

Put another way, the participant *John* in the linguistic expression (3.a) receives great prominence, and the same goes for the participant *Mary* in (3.b). Consequently, the constituent *John* bears the syntactic function of subject in (3.a) and the constituent *Mary* is assigned this syntactic function in (3.b).

Dik's definition of subject, however, does not pay attention to several syntactic properties of the subject that are not incompatible with a functional tradition, as Givón (1995: 225) has put forward. Indeed, there has been a tendency in the functional field to put aside the formal properties of syntactic functions since the main concern of a functional paradigm is the function, not the structure of language. In this spirit, syntactic functions could be ignored since they correlate with pragmatic functions in such a way that the subject, for instance, is frequently the topic of the clause. In fact, the traditional definition according to which the subject is the entity about which the predicate states something constitutes a semantic or a notional definition, rather than a syntactic one. According to Givón (1984: 139) or Dik (1989: 216), the subject is prototypically the topic of the clause. This is illustrated by example (4):

(4)
a. **The mail** leaves tomorrow
b. **Caroline** is my sister
c. **The glass** broke noisily

In (4.a), (4.b) and (4.c) the subject correlates with the topic of each of the clauses. In other words, the function of subject coincides with the piece of information which constitutes, in the terminology adopted by Halliday (1985), or by Prague School linguists like Firbas (1992), the point of departure of the message.

In non-prototypical, or marked, associations, the subject correlates with non-topical constituents which carry focal information. Thus, compare example (5.a) with example (5.b):

(5) (Lambrecht 1994: 137)
a. A: What's the matter?
   B: **My NECK** hurts
b. A: How's your neck?
   B: My neck **HURTS**

In example (5.a), the subject carries new information thus being non-topical (and non-prototypical); whereas in example (5.b) the subject involves given information, thus constituting a topical (and prototypical) subject.

From the semantic point of view, the subject is prototypically the agent of the event contained in the proposition, which is exemplified by (6):

(6)
a. **The policeman** broke the door
b. **My brother** made the meal

For example, the participant *The policeman* is the agent of the action to which the linguistic expression (6.a) refers. The same situation holds in the linguistic expression (6.b), in which the participant *My brother* performs consciously the action depicted by the linguistic expression.

As Dik (1989: 223) and Givón (1993: 93) have suggested, there is a hierarchy of semantic functions to which the syntactic function of subject can be assigned.[5] In English, this hierarchy includes the semantic functions agent, patient and recipient. The assignment of the subject to the agent is more prototypical than the assignment of the subject to the patient, which is, in turn, more prototypical than the assignment of the subject to the recipient. This is exemplified by (7):

(7)
a. **My mother** gave the tickets to me
b. **The tickets** were given to me by my mother
c. **I** was given the tickets by my mother

In (7.a), the subject is assigned to the agent participant; in (7.b), the subject is borne by the patient participant; and in (7.c), the recipient participant bears the function of subject.[6]

So far we have seen that the subject has prototypical correlates at the pragmatic and at the semantic level: the subject is assigned prototypically to the participant agent and to the topical information of the clause. However, we come across many exceptions that do not conform to the prototype. We offer two more examples of this:

(8)
a. **I** was dismissed for insubordination
b. **Who** did it?

(8.a) illustrates the assignment of subject to the patient participant, to the first person singular pronoun *I*; while the linguistic expression (8.b) is a case of a subject constituent, the WH-pronoun *who*, carrying non-topical information. As a matter of fact, these exceptions allow for a definition of the syntactic function subject. As Dik (1989: 222), Palmer (1994: 6) and Givón

(1995: 226), among others, hold, in order to demonstrate the relevance of the syntactic function of subject one must dissociate it from semantic and pragmatic functions. In other words, if the English subject were always coterminous with the topic and the agent, we could put the syntactic and the semantic functions aside in our description.

Up to this point nothing has been said concerning the universal status of the subject, implicit in Humboldt and present in Sapir, as has been stressed above. Universality is a major issue in the definition of the subject: characterising the subject has raised a number of unsurmountable problems, the most central one being, *does the subject occur in all languages?* As is usually the case with linguistics, the answer seems to depend on the kind of definition that we adopt. A highly syntax-driven definition of the subject leads to the conclusion that the subject is by no means universal. To start with, there are languages that favour topic-prominent (instead of subject-prominent) patterns. Let us consider the following Chinese example and its translation into English as illustration:

> (9) (Li and Thompson 1976: 462)
> Nei-xie   shùmu shù-shèn dà
> Those trees (topic)   the trunks are big
> "The trunks of those trees are big"

In some other languages, such as Japanese, both subject-prominent and topic-prominent structures occur:

> (10) (Shibatani 1991: 98)
> a. Hi   wa   noburu
>   sun   topic   rise
>   "The sun rises"
> b. Hi   ga   noburu
>   sun   nominative   rise
>   "There rises the sun!"

