Encyclopedia of Chinese Language and Linguistics

Volume 3
Men–Ser

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF CHINESE LANGUAGE AND LINGUISTICS

Volume 3
Men–Ser

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2017

Tibeto-Burman side of the Sino-Tibetan family and by others as a variety of "Chinese" (Norman 2003:73). It has also been suggested that Bái and Sinitic are separate language groups comprising the Sino-Baic branch of Sino-Tibetan (Zhèngzhāng Shàngfāng 2012:755). Whether the term "Chinese" is being used in its broadest sense, or a more narrow one, the boundaries of the term remain unfixed and subject to debate.

When describing particular varieties of Sinitic languages, the same kind of multiplicity of meaning which afflicts the term "Chinese" frequently spreads to other, more specific, words; that is, terms for branches of Sinitic or for individual Sinitic languages are also used similarly imprecisely, with similar confusion resulting. The term "Taiwanese", for example, is commonly used as the English equivalent of *Táiyǔ* 台語 (lit. language of Táiwān); *Táiyǔ*, however, usually, but not always, refers specifically to the Southern Mǐn varieties spoken on Táiwān, excluding the Hakka and (non-Sinitic) Formosan languages spoken there (Klöter 2005:3). When notions of "Chinese" are confused, it seems, notions of individual Sinitic languages often will be as well.

The wide and potentially confusing range of meanings for "Chinese" arises from the fact that, even when its referent is limited to language, there is no single coherent concept that can be called "Chinese". When precision is called for, the term "Chinese" is best avoided in favor of a word or phrase that more accurately and precisely characterizes the specific variety of Sinitic that is being discussed.

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Notions of "Subject"

The title of this article presupposes that there is some global category of all languages called "subject" that we can talk about. Up to the early 1970s that would have been a generally common assumption, despite the fact that there was much disagreement about and no universal notion of "subject" (Platt 1971; Van Valin 1977, 1981; Foley and Van Valin 1977, 1984; Gary and Keenan 1977; Comrie 1981), though most theories

assumed some conception of syntactic functions. The concept of "subject" began with Aristotle's theory of truth, but Aristotle defined subject (Greek *hypokeímenon*—Latin *subject* is a translation of this word) as the entity that the proposition is about, i.e., the topic. He did not have a separate term for grammatical subject. This led to centuries of debate about the nature of subject (see Seuren 1998, §2.6.3 for an overview), including attempts to distinguish grammatical subject and psychological subject (e.g., Von der Gabelentz 1869:378), the latter essentially topic, and what became "theme" in the → Prague School terminology. (Theme and topic are actually two different functional structures (LaPolla 2013), but as the Prague School linguists were working only with languages in which topic and theme generally coincided they confused the two.) A third term, "logical subject", was sometimes used, but could be associated with grammatical subject (often now seen as agent) or with psychological subject (particularly in logic), depending on the scholar. Bloomfield (1914:60–61, cited in Seuren 1998:131) used the term "subject" to refer to topics and also to heads of phrases.

Starting with Van Valin (1977), there were challenges to the notion of "subject" as a global category within a single language, and as a valid category cross-linguistically (see also Dryer 1997). Currently there are three major positions on this question: (1) syntactic relations are theoretical primitives and are universal and do not need to be defined, only identified in different languages (the rationalist/formalist tradition); (2) syntactic relations exist, but need to be defined in each language in terms of the constructions that manifest them (most empiricist/functionalist/typological approaches); and (3) there are no syntactic relations, only part-whole relations within constructions (Radical Construction Grammar; Croft 2001, 2013). It is in fact impossible to discuss the notion of "subject" or other syntactic relations outside of a particular grammatical theory. As Marantz has pointed out, "There can be no right definition of 'subject'... only a correct (or better) syntactic theory" (1984:3). Although working within the formalist tradition, Marantz (1982, 1984) has argued that syntactic functions should not be

seen as primitives or tied to semantic roles. For example, "subject", as a grammatical category, is not simply a particular semantic role, such as agent (see also Jespersen 1909–1949, vol. III, 11.1). "Subject" is also not simply topic; it must have grammatical properties beyond just being what the clause is about. Functionalists and typologists would generally agree with this position.

