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<u>0.</u>   There is a generally accepted view among linguists
that, in sentences, the position in front of the verb
(subject position in a number of languages) and the
position immediately behind the verb (direct object
position) are engaged by nouns that are primarily or
secondarily topicalized, respectively It was pointed
out by case grammarians along the lines of Fillmore
(1968: 33-48) that the treatment of the category 'sub-
ject' at the level of deep structure results in an
incorrect understanding of the basic relations of the
grammar of natural languages, since subjects are mani-
fested on the surface due to the process of subjecti-
valization Along the lines of Fillmore, however, case
grammarians have treated subject-raising as a kind of
universal rule of grammar, and thus the derivational
process of primary topicalization has gained a crucial
status in the analysis of surface strings, and the
appearance of subjects was considered to be a universal
property of surface forms. It was proposed by Fillmore
(1968: 33), Lambert (1969: 36, 38, 148), Anderson (1971:
160-165), Stockwell et al. (1973: 59-63), and a number
of other case grammarians, that the eligibility of the
various deep cases to function as surface subjects is
hierarchically ordered in such a way that whenever
there is an Agent in a sentence, that Agent must appear
in subject position in active sentences. The respec-
tive order of the rest of the case categories for sub-
ject choice is the following: Experiencer, Instrumental,
Objective, and finally Locative, Temporal, etc. Although
most of these grammarians used this respective hierarchy
in determining the constraints on their rule of sub-
jectivalization, it was Nilsen who attempted to give
arguments for such an ordering of case notions for the
first time. He suggested (Nilsen, 1973: 140) that the
activity quotient of a particular case, as determined
by its semantic features, had a decisive role in pro-
viding a definite position of the case in question in
the subject-choice hierarchy. Cases with a high acti-
vity quotient were most likely to be chosen as subjects

in the surface structure of sentences

The purpose of the present paper is to point out that the status of the subject as a basic category of surface structure is significantly weakened based on an analysis of the manifestation of subjecthood in languages having a relatively free word order, such as Hungarian. It will be pointed out that Hungarian provides convincing arguments against the universal nature of the subject-choice hierarchy, and it will also be shown that primary topicalization loses its position to be considered as a primary rule of the transformational component of the grammar of this language, since the subject position is often left empty as a result of the operation of deletion rules.

1. Let us first have a look at some examples which would seem to support the view that constraints on subject selection are valid for Hungarian surface structures, as well.

(1)(i) Péter eltörte a tányért a konyhában.
        ('Peter broke the plate in the kitchen.')
   (ii) A tányér eltörött a konyhában.
        ('The plate broke in the kitchen.')
   (iii) A tányért törte el Péter a konyhában.
        ('It was the plate that John broke in
         the kitchen.')
   (iv) A konyhában törte el Péter a tányért.
        ('It was the kitchen where Peter broke
         the plate ')
   (v)   A konyhában törött el a tányér.
        ('It was the kitchen where the plate
         broke.')

Since Hungarian has a rich system of surface case morphemes, it is unnecessary in this language for categories of surface syntax to be positionally bound. Morphological markedness of surface case relations results in a relatively free word order, giving place to a relatively free topic selection. Thus it can be seen that whereas a coincidence of subject and topic is manifested in (1i) and (1ii), this is not the case in (1iii), (1iv) and (1v). In (1iii) it is the deep Objective that is chosen as topic, whereas in both (1iv) and (1v) it is the Locative. Since subjects are marked with a Ø morpheme in Hungarian surface structure while

a typical ending for objects is -t and a typical ending
of the locative relation is -ban/-ben, it can be seen
that these notions are easy to recognize in sentences
due to their morphological markedness. It is the Agent
which is the subject in (1i), (1iii), and (1iv), whereas
in (1ii) and (1v) the Objective is chosen for this func-
tion.

    Returning now to our main topic, the dependence of
the subject choice hierarchy of deep cases on their
activity quotient, it can be seen that all the examples
in (1) supported this idea, since in sentences (1i),
(1iii) and (1iv), where an Agent appeared on the sur-
face, this was chosen as subject of the sentence,
whereas in (1ii) and (1v), in which only an Objective
and Locative occurred, the Objective functioned as
subject. Curiously, however, it was not the higher
activity quotient of the Objective case that was deci-
sive in the choice of this category for position of
subject in (1ii) and (1v), but the compulsory nature of
this case in the frame of the verb "eltör -- eltörik",
whereas the Locative was optional in (1i-iii), and it
was only due to the choice of this category for the
function of the topic that its surface occurrence was
compulsory in (1iv-v).

    Let us now have a look at the following example.

    (2)   Az a cikk Jánosé.