When both subject and topic prominence do occur in a language, the preference for one to the exclusion of the other is attributable to semantic-pragmatic reasons. Indeed, the topical expression (10.a) states a general property of the sun, that it rises in the morning; whereas the topicless expression (10.b) implies some sort of exclamation uttered by someone who has just witnessed the rising of the sun.

There are even languages that show neither subject-prominent nor topic-prominent arrangements. For example, in Cebuano the basic transitive clause

is the actor-focus clause, in which no Indo-European-like subject shows up (Schachter 1976: 516):

> (11) (Siewierska 1991: 83)
> Ni-hatag si   Juan sa   libro sa   bata
> AF-give act/foc Juan goal book rec child
> "*Juan* gave the book to the child"

This kind of evidence has made some linguists, such as Foley and van Valin (1984), Langacker (1991) and Foley (1993), draw the conclusion that semantically empty universal syntactic functions do not exist. Nevertheless, these scholars do not agree on the kind of definition that should be susbstituted for the non-semantic one. At this point, we come back to the issue of the generality of the definition. It seems out of the question that the more general the definition you provide the more chances there are that the definition will achieve universal status. We have just seen that a syntax-driven definition is not applicable to many non-European languages. Foley and van Valin and Foley, on the one hand, rely on the universal semantic macroroles *agent* and *undergoer*, which represent extended notions of agent and patient respectively. Let us recall example (11), where the focus particle *si*, which can hardly be said to introduce the subject, is attached to the agent; and the particle *sa* introduces the undergoer. Langacker (1991: 318), on the other hand, has opted for a wider—schematic rather than semantic—definition according to which the subject is a relational figure within a profiled relationship: the subject represents the syntactic figure, the object the syntactic ground and the verb expresses the relationship between figure and ground.

The picture that emerges from this brief discussion of the state of the art could be described as follows: in the first place, there seems to be agreement (at least, in the functional-cognitive field) that there are no universal properties of subjects, perhaps with the only exception of the raising of embedded clause arguments (Bresnan 1982: 301).[7] From the intralinguistic perspective, Foley and van Valin's proposal for macroroles reinforces the view that grammatical properties are associated with certain noun phrases, even interlinguistically (although the data show that the choice and coding of those nominals are, to a large extent, language-dependent). In this respect, we will follow in the steps of those (Downing and Locke 1992; Givón 1993; Huddleston 1989; and Quirk et al 1994, *inter alia*) who have stressed that both formal and functional characteristics must be taken into account in defining the English subject. Although there are glaring differences among the approaches taken by scholars, they usually recognise the formal unity of the subject, list a number of formal properties that characterise this grammat-

ical function and give a bird's eye view of its semantic and pragmatic corre-lates. However, it is our contention that formal leakage and rule blocking will allow us to report more solid results in the intralinguistic dimension than the ones quoted so far, as well as to derive some implications for the in-terlinguistic dimension.[8] Methodologically, we will part company with Langacker's (1991: 312) schematic definition of the subject. It is not our in-tention to be polemical, but classical generative grammar already pointed out the need to constrain the power of linguistic theories, since that which ex-cludes nothing explains nothing. In other words, although we accept the view that the definition of the subject as a relational figure may be of use in the interlinguistic axis, the explanatory power of Langacker's definition in the intralinguistic axis remains unclear to us. Finally, as regards the functional properties of the English subject, the above outline will suffice for the purposes of this paper.

3. LEAKAGE

The property cluster definition was first proposed by Keenan (1975, 1976), who attempted a universal definition of subject that demonstrated the rele-vance and the formal unity of this syntactic function.[9] According to Keenan (1976: 324), the formal properties of the subject fall into two categories: coding properties and control properties. The term *coding properties* makes reference to the morphosyntactic features that subjects possess. In the case of English these properties are omissibility, position, tag recoverability, case marking and agreement:

(i) As is well known, the subject in English, must be present in declara-tives and interrogatives, but not in imperatives, as (12) exemplifies:

(12)
a. **He** switched off the light
b. Can **you** switch off the light?
c. Ø Switch off the light!

(ii) The English subject is placed before the verb in declarative clauses, as in (13.a), and in WH-interrogative clauses where the WH-element is sub-ject, as in (13.b):

(13)
a. **Everyone** left early
b. **Who** came in last night?

The subject is placed after the auxiliary in yes/no interrogative clauses, as in (14.a), and in WH-interrogative clauses in which the WH-element is object or adverbial, as in (14.b):

(14)
a. Did **everyone** leave early?
b. Who(m) did **you** see last night?

(iii) The subject is the element which is picked up in a tag-question phrase and referred to anaphorically by a pronoun. This is shown in (15):

(15) **Your brother**$_i$ goes in for skiing, doesn't **he**$_i$?