Keenan (1976) and Comrie (1981) argue that the prototypical subject is the intersection of topic and agent, but Shibatani (1991) argues that topic, what you are talking about, and grammatical subject need to be distinguished, as in Japanese these two distinct notions have distinct markings, *wa* and *ga* respectively. He argued for the following view of subject (1991:103):

(a) it is a syntactic category resulting from the generalization of an agent over other semantic roles, (b) languages vary as to how far this generalization has taken place; i.e., the grammatical status of subject differs from one language to another, and therefore, (c) the subject is not necessarily a universal category... [A] subject is an argument of a lexical predicate... However, this is not the case with topic...

Shibatani argues that languages can differ in terms of the degree to which non-agentive arguments pattern like agentive arguments, that is, the extent to which the reference-related properties of topic and the (semantic) role-related properties of "subject" are conflated on a single noun phrase, and also in terms of which argument is grammaticalized into the "subject".

Although many scholars believe it is impossible to define "subject" cross-linguistically (universally), many do try to define subjects for individual languages. The earliest reference grammar of any Chinese variety, → *Mǎshì wéntōng* 馬氏文通, was of → Classical Chinese, the standard written language of the time. In that book the expression that represented the referent that the predicate was about was called the *qǐcí* 起詞 'starting word', and the position (interpreted as case) of the *qǐcí* was called the *zhǔcì* 主次 'main position'. It is also discussed in the book as the one that initiates the action

(i.e., actor). This contrasted with the *zhǐcí* 止詞 'stopping word', which was the expression that represented the one affected by the action of the predicate and appeared in the *bīncì* 賓次 'guest position'. In *Xīnzhù Guóyǔ Wénfǎ* 新著國語文法 (1924), by Lí Jǐnxī 黎錦熙 (1890–1978), the modern term for "subject", *zhǔyǔ* 主語, is used, and it is defined as the expression that represents the *zhǔnǎo* 主腦 'essential aspect/point of a matter, controller'. Neither of these works deal with a grammatical definition of "subject" other than to define "case" by position. There have been many attempts since then to define a subject for Chinese, though no one has fully succeeded in this venture (see Lǚ Shūxiāng 呂叔湘 (1904–1998) 1979; Li and Thompson 1978, 1981; and Lǐ Líndìng 1985 on the difficulties of trying to define "subject" for Chinese). There was a two year debate in the 1950s to try to decide the question of "subject" and "object" (*bīnyǔ* 賓語) (Lǚ Jìpíng 1956), but no agreement was reached. In their attempts to define "subject" in Chinese, scholars can be roughly divided into three camps: those who define "subject" as the agent (possibly actor) (e.g., Wáng 1956; Tāng 1988; Li and Thompson 1981; Shibatani 1991), those who define it as the topic or whatever comes first in the sentence (e.g., Chao 1968; Lǚ Shūxiāng 1979), and those who believe both are right (Lǐ 1985). Several authors have also argued that though there is a "subject" in Chinese, it is not structurally defined and does not play an important role in Chinese grammar (e.g., Lǐ 1985; Li and Thompson 1981).

Those authors who define subjecthood on the basis of selectional restrictions vis à vis the verb (i.e., equating subject with agent or actor) are not distinguishing semantics and syntax. They claim that subjects have such a selectional restriction, while topics do not. This definition would imply that subjects are not topics. That a noun phrase has a selectional restriction *vis à vis* the verb simply means that that noun phrase is an argument of the verb. This is a necessary condition for subjecthood, but, as discussed above, it is not a sufficient one. A simple chance intersection of actor and topic in a particular sentence also does not constitute a subject. In Chinese, currently and historically, there is no restriction on what

semantic role can be the topic, though actors are cross-linguistically more often topics (particularly the speaker and addressee—see Silverstein 1981:243 on the speaker and/or addressee as the "maximally presupposable entities" which make the most "natural" topics), and this is what seems to have led to the confusion of topic and subject.

Li and Thompson (1976) argue that Chinese is a topic-prominent rather than subject-prominent language. They point out that "[t]here is simply no noun phrase in Mandarin sentences which has what E.L. Keenan [1976] has termed 'subject properties'" (1976:479; properties such as indispensability, control of agreement and cross-reference, case marking—see also LaPolla 1990 for discussion of these properties relative to Chinese). In their later *Mandarin Chinese: A Functional Grammar* (1981), they do recognize a "subject" for Chinese, but it "is not a structurally [i.e., syntactically—RJL] definable notion" (1981:19). The "subject" that Li and Thompson speak of is distinguished from "topic" because it has a "direct semantic relationship with the verb as the one that performs the action or exists in the state named by the verb" (p. 15), whereas the "topic" need not necessarily have such a relationship with the verb. If this is the only criterion for determining a "subject", though, then we are again simply substituting semantic relations for syntactic relations, and there is no subject that can be defined in syntactic terms.