The above sentence has two interpretations in Hungarian.
It either translates as "That paper belongs to John,"
or, and this is more important for our purposes, as
"That paper was written by John." If the first inter-
pretation is taken, there is no problem with the subject-
choice hierarchy, since it is the lack of an Agent that
makes it possible for the Objective NP "az a cikk"
('that paper') to appear as the surface subject of the
sentence. The second interpretation, however, contra-
dicts the subject-choice hierarchy, since the NP
"Jánosé" translates as "by John", that is, it functions
as an Agent and not as a Goal in the sentence. It
should be mentioned, however, that there are no passives
in present-day Hungarian, and thus (2), being an active
sentence, ought to be ruled out by the subject-choice
hierarchy, since it is the NP that represents the Objec-
tive deep category that functions as a subject here, in

spite of the surface appearance of the Agent within the boundaries of the simple sentence. (2), however, is a fully grammatical sentence, and similar examples are easy to find in Hungarian. Given that the Objective is a lower case than the Agent as regards the activity potential, it seems that the constraint is not valid for Hungarian. Similar examples are the following:

(3)   <u>Az a meleg leves</u> nem tett jót <u>neki</u>.
      Obj.   Exp.
      ('That hot soup was harmful to him.')
(4)   <u>A lőtér</u> tele volt <u>katonákkal</u>.
      Loc.   Obj.
      ('The rifle-range was filled with soldiers.')
(5)   <u>A zár</u> csak <u>hatos kulccsal</u> nyilott.
      Obj.   Instr.
      ('The lock (could be) opened with a No. 6
      key only.')

In (3) it is the Objective case that is the subject in spite of the appearance of the more "active" Experiencer in the same sentence. In (4) this position is filled by the Locative although an Objective is also present, and in (5) it is the Objective, again, that is subjecti-valized, although there is a more active Instrumental in the same sentence. It should be remarked that although we gave a passive sentence as a translation of (5) above, the Hungarian sentence is a fully understood active sentence. There exist, however, some construc-tions in which an effect of the passive can be felt, but the occurrence of such structures was a result of the effect of structures of German on Hungarian. (Even today, German is the most frequently spoken foreign language in Hungary, as a result of the historical past of the nation.) Thus (6) would sound strange for native speakers of Hungarian generally, and is accepted only by those who have at least some knowledge of a Germanic language.

(6)   Az a zár csak hatos kulccsal <u>volt nyitható</u>.
      ('That lock <u>could be opened</u> with a No. 6
      key only.')

In spite of the predicate structure that is considered to be a Germanism in (6) above, the sentence is, again,

an active construction in which the Objective functions
as subject.

It seems reasonable, then, on the basis of examples
(2) - (6), that in Hungarian, and most probably in a
great number of other free word order languages as well,
the idea of considering the condition of the activity
quotient of cases to be of decisive power in the deter-
mination of subject choice hierarchy should be rejected,
and together with this, as evidenced by the above sen-
tences, the hypothesis of the subject choice hierarchy,
which has gained wide acceptance by case grammarians,
has to be dispensed with in a universal grammar. Before
an attempt is made toward an explanation of the above
phenomena, it has to be remarked that the role and
effect of topic selection and of the process of themati-
zation on the subject selection of sentences has not yet
been examined by case grammarians in detail. Strangely
enough, they have neglected to investigate the relation
of the pairs: topic vs. comment and theme vs. rheme,
and have only used the notion of topic in the analysis
of the processes of topicalization. It was Ferenc
Kiefer who pointed out the relevance of differentiating
between the role of these pairs in grammatical analysis
(Kiefer, 1976: 157-161). On the basis of this differ-
ence, the following hypothesis for subject selection in
sentences can be put forward.

> Whenever a particular deep case undergoes topic
> selection and also functions as the theme of the
> utterance at the same time, that deep case com-
> pulsorily fills the position of subject in the
> sentence.

It follows from the above hypothesis that there exist
cases where the positions of theme and topic of the
sentence are filled by two different NPs, and this can
be seen in examples (liii-v) above. The hypothesis,
however, works as an explanation of why the particular
cases in sentences (2) - (6) were chosen as subjects in
spite of the fact that potentially more active cases
also occurred in these examples. For the sake of gaining
further support, let us take sentence (4) and see what
happens when the item "katonákkal" ('with soldiers') is
chosen as topic and becomes the theme of the sentence.

(4') Katonák töltötték meg a lóteret.
     Obj.
      ⋮
   topic
   theme
    ⋮
   subject

It can be seen that simultaneous topicalization and thematization of the Objective case resulted in the selection of this case as subject, followed by a change in word order and the morphological marking of the items (surface subject marked ∅, and object typically marked -t). (4') is a grammatical sentence in Hungarian that translates into English as "Soldiers filled the rifle-range."