(iv) The pronominal forms *I, he, she, we* and *they* are used to realise the subject function, as is illustrated by (16.a); in contrast to the objective forms *me, him, her, us* and *them*, which are used for objects, as in (16.b):

(16)
a. **I** met him
b. **Jennifer's** got lost in the post

(v) English subjects determine number and person agreement with the verb. Concord is manifested only in those verb forms which show inflec-tional contrast, as is the case with the ones under (17):

(17)
a. The librarian/he/she **has** checked the book
b. The librarians/I/you/we/they **have** checked the book
c. Where **is** my credit card?
d. Where **are** my credit cards?

The subject typically determines the number of the nominal phrase real-ising the syntactic function of subject complement, as in (18.a); and of the person, number and gender of reflexive pronouns, as in (18.b):

(18)
a. Jean and Bill are **my friends**
b. **She**$_i$ cut **herself**$_i$ with a piece of broken glass

So far, so good. But the data display more complexity than these examples do. In other words, coding properties leak, or show a degree of irregularity

that should be accounted for in a non-intuitive definition of the English subject. This comes as no surprise since, as Sapir put it, *"there is in all languages a certain degree of randomness . . . all grammars leak"* (1921: 38).

As regards the first coding property of the English subject that we have mentioned, omissibility, the subject remains opaque even in complex expressions like (19.a). Quirk et al (1985: 403), however, observe that the omitted subject of the imperative is recoverable from tag questions, like (19.b), and object reflexive pronouns, as in (19.c). Moreover, the subject must be retained in strengthened commands like (19.d):

(19)
a. On no account Ø open the floodgates!
b. Close the window, will **you**?
c. Pull **yourself** together!
d. **You** get out of here!

In examples (13) and (14) we have already shown that the position of the subject is in no way context-independent. On the contrary, it is directly bound to considerations of illocution and polarity.

With reference to tag recoverability, this area does not cause much trouble. Nevertheless, clause subordination entails a certain degree of complexity for subject recoverability:

(20) (Quirk et al. 1985: 391)
a. I suppose you are not serious, are **you**?
b. *I suppose you are not serious, don't **I**?
c. I do not suppose he is serious, is **he**?
d. *I do not suppose he is serious, do **I**?

Notice that (20.b) and (20.d), in which subject recoverability is straightforward, are not grammatical.

As for subject case marking, this realm is a bit more troublesome. One may say that the subject undergoes the same degree of syntactic complexity as the construction to which it belongs. Thus, the subject of non-finite clauses has prepositional marking, as in (21.a); the subject of nominalizations is not coded in the direct case but in the oblique (accusative or genitive case), as is shown by (21.b); and prepositional marking is used as well in nominalized expressions like (21.c):

(21)
a. It is difficult **for me** to leave now
b. I was astonished at **his/John's/him/John** cheating
c. The painting of the house **by John**

Even though Quirk et al (1991: 739) remark that the preposition in instances such as (21.a) acts more as a conjunction than as a preposition proper, it seems beyond doubt that the control of case marking in clause embedding and nominalization allows for a certain amount of coding property leakage to take place.

Regarding agreement, we do find property leakage, both in number and in gender agreement. As far as number agreement is concerned, it is a well-known fact that collective nouns do not conform to the rules of grammatical agreement, as is illustrated in (22.a). The same applies to copulative subjects like that in (22.b), but not to disjunctive subjects, such as the one of (22.c). Notice that, as Quirk et al. (1991: 363) point out, with two plural subject phrases, as in (22.d), the verb is plural; but when one subject phrase is singular and the other is plural the dilemma is normally solved in terms of proximity, that is, the number of the verb is determined by the number of the phrase with is closer to the verbal element, as is displayed in (22.e) and (22.f).

(22)
a. The government **have** made no comment
b. Jerry and Susan **are** not coming tonight
c. Either the Senior Tutor or the Dean **is** bound to
   resign
d. Either the patients or the visitors **are**
   responsible for this mess
e. Either the teacher or **the pupils are** responsible
   for this mess
f. Either the journalists or **the minister is**
   responsible for this mess

As the instances under (22) show, the area of agreement in number is subject to a considerable degree of coding property leakage: the non-grammatical concord of (22.a) and the recourse to proximity considerations confirm this view. What is more, the proximity principle, in terms of which the number of the verb is determined in examples such as (22.e) and (22.f), is ultimately governed by pragmatic conditions, such as ease of recoverability, because the choice of the noun phrase that comes closest to the verb is by no means morphosyntactic.