Defining "subject" as whatever noun phrase is sentence-initial (i.e., equating "subject" and topic, e.g., Lǚ Shūxiāng 1979; Lǐ 1985) is also problematic. Topichood is a pragmatic relation, not a syntactic one. Though the subject in languages that have this syntactic function is often also a topic, it need not be, as can be seen in clauses in English with non-topical "dummy" subjects, such as *It's raining*, and focal subjects, as in *John's coming today, not Bill.* On the view of those who define "subject" as topic, a patient noun phrase becomes a subject anytime it appears before the agent. There is then no such structure as 'topicalization', as the 'topicalized' noun phrase becomes the subject, as in the following examples from Lǐ (1985:70):

1. a. 我已經知道這件事了。
        Wǒ yǐjīng   zhīdào zhè jiàn shì   le.
        1SG already know this CLF affair CSM
        'I already know about this affair.'
    b. 這件事我已經知道了。
        Zhè jiàn shì   wǒ yǐjǐng   zhīdào
        this CLF affair 1SG already know
        le.
        CSM
        'This affair, I already know about.'

On Lǐ's analysis, in (1a) *zhè jiàn shì* 這件事 'this affair' is an object, while in (1b) it is a subject. In a later article, Lǐ (1986:349) claims that not only the syntactic function, but the semantic role of a referent changes with a change in position in a sentence. He claims that in (2a) the referent of *wǒmen zhèxiē rén* 我們這些人 'we few' is a patient, while in (2b) it is an agent:

2. a. 這一下，就忙懷了我們這些人。
        Zhè yī xià, jiù   máng huài le
        this one time then busy ruin PFV
        wǒmen zhè-xiē   rén.
        1PL   this-few people
        'This time we few really got busy.'
    b. 我們這些人就忙懷了。
        Wǒmen zhè-xiē rén   jiù   máng
        1PL   this-few people then busy
        huài le.
        ruin PFV
        'We few really got busy.'

At the same time Lǐ (following Lǚ Shūxiāng 1979) says that "subject" in Chinese has two natures: as the topic and as whatever role it is. Lǚ Shūxiāng's original idea (1979:72–73) was that since "subject" and "object" can both be filled by any semantic role, and are to a certain extent interchangeable, then we can say that subject is simply one of the objects of the verb that happens to be in topic position. One of the examples of what he means by 'interchangeable' is (3a)–(3b) (Lǚ Shūxiāng 1979:73):

3. a. 窗戶已經糊了紙。
        Chuānghu yǐjīng   hú   le   zhǐ.
        window   already paste PFV paper
        'The window has already been pasted with paper.'
    b. 紙已經糊了窗戶。
        Zhǐ   yǐjīng   hú-le   chuānghu.
        paper already paste-PFV window
        'The paper has already been pasted on the window.'

Lǚ Shūxiāng gives the analogy of a committee where each member has his own duties, but each member can also take turns being chairman of the committee. Some members will get to be chairman more than others, and some may never get to be chairman, but each has the possibility of filling both roles. This concept of the dual nature of "subject" is Lǚ Shūxiāng's (and Lǐ's) solution to the problem of defining the concept of "subject" in Chinese. It is clear that this definition does not give us a consistent definition for "subject"; it simply states that the subject is the topic, and can be any semantic role.

In his monumental grammar, Y.R. Chao (1968) spoke of "subjects", but he defined them as whatever came first in the sentence, and explicitly said they were topics, not the kind of "subject" found for example in English. He argued that clause structure in Chinese is simply topic-comment, and there are no exceptions. (For an overview, see LaPolla and Poa 2006; LaPolla 2009.)

If we accept grammaticalization as a fact, then we must accept that all grammatical structure is grammaticalized, and so in order to show that a language has grammaticalized a "subject" relation, we need to show that the relevant noun phrase has consistent special *grammaticalized* properties in a majority of the constructions of the language, beyond the prominence that might be associated with its semantic or pragmatic role, because of a restricted neutralization of semantic roles for grammatical purposes, essentially referent tracking. That is, syntactic relations are conventionalized patterns for constraining the identification of referents and the roles they play in events or states of affairs (see LaPolla 2006a, 2006b). In order to determine if a language has such a grammaticalized subject, we can follow the methodology used, for example, in Anderson (1976), Van Valin (1981), Faarlund (1989), and Shibatani (1991), that of examining various constructions in the language to determine which argument of the verb, if any, figures as the syntactic pivot in each of the