In fact, as was pointed out by Nilsen (1973: 130-2), there are no semantic constraints as to the subject-fronting of deep cases in sentences, since virtually any deep case can appear in this position. Nilsen, however, used sentences with the surface appearance of only one compulsory case throughout his analysis and at that point did not investigate the validity of the hierarchy of cases eligible for subjects As it was pointed out above, two processes that have an important role in subject selection are topic selection and thematization. It remains for us to determine the relative rank of these processes as regards their effect on subjectivali-zation. Since Hungarian is a language in which vir-tually any of the NPs in the sentence can be topicalized, and raising into topic position does not necessarily bring along subject-fronting of the particular case, and since, as it will be pointed out below, theme selec-tion goes well beyond the boundaries of the sentence, and the coincidence of themes and subjects is typical in this language, the following hierarchy is reasonable:

   I.   theme-selection
         ⋮
   II.   topic-selection
         ⋮
   III. subject-selection

2. Having pointed out the erroneous nature of the determination of subject choice hierarchy of cases, it

is the purpose of the following section to point out
that the relevance of subjecthood itself loses its pri-
mary importance in the categorial breakdown of surface
sentences, if languages with a relatively or completely
free word order are examined, since it is a very common
phenomenon of surface strings in such languages that
the subject position is left empty in the sentence.
Examples from Hungarian are the following:

(7) (i)   Hova ment?
          ('Where did he go?')
    (ii) Elment a barátjához.
          ('He went to see his friend.')
    (iii) Akarok venni egy ernyőt.
          ('I want to buy an umbrella.')
    (iv) Mire célzol?
          ('What are you hinting at?')

It can be seen that while the subject NPs were deleted
from the surface in the above Hungarian sentences, their
English counterparts are grammatically correct only in
the case when these NPs appear in their surface forms.
It is not the case, however, that deep cases eligible
for subject selection do not appear in deeper layers of
the derivational history of the above Hungarian sen-
tences. The argument for the presence of such cases in
deeper layers is strengthened by the fact that native
speakers are fully aware on intuitive grounds which
category is understood to be capable of filling the
function if it were the case that their surface appear-
ance were required by the well-formedness conditions of
sentences. Although subject NPs do not appear in any
of the examples in (7) above, the intuitive recognition
of their deep status is supported by the morphological
process of verbal suffixation. Viewed diachronically,
the rich suffixation of verb conjugation in Hungarian
developed as a result of reduction in deeper layer pro-
nominalization sets; thus it can be assumed that the
surface deletion of subjects is affected by previous
pronoun deletion based on coreference phenomena. This
is the reason why it is easy for native speakers to
identify the deep case eligible but left unexpressed as
a subject, on intuitive grounds.
     If we try to give an explanation of the process of
subject deletion in Hungarian surface structure, the

following three categories should be examined in rela-
tion to one another. What is the role, if any, of
<u>theme</u> selection and <u>topic raising</u> in subject selection
and subsequent <u>subject deletion</u>? The role of topics
and themes in subject selection was pointed out in the
previous section. If Hungarian surface strings are
examined from the point of view of topic and subject
selection, it can be observed that it is the <u>topic</u> that
dominates within the limits of the sentence. If the
two functions are filled by one item, that item is
moved to the front of the sentence, but whenever these
functions are filled by two different items (as in
(1iii-v)), it is the topic that keeps its front posi-
tion. It can thus be observed that Hungarian is a
topic-prominent language, where it is the surface
appearance of the topic that is of primary importance.
Going back to our examples in (7), it can be observed
that in (7i) and (7iv) the topic is expressed and the
subject remains unexpressed. In (7ii) and (7iii), how-
ever, even the topic has undergone deletion on the sur-
face. There are parallel strings, however, where the
topic keeps its front position.

(7) (ii') <u>A barátjához</u> ment el.
    (iii') <u>Egy ernyőt</u> akarok venni.

One thing that remains to be taken into consideration
here is the role of <u>theme-selection</u> in the above pheno-
mena. As it was pointed out in the previous section,
the process of thematization is of primary importance
in the formation of sentence structures in Hungarian,
and this process goes well beyond the boundaries of the
sentence, once a set of sentences is related to form
part of a higher unit, that of discourse. If the sen-
tences in (7) are examined from the point of view of
theme-selection, it is striking that the theme is not
represented by an NP on the surface in Hungarian,
whereas its appearance is compulsory in the correspond-
ing English sentences. The Hungarian examples of (7),
however, are accepted as well formed only if they are
inserted into the flow of conversation, whereas the
corresponding English sentences seem to be fully under-
stood by themselves, as well. Thus it becomes clear
that in Hungarian, at least, and most certainly in the
majority of languages having a free word order, as well,