Gender agreement also suffers from leakage, even though this is a less widespread phenomenon than leakage in number concord. To illustrate this,

let us take a look at the kind of definition that has imposed itself in dictionaries published in recent times:

(23)
a. If **someone**$_i$ keeps up **they**$_i$ move at the same speed as someone else (*Collins COBUILD*)
b. If **someone**$_i$ keeps up (with someone else) **they**$_i$ do whatever is necessary to stay level or equal with that person or thing (*Cambridge International Dictionary of English*)
c. [To keep up means] to succeed in moving as fast as **someone else**$_i$, when **they**$_i$ are moving very quickly and remaining level with **them**$_i$ (*Longman Language Activator*)

These cases illustrate the weakness of the gender concord system: in order to use language in a politically correct way, the plural forms *they/their*—which do not show gender agreement—are used in a co-referential way with the singular forms *one/one's* to avoid the third person pronouns *he/she/his/her*, which do follow agreement patterns; or the sequences *he/she* and *his/her*, which do not seem compatible with the economy principle that governs many areas of language. The lesson that can be learned from these examples is that coding rules cannot be very tightly woven if extra-linguistic reasons, justified though they are, modify such rules almost overnight (even when linguistic and cognitive evidence show that the feminine gender is the marked member of the pair masculine-feminine, as Givón (1995: 65) has remarked).[10]

4. CONTROL

In the preceding section we have dealt with the coding properties of the English subject and have identified some troublesome areas of inflectional morphology and word order. Taking inspiration from Sapir (1921), we have drawn the conclusion that there is a considerable amount of leakage in the codification of the English subject. The next step in our discussion is to decide whether the control properties of the subject leak too, and to see if there is a moral to be drawn from the cross-linguistic dimension. To do so, we will consider not only control properties, but also blocking properties, the latter constituting, most probably, a subset of the former. In the light of control and blocking properties we will establish whether, in the event of these properties also leaking, they allow for more or less leakage than coding properties.

As we have already said, the prototype approach to syntactic functions is based on the clustering of many features to determine subjecthood. These features are ranked along the implicational hierarchy (Keenan 1976) *case marking>grammatical agreement>word order>control properties* (case marking is the least universal subject property and behaviour and control the most universal one). Givón (1995: 251) has re-interpreted Keenan's intuition as follows: functionally-transparent subject properties (i.e. the pragmatically-motivated ones) occur more frequently in cross-linguistic distribution than functionally-opaque subject characteristics. In this view, inflectional morphology represents a higher degree of grammaticalization than word order, which, in turn, involves a higher degree of grammaticalization than control properties. Indeed, some control properties (at least) do not stray outside the bounds of topicality.[11] Let us take stock of control properties in order to decide on the matters we have just set out.

We define the control properties of subjects, in line with Moreno Cabrera (1991: 425), as follows: if a certain noun phrase syntactic phenomenon occurs in a language, this phenomenon will typically involve the subject. Control properties of the English subject include: co-referentiality, reflexivization, raising, promotion, relativization, clefting, quantification and extraposition. Let us revise them very briefly.

(i) Co-referential pronominalization, as (24) illustrates, is controlled by the subject:

(24) (Keenan 1976: 315)
a. **John**$_i$ talked to Bill for a while and then **he**$_i$ left
b. >**John** talked to Bill for a while and then **John** left
c. *>**John** talked to Bill for a while and then **Bill** left

Indeed, we associate the anaphoric pronoun with the subject. This is the reason why we interpret (24.a) as (24.b), and not as (24.c). The same association is found in the case of cataphoric co-referentiality, as is shown by (25), where (25.c) is asterisk.

(25)
a. When **he**$_i$ got home, **John**$_i$ talked to Bill
b. >When **John** got home, **John** talked to Bill
c. *>When **Bill** got home, **John** talked to Bill

(ii) Another syntactic phenomenon that is controlled by the subject is reflexivization. According to Givón (1995: 258), the non-subject noun phrase becomes the reflexive pronoun and is inserted into the second nominal slot:

(26)
a. She_i cut herself_i
b. She_i is thinking about herself_i

Possessive reflexives, as in (27.a), and the emphatic reflexives, like the one in (27.b), are also controlled by the subject:

(27)
a. He_i killed his_i own mother
b. I_i wouldn't do that myself_i

(iii) The subject can take part in raising constructions by means of which the subject of the embedded clause is raised to object of the matrix clause.[12] This is displayed by (28):

(28)
a. She believes it
b. Cindy is a genius
c. She believes Cindy/her to be a genius

According to Bolkestein (1979: 15) and Dik (1979: 119), the constituent *Cindy/her* is the subject of the embedded clause and the object of the main clause. The analysis of *Cindy/her* as object is apparent in example (29), where *Cindy/her* is the object and *a genius* the object complement:

(29) I consider Cindy/her a genius

The subject of an embedded clause can also be raised to subject of a matrix clause, as in (30):

(30)
a. It seems that the door is locked
b. The door seems to be locked

These examples bear on the restrictions that apply to raising: only the top-ranking syntactic function subject can control such construction; not even objects can take over raising, as example (31), which involves raising to object shows:

(31)
a. They said that Bill murdered Rose
b. *They said Rose Bill to have murdered her
c. *Rose is reported Bill to have murdered her

According to Givón (1993: 2.229), the raised referents are more topical than their unraised counterparts. If raising only applies to highly topical noun phrases, then the restriction on subject raising insists on the fact that the subject is the most topical grammatical role in the clause and reinforces the functional motivation of these constructions.

