

# **Grammatical relations and the** **case hierarchy**

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# Grammatical relations

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Subject

Direct object

Indirect object

Adverbial/Adjunct (=Oblique)



# **The notion of subject**

# Subject

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- Agent actor
- Case marking
- Position
- Agreement
- Controller

# Subject

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Agent / actor

- (1) The man is kicking the ball.
- (2) The ball is rolling down the hill.
- (3) The ball was kicked against the wall.

# Subject

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Case marking

- (1) He saw her.
- (2) Mir gefällt das Bild.
- (3) Mir ist kalt.

# Subject

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## Position

- (1) Peter saw Mary.
- (2) Across the bridge lived an old man.
- (3) Paul hat Elke gesehen.
- (4) Den Mann hat Peter gesehen.

# Subject

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## Agreement

- (1) She loves bananas.
- (2) There are my shoes.
- (3) Das ist ein Pferd.
- (4) Das sind meine Freunde.
- (5) ?Die sind meine Freunde.



# Subject

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## Controller

- (1) Peter talked to Sally and (then) went home.
- (2) Peter promised Sally to leave.
- (3) Peter convinced Sally to leave.

## Antecedent of reflexive

- (1) He saw himself in the mirror.
- (2) He saw him in the mirror.

# Subject

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Keenan (1976) The notion of subject

- Semantic properties
- Coding properties
- Behavioral properties

# Semantic/pragmatic properties

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1. The subject tends to be the actor / agent.
2. The subject tends to be the topic / theme.
  - (1) There was an old man. He lived in a small house.

# Coding properties

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## 1. Position

Across languages the subject tends to precede the object.

## 2. Case

If there is morphological case marking, the subject tends to be unmarked (notably in intransitive clauses).

# Coding properties

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Old English

	SG	PL
NOM	stan	stan-as
GEN	stan-es	stan-a
DAT	stan-e	stan-um
ACC	stan	stan-as

# Coding properties

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Latin

	king	boy	queen
NOM	rex	puer	regin-a
GEN	reg-is	puer-i	regin-ae
DAT	reg-i	puer-o	regin-ae
ACC	reg-em	puer-um	regin-am
ABL	reg-e	puer-o	regin-a

# Coding properties

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## 3. Agreement:

If there is head-marking / agreement marking on the verb, the subject is the element that is most frequently expressed by an agreement marker.

(1) He like-**s** bananas

(2) Ich gehe  
Du gehst  
Er geht  
Wir gehen  
Ihr geht  
Sie gehen

# Behavioral properties

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1. The subject is the controller of a 'gapped' NP in a coordinate clause.

(1) Peter cleaned the dishes and \_\_\_ went to bed.

2. The subject is the controller of a 'gapped' NP in non-finite ADV-clauses.

(2) Watching TV, she fell asleep.



# Behavioral properties

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3. The subject is the controller of a reflexive pronoun.

(1) Peter saw **himself** in the mirror.

4. The subject is the controller of a pronominal element in a fronted adverbial clause (backwards pronominalization)

(2) When **she** is in New York, Sally always visits the Museum of Modern Arts.

# Behavioral properties

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5. The subject is often omitted in imperative sentences.

(1) Open the window!

6. The subject is the only role that can be relativized in all languages.

(1) The man who saw Mary.

(2) The man who(m) Mary saw.

(3) The man who(m) Peter gave the book to.

(4) The man who(m) the dog ran to.



# **The case hierarchy**

# Encoding grammatical relations

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- position / order
- case marking / adpositions
- agreement



# **Position**

# Position

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rigid



flexible

(1) Die Maus hat die Katze gesehen.

Word order

(2) Die Maus hat die Katze gefangen.

Meaning

(3) Den Hund hat die Katze gejagt.

Case marking



**Case**

# Case marking

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(1) Tamil (Whaley 1997:167)

Nominative	maram	‘tree’
Accusative	maratt-ai	‘tree’
Genitive	maratt-utaiya	‘of the tree’
Dative	maratt-ukku	‘to the tree’
Locative	maratt-il	‘at the tree’
Ablative	maratt-iliruntu	‘from the tree’
Instrumental	maratt-al	‘using the tree’
Sociative	maratt-out	‘(together) with the tree’



# Case marking

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## CASE HIERARCHY

Subject > Direct object > Indirect Object > Others

SU	der Mann
DO	den Mann
IO	dem Mann-e
GEN	des Mann-es

SU	the man
DO	the man
IO	the man
GEN	the man-s



# **Agreement**

# Agreement

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(1) English (SU)

Peter like-**s** bananas

(2) Swahili (SU + DO)

**Ni-li-m**-piga

1SG.SUBJ-PST-3SG.OBJ-hit

‘I hit him/her.’

# Agreement

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## (3) Abkhaz

a-xàcʔa      a-pḥəs      a-ʃqʔə      Ø-lə-y-te-ytʔ  
the-man      the man      the-book      it-her-he-gave-FIN  
'The man gave the woman the book.'

## (4) Kinyarwanda (SU + DO + IO + BEN)

y-a-kí-mú-bá-hé-er-eye  
he-PST-it-him-them-give-BEN-SAP  
'He gave it to him for them.'

# Agreement

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(1) Turkish (Whaley 1997:154)

Ben	bu	makale- <b>yi</b>	yarın	bitir-eceğ- <b>im</b>
I	this	article-ACC	tomorrow	finish-FUT-1SG
'I shall finish this article tomorrow.'				

(2) Hasan      çocuğ-**a**      elma-**yı**      ver-di-**Ø**  
Hasan      child-DAT      apple-ACC      give-PST-3  
'Hasan gave the apple to the child.'

(3) Kitap-lar      masa-**dan**      yer-**e**      düş-tü-**Ø**  
book-PL      table-ABL      floor-DAT      fall-PST-3  
'The books fell from the table to the floor.'

# Case hierarchy

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## CASE HIERARCHY

Subject > Direct object > Indirect Object > Others

Verbal affixes



Case / adpositions