constructions. Essentially, a pivot is "any noun phrase type to which a particular grammatical process is sensitive, either as controller or target" (Foley and Van Valin 1985:305; see also Van Valin and LaPolla 1997, Ch. 6). To determine if there is a pivot for a particular construction, we need to look for restricted neutralizations among the semantic roles of the arguments of the verb. In this methodology the three major types of argument are referred to as S, the single argument of an intransitive verb; A, the argument which prototypically would be the agent of a transitive verb; and P, the argument which prototypically would be the patient of a transitive verb. In a given language, if S and P function in the same way in a particular syntactic construction, and differently from A, then we can say that there is a neutralization of the distinction between S and P, and so the syntactic pivot for that construction is [S,P]. If on the other hand S and A function in the same way in a particular syntactic construction, and differently from P, then we can say there is a neutralization of the distinction between S and A, and so the syntactic pivot for that construction is [S,A]. In a language where all or most of the constructions in a language have [S,P] pivots, [S,P] can be said to be the subject of that language, and the language can be said to be syntactically → *ergative.* If, on the other hand, [S,A] is the major pivot pattern for all or most of the syntactic constructions of the language, then that grouping can be said to be the subject, and the language can be said to be syntactically *accusative.* If no consistent pattern of restricted neutralization is manifested, then it is hard to say there is a global subject. If there is no neutralization in any construction of the language, or unrestricted neutralization, then that language has no syntactic pivots, and it makes no sense to talk of grammatical subjects, ergativity or accusativity. (This paragraph is adapted from Van Valin 1981:362; see also Comrie 1981:64,118. There are also two other possible configurations: an active-inactive split—where there is no S, just actor and undergoer, as in Acehnese [Durie 1987]; and a situation such as in Takelma, where S, A, and P each pattern distinctively—see Fillmore 1968, from Sapir 1917.)

When this method is applied to Chinese, as in LaPolla (1990, 1993), we find unrestricted neutralization in all the relevant constructions. As argued by Chao (1968), Chinese clauses are simply topic-comment and constituent order in the clause is controlled by the nature of information flow (see LaPolla 1995, 2009; LaPolla and Poa 2006; Luó and Pān 2005). But arguing that Chinese doesn't have "subject" is rather pointless, as it assumes that "subject" is a thing, whereas, as discussed above, what we call "subject" is particular constraints in particular constructions on referent tracking (see also LaPolla 2006a, 2006b). So what it means to say that Chinese does not have a grammatical "subject" is that it does not constrain the interpretation of the roles of referents in discourse the way English does.

This constructionalist approach to grammatical relations is still often used to talk about "subject" in particular languages (if enough constructions manifest the same sort of pivot), but if we take the constructionist approach seriously, it in fact brings us to the third option mentioned at the beginning of this article, the Radical Construction Grammar view of languages not having any global categories (Croft 2001), just individual constructions. In this view questions of syntactic relations disappear, as they are no longer part of the analysis of the language, and other phenomena, such as word classes and transitivity, are handled as constructional phenomena rather than global phenomena (see LaPolla 2013; LaPolla *et al.* 2011). This view also is a natural correlate of our understanding of the process of grammaticalization, as grammaticalization is not of words, and does not occur in the language as a whole (i.e., globally), but is of individual constructions (Gisborne and Patten 2011; Himmelmann 2004; Bybee 2003). For example, English *go* is often talked about as having grammaticalized into a prospective aspect marker, as in *I am going to eat now*, but it is not the word *go* that marks prospective aspect, but the construction as a whole, of which *go* is just one part. The grammaticalization of that construction has no relevance at all for uses of *go* in other constructions in the language, and in fact *go* can be used as the main predication even in that construction if it appears in the relevant

slot of the construction (*I am going to go now*). The same is true for the →*bǎ* 把 construction in Chinese and other grammatical phenomena. Talking about all aspects of grammar from a construction-based perspective obviates the need to talk about global categories such as word classes and syntactic relations, as what is important is just the propositional function (predicative, referential, or modifying) in the construction (see Croft 2001; LaPolla 2013 for arguments).

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Randy Lapolla

Noun Modification

Introduction

In this article we present an overview of the modification patterns in the nominal domain in Chinese languages, past and present. We take as our point of departure the different types of modifiers given in Cheng and Sybesma (2009), which incorporates earlier research, e.g., Zhū (1956), Chao (1968:676–677