(iv) As Perlmutter (1980: 195) and Perlmutter and Postal (1983: 81) have pointed out, the subject undergoes demotion when the object is promoted to subject in a passive construction. This is given under (32):

(32)
a. The media criticised the Prime Minister
b. The Prime Minister was criticised by the media

Similarly, a *to*-phrase complement can be promoted to the position of indirect object while the direct object is displaced towards the final positions of the clause, as is displayed by (33):

(33)
a. Sarah gave his son a present
b. The porter called the don a taxi

The non-final indirect object of these examples achieves a more topical status, while the direct object, which is inserted into final position, becomes more focal.[13] As is the case with raising, promotion of subjects and indirect objects possesses a clearcut functional import.

(v) Example (34) illustrates subject and object relativization:

(34)
a. The man who likes rattlesnakes is my uncle
    (>that man is my uncle and that man likes rattlesnakes)
b. The book you recommended is very boring
    (>You recommended a book and that book is very boring)

Since the direct object can be relativized in English, the subject can also be relativized. If only one syntactic function controlled relativization, that function would be the subject. This follows from our definition of control properties, according to which if a certain noun phrase syntactic phenomenon

occurs in a language, this phenomenon will typically involve the subject. This view is reinforced by the fact that in participial relative clauses only the subject can be relativized, as example (35) illustrates:

(35) (Foley and van Valin 1984: 109)
a. The woman scolding the policeman is my mother
b. *The policeman the woman scolding is my father
c. The policeman being scolded by the woman is my father

Within the domain of relativization, there seems to be a certain amount of leakage caused by the fact that complex noun phrases in postmodification (phrasal qualifiers and relative clauses) can be relativized inside but not outside the main clause. This is called the *complex NP constraint* (Ross 1967 in Radford 1988: 487): the co-referentiality relation must hold between a head noun and its co-referential noun phrase inside an adjacent relative clause, as in (36.a). On the oher hand, embedding configurations where the relative clause is not adjacent to its head noun, as is the case with (36.b), are not acceptable; the reason being that the co-referentiality relation must cross two clause boundaries to reach a non-adjacent relative clause.

(36) (Givón 1993 vol II: 155)
a. **The woman** [who [Ø] saw **the dog** [that [Ø] bit the man]]
b. *The man [that the woman saw **the dog** [that [Ø] bit [Ø]]]

It is not by chance that subjects are *islands* (to use the term coined by Ross), whereas complements are accessible to the extraction that relative constructions involve.

(vi) The subject, like the object, can control cleft and pseudo-cleft constructions as in (37.b) and (37.c) respectively:

(37)
a. John hates sand
b. It is **John** that hates sand
c. What John hates is **sand**

According to Givón (1993 vol II: 195), clefting tends to apply to free lexical words, nouns and anaphorically topical constituents (verbs, adverbs, auxiliaries and adjectives are likely to constitute the asserted information since they are more topical than nouns). As is the case with raising, the restrictions on clefting are, to a large extent, pragmatic.

(vii) Subjects (and objects) control floating quantifiers, that is, mobile quantifiers like *all*, that can appear in more than one position in the clause:

(38) (Perlmutter and Postal 1974 in Keenan 1976: 320)
a. **All** the boys left
b. The boys **all** left

(viii) The subject controls extraposition as well. Extraposition is a syntactic device by means of which a complex subject, like *That John was late* in (39.a), is inserted into clause-final position. Clause-initial position is filled by the anticipatory pronoun *it*, as is illustrated by (39.b).

(39) (Huddleston 1984: 89)
a. **That John was late** annoyed them
b. **It** annoyed them **that John was late**

As example (39) shows, extraposition, being a syntactic device, serves a clear pragmatic purpose: focal or complex subjects are displaced towards the end of the clause, where they receive clause stress and are more easily available for the hearer. There is extraposition of the clausal object too:

(40) (Quirk et al 1991: 965)
a. I made **it** my business **to settle the matter**
b. You must find **it** exciting **working here**
c. I owe **it** to you **that the jury acquitted me**

At this point, several remarks are in order. Firstly, we have not dealt yet with those properties that we consider to constitute not control properties but rather blocking properties of the subject. We make reference to blocking properties below. Secondly, we have observed a certain degree of leakage in the control properties of the subject. Our position in this respect is that, as has been shown in the above, coding properties leak more than control properties do. Moreover, the leakage of control properties can be put down to pragmatic reasons associated with syntactic complexity (as is the case with raising or relativization), and can thus be functionally motivated. As we have seen in the preceding sections, the functional motivation of coding property leakage is a bit more elusive.[14] And, thirdly, even though the realization of the subject may be of little use in cross-linguistic comparison, the kind of category that performs this grammatical function should be taken into account in a non-intuitive definition of the English subject.