it is the <u>theme</u> of the unit of discourse that is respon-
sible for <u>topic</u>- and <u>subject-deletion</u> in particular
sentences. <u>Themes</u> are basic elements of discourse
units, and if they are once expressed in Hungarian, they
dominate the structural relations of the corresponding
sentences forming part of that given discourse unit.
The <u>theme</u> of the discourse unit has to be expressed only
once within the boundaries of that particular discourse
unit. Whenever there is a new theme-selection, however,
the newly chosen theme must appear in the discourse com-
pulsorily, and that theme governs the surface relations
and morphological processes in the sentences of that
unit of discourse. Thus themes have an absolute con-
trol over subject-choice in the particular sentences.
This is not the case as regards their role in topic
selection, however. As it has been pointed out above,
topic selection is an important feature of Hungarian
sentence structure, and virtually any NP filling the
function of a deep case notion can be topic-fronted on
the surface in this language. When there is a coinci-
dence of the theme and the topic, however, and the topic
has already been expressed in the discourse unit, as it
is not required that it be expressed again and again in
the sentences of that discourse unit, this condition
results in topic deletion. When the topic and the theme
are expressed by two different NPs, the topic cannot be
deleted on the surface, since Hungarian is a topic-
prominent language. As Hungarian is not a subject-
prominent language, it follows that since it is the
theme that has primary control in the subject-choice of
sentences, subject NPs can be deleted from the surface
within the boundaries of the particular discourse unit
once the theme (and together with this the subject) was
expressed in that discourse. If the theme in the dis-
course unit is the speaker or the hearer, the subject
is not expressed by a surface NP. Its presence is
understood intuitively, however, and the recognition of
this is further supported by the morphological marking
of the verb that functions as a predicate in sentences
belonging to the given discourse. This is evidenced by
examples (7iii) and (7iv) above.

As a conclusion to the above, then, the rule of
subject- and theme-deletion in Hungarian can be the
following:

Within the boundaries of a discourse unit the
<u>theme</u> has to be determined compulsorily, but it
is required to appear only once in that discourse.
Whenever the theme and the topic of the discourse
unit are expressed by the same NP, that item can
be deleted from following sentences forming part
of that unit of discourse. If there is a coinci-
dence of theme, topic, and subject of the sen-
tence, the surface appearance of the item that
represents these is required only once in the
given discourse unit; in subsequent strings the
subject is deletable. If the theme and the topic
are expressed by two separate items, subject
selection is controlled by the theme only, and
once the theme is expressed in the discourse unit
and the subject is dominated by that item, the
subjects are deletable from the subsequent sen-
tences in that particular discourse.

Let us now take some examples and see how the operation
of the rule is realized in speech. Let us assume that
two girls, Helen (H) and Anne (A) are talking.

(8)(i)   A: Elmentél Péterhez?
             ('Did you go to see Peter?')
   (ii) H: Elmentem, igen. Péter azonban nem
             volt otthon.
             ('Yes, I did. Peter, however, was
               not at home.')
   (iii) A: Mit gondolsz, miért nem volt otthon?
             ('Why do you think he was not at home?')
   (iv) H: Biztosan meglátogatta a nagymamáját.
             ('He must have visited his granny.')
   (v)   A: A nagymamája is ebben a városban lakik?
             ('Does she live in this city, too?')
   (vi) H: Fogalmam sincs. Péter még sohasem
             emlitette, hogy hol lakik.
             ('I have no idea. Peter has never
               mentioned where she lives.')
        ...

As it is Anne who addresses Helen by putting her ques-
tions throughout the conversation, Anne becomes the
primary theme of the conversation. As it was mentioned
earlier, the surface appearance of this NP is unnecessary

in such cases; its deletion is optional, however, as shown by (8i').

    (8)(i') Elmentél Péterhez, Anna?

In all the sentences following (i) in (8), "Anna" does not gain surface expression, as she functions as the primary theme of the conversation. In (8ii), however, a new, secondary theme is chosen, the person "Peter", whose surface appearance is compulsory in (8ii). From that on, however, until the theme changes again in (8v), the NP "Peter" remains unexpressed on the surface except for the morphological marking via the verbal suffixes in the sentences. The same rule operates for the new theme, Peter's granny, introduced in (8v).
3.   It can be concluded, then, that the status of the rule of subject raising as considered to be a kind of universal transformational process in a semantically based grammar is significantly weakened if data based on an analysis of Hungarian sentence structure, and probably of other free word order languages too, are taken into account Subject-fronting is a language-specific rule of grammar, and its constraints are determined by parallel powerful rules of the grammar. Thus the generally accepted idea that subject-fronting is in close relation with case ranks on semantic grounds is to be rejected altogether. Subject-fronting is preceded by the more powerful process of theme selection, and is also controlled to some extent by topic selection, and the conditions on the latter rule are also to be considered language-specific in a number of natural languages.

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