5. CATEGORIZATION

The subject in English can be realised by various phrases and clauses: by a noun phrase, as in (41.a); by a finite clause, as in (41.b); by a non-finite clause, as in (41.c); by the anticipatory *it* plus an extraposed clause, as in (41.d); by an empty (*dummy*) *it*, as in (41.e); by an existential *there* plus a postposed nominal phrase, as in (41.f); by a prepositional phrase, as in (41.g); by an adverbial phrase, as in (41.h); and by an adjectival phrase, as in (41.i):

> (41) (Downing and Locke 1992: 34-39)
> a. **It** is alarming
> b. **That he failed to turn up** surprised nobody
> c. **To take such a risk** was rather foolish
> d. **It** surprised nobody **that he failed to turn up**
> e. **It** was a dark, windy night
> f. **There** is **plenty of time**
> g. Will **up in the front** suit you?
> h. **Now** is the time to act
> i. **The very young and the very old** need State care

We may take several cues from these realizations. In the first place, a noun phrase or a noun clause is a more prototypical subject than a prepositional phrase, an adverbial phrase or an adjectival phrase. Indeed, prototypical subjects are concrete nouns. Therefore, noun phrases are more prototypical than noun clauses. This is easily demonstrated by the fact that noun clauses cannot occur as subjects in interrogatives, which is illustrated by example (42):

> (42) (Huddleston 1989: 64)
> a. **That John was late** annoyed them
> b. *Did that John was late annoy them?

In the second place, only subjects can be realized by dummy constituents. We are aware, however, that we are on slippery ground here, for the function of the dummy constituent is a much debated point. The transformational analysis, to start with, assumes that the postponed noun phrase is the subject of the source sentence. Quirk et al (1991: 956) have also taken this line and have described the dummy as the grammatical subject (because it exhibits subject properties) and the indefinite noun phrase as the notional subject. Downing and Locke (1992: 35) also assign to both constituents (the dummy on the one hand and the postponed noun phrase on the other) the

function of subject, since both have subject properties. Huddleston (1984: 66) remarks that the dummies *it* and *there* must be the subjects since they assume many of the prototypical characteristics of the subject: *it* assumes category, pronominal inflection, position in declarative clauses and position in interrogative clauses; *there* assumes verb agreement, pronominal inflection, position in declarative clauses, position in interrogative clauses and omissibility. Dik (1980: 108) and Hannay (1985: 14) insert *it* and *there* in the subject slot because they have the positional properties of subjects; nevertheless, neither Dik nor Hannay has defined *there* and, by extension, *it*, as the subject term itself. Givón (1993 2.206) considers the postponed noun phrase the only subject since it is the most topical constituent, which Givón identifies with this syntactic function. Finally, Langacker (1991: 349) describes these constructions as consisting of two subjects that belong to different levels of structural complexity, the higher level representing a setting subject construction and the lower level designating a participant that pertains to that setting. In the light of this discussion, it could be said that dummy elements share, at least, certain properties with more prototypical subjects, which reinforces the view that the subject is a privileged member of any syntactic construction: again, if *dummying* (if this term exists) is possible, it is associated with the subject.

6. BLOCKING

The term *blocking* refers to the non-assignment of a certain function or the non-expression of a given feature. It is our contention that some properties that have been referred to in the literature as control properties are better described in terms of blocking, because they involve the compulsory or optional absence of the subject. This is the case with co-referentiality. To the best of our knowledge, other blocking properties, such as subject omission, blocking or pronominal agreement blocking, have not been dealt with in connection with the definition of the subject. Let us consider blocking properties in turn.

(i) The subject blocks the occurrence of a co-referential noun phrase, as in (43):[15]

> (43) **Mary$_i$** opened the door and **[Mary$_i$]** said 'hello'

The subject of the main clause also blocks the presence of a co-referential noun phrase in an embedded clause, as (44.a), or a dependent clause, as in (44.b):

(44)
a. She$_i$ wanted PRO$_i$ to leave
b. They$_i$ sold the car PRO$_i$ to buy a house

Leakage also affects blocking properties: even though the presence of the subject of the dependent clause is, as a general rule, blocked by the subject of the main clause, the object of the main clause seems to block the subject of causative constructions, with verbs such as *force, tell, make*, etc.:[16]

(45) He asked them$_i$ PRO$_i$ to leave the room

Putting aside cases like (45), what examples (43) and (44) show is that the control of co-referentiality in coordinate, embedded and dependent clauses is governed by the equi-subject condition, which stipulates that the natural tendency in language is to assign the co-referentiality of a zero-marked subject to the subject of the preceding clause. Therefore, the natural tendency is to assume subject continuity, which iconically reflects topic continuity, topic continuity representing functional motivation. Under certain circumstances, however, the co-referentiality of the zero-marked subject can be assigned to the following clause. This is the situation in participial constructions like the following ones:

(46) (Dik 1989: 22)
a. PRO$_i$ seeing nobody, John$_i$ left the hotel
b. *Nobody seeing PRO$_i$, John$_i$ left the hotel
c. PRO$_i$ seen by nobody, John$_i$ left the hotel

As can be gathered from (46), it is the subject of the main clause that blocks the subject of the adverbial clause: the blocking of the object of the dependent clause by the subject of the main clause is not possible, as (46.b) shows.

(ii) The omission of the relative pronoun exemplified by (47.a) is blocked by the assignment of the subject to the relative pronoun. Therefore, (47.b) and (47.c) are asterisk:

(47)
a. The lady whom/Ø I visited yesterday is Frank's
   mother

b. *The man likes rattlesnakes is my uncle
   (>that man is my uncle and that man likes rattlesnakes)
c. *The car is over there is mine
   (>that car is mine and that car is over there)

However, further complexity is added if direct object and oblique assignment are taken into account. The assignment of direct object to the relative does not block its omission, as is reflected in (48.a). The prepositional phrase does block the omission, as can be seen in (48.b), which is asterisk. Finally, the stranded preposition construction exemplified by (48.c) does not block the omission under consideration:

(48)
a. I don't like the book that/Ø you recommended
b. *I don't like the book Ø you devoted so many years
c. I don't like the book that/Ø you devoted so many years to

Such evidence seems to contradict the hierarchy of syntactic functions in terms of control of syntactic constructions given in Keenan and Comrie (in Dik 1980: 57), since the subject blocks an omission that the direct object does not block and which the indirect (prepositional) object blocks only under certain conditions.

Notice that the omission of the relative pronoun is a variant of the omission of a co-referential noun phrase which we have mentioned above. As we have already pointed out, the subject controls co-referential pronominalization. The control of the omission of a relative pronoun is shown by (49):

(49) The book$_i$ you recommended pro$_i$ is very boring

In (49) the co-referentiality of the omitted relative pronoun is assigned to the subject of the main clause. As we have already seen, we assign the co-referentiality of a zero-marked subject to the subject of the preceding clause. If the function of subject is filled, however, we assign the co-referentiality of a zero-marked object to the subject of the preceding clause. This is a slightly modified version of the *equi-object condition* (Givón 1993 2.165).

(iii) As example (50) illustrates, the object and the subject, at least, can be the target of a question:

(50)
a. Who came yesterday?
b. What do you prefer?
c. *Who did come?

However, whereas the asignment of the object to the *wh*-pronoun has no spe-
cial effect, the assignment of subject to the relative pronoun brings about dif-
ferent verb morphology: we use the order and coding associated with state-
ments, instead of the usual order and coding of statements. A possible inter-
pretation of this is that the subject is the unmarked target of a question,
which is reflected iconically by the unmarked morphology of the verb in sub-
jective *wh*-questions. Conversely, the object and the complements are the
marked target of questions, and trigger marked verbal morphology in *wh*-
questions. From the perspective of blocking, the assignment of subject
blocks pronominal agreement whereas object assignment does not. On the
other hand, subject and object assignment share lack of case marking.
Consequently, only the indirect object (in the sense given by Givón [1993])
can opt for *pied piping* (Ross 1967 in Radford 1988: 487), that is, initial-po-
sition preposition, or for the *stranded* (final position) preposition exemplified
by (51):

> (51)
> a. **To whom** did you talk?
> b. **Whom** did you talk **to**?

Notice that the same choice is available in relativization:

> (52)
> a. **For which** party did you vote?
> b. **Which** party did you vote **for**?

Unlike relative pronoun omission, question targeting reinforces the hier-
archy of syntactic functions in terms of control of syntactic constructions
given in Keenan and Comrie (in Dik 1980: 57): the direct functions are mor-
phologically unmarked with respect to the oblique ones.

7. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In the cross-linguistic field, we have drawn inspiration from those who have
questioned the universal validity of any narrow definition of the subject. It
has been in this spirit that we have voiced an objection against schematic
definitions of the subject which, however universal they may be, do not have
much descriptive or explanatory power.

In the intra-linguistic dimension we have pointed out that a non-intuitive
definition of the English subject calls for the notions of leakage and blocking
as well as for the type of categorization associated with the syntactic function
under scrutiny. The following table summarises our discussion and helps us
establish a hierarchy of leakage of coding, control and blocking properties:

Coding properties	Leakage
omissibility	√
order	√
recoverability	√
case marking	√
agreement	√
Control properties	
co-referentiality	
reflexivization	
raising	
promotion	
relativization	√
clefting	
quantification	
extraposition	√
Blocking properties	
co-referentiality	√
relative omission	
question target	

Table 1: Leakage of coding, control and blocking properties

According to this table, the hierarchy

> *blocking properties > control properties > coding properties*

could be put forward. This hierarchy stipulates that the degree of leakage of
the coding properties of the English subject is higher that that of control and
blocking properties. It remains to be demonstrated that this hierarchy is of
universal relevance; if it were, it would modify Keenan's and Givón's pro-
posals in the sense that coding properties imply control properties, but not
viceversa.

As regards the hierarchy of syntactic functions of Keenan and Comrie, we have found that, whereas question targeting keeps to this hierarchy, other blocking properties such as relative pronoun omission challenge it.

To round off, the idea has implicitly been fostered throughout this discussion that a cross-theoretical approach to a complex linguistic phenomenon, like the subject, is more likely to report net results than a theory-driven one, in which the risk certainly exists of failing to see the linguistic wood for the theoretical trees. Such an approach, however, is not devoid of problems. Indeed, we have found ourselves admitting the advantages that the consideration of blocking properties has for a functional paradigm (since it allows us to dispense with multi-level analyses that quite often imply structure-changing operations), while resorting to promotion and demotion (which can hardly be accused of not involving multiple strata) in dealing with the passive and dative shift. We hope that the overall picture of the subject in English we have offered will be worth the theoretical inconsistencies that arise in eclectic approaches. ✂

NOTES

1. The funding for this research has been granted through the projects DGES-PB96-0520 and UR-API-97/B18, whose main researcher is Dr. Francisco Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez (Universidad de La Rioja).

2. For Boas on this topic, *vid.* Foley (1993: 136).

3. In more recent versions of the theory, the subject is the Noun Phrase of Sentence (Chomsky 1981) or the Specifier of the Inflection Phrase (Chomsky 1995).

4. The semantic notion *perspective* is related to the syntactic notion of pivot: the pivot is the noun phrase around which the construction is built (Foley and van Valin 1984: 108).

5. In Dik's functional grammar the notion of agentivity is associated with the concept of first argument. Givón (1995: 226), whose concept of agentivity is less restricted than Dik's, points out that in English the assignment of subject is restricted to the semantic roles agent, dative and patient. *Vid.* Blake (1994: 63) and Schlesinger (1995: 28).

6. Vid Goldberg (1995: 116) and Taylor (1989: 206) with reference to prototypical constructions involving the subject.

7. Dixon (1990: 97; 1994: 123) takes a different tack: S (intransitive subject), A (transitive subject) and O (transitive object) constitute universal core categories in terms of which the syntactic rules of every grammar are defined. By raising of embedded clause ar-

guments we mean the semantic and syntactic promotion of the dependent clause subject involved in instances like *We consider that he is honest > We consider him honest > He is considered honest.*

8. The term *blocking* has been drawn from classical generative grammar, where the application of a rule to a given domain could be blocked by certain phrase-structure characteristics. Vid Akmajian and Heny (1975) and Huddleston (1976).

9. Keenan's proposal has been revised by Andrews (1985), Faarlund (1988) and Givón (1995). We also refer the reader to Mithun (1991: 166).

10. According to Corbett (1991: 226), there exists an agreement hierarchy *attributive<predicate<relative pronoun<personal pronoun*, according to which possible agreement patterns are constrained as follows: The further we move rightwards along the hierarchy, the more likely semantic agreement (to the exclusion of grammatical agreement) becomes.

11. By *topicality* we mean pragmatic function assignment. It is worth having a look at the way Langacker (1991: 314) interprets this term: topicality involves role, emphathy, definiteness and figure/ground organization.

12. *Vid.* Haegeman (1995: 320) and Radford (1988: 435; 1997: 315).

13. *Vid.* Wierzbicka (1988: 359).

14. For the relationship between control, accusativity and ergativity, I refer the reader to Palmer (1994: 88).

15. *Blocking* is used here in the sense that the subject is the syntactic pivot of the structure under discussion. *Vid.* Foley and van Valin (1984: 108) and Haegeman (1995: 251).

16. *Vid.* Dik (1980: 57).

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SOME INSIGHTS INTO THE TEACHING OF TRANSLATION

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the last few years the field of translation has gone through three major changes. First, an emphasis has been placed on the translation problems that go beyond the word and the sentence levels, that is, as in the general linguistic domain, attention has been paid mainly to translation in connection with suprasentential units of analysis. Secondly, translation has ceased to be regarded exclusively as a simple transfer of information from one language to another. Translation is not seen only as a textual operation; it is not simply a matter of isolated words. It is at present seen as an intercultural and communicative act. It is a cross-cultural event as it is quite clear that there are more factors intervening in the translation process than the inherently linguistic ones. This in fact has been considered as a "top-down" approach (Neubert and Shreve 1992) since now attention is devoted to the function and relevance of words and sentences within the text. Thirdly, Translation Studies have tried hard to become an autonomous and well-organised empirical science, with its own objectives and methodology, and independent of Linguistic Theory. In this direction, Toury (1995: 9-10), following Holmes (1970), makes a distinction between pure and applied translation; the former divided in its turn into two components: theoretical and descriptive. Moreover, translation is now conceived from the perspective of the target culture and the traditional conception of 'equivalence' as an instrument of linguistic transference is questioned. There is not only one possible translation for a given text but several and the existence of several types of equivalence should be accounted for: communicative, stylistic, structural, formal, pragmatic, semantic and textual (Rabadán 1991).

Moreover, nobody questions the importance of translation in the current world; without translators several fields such as art, politics, science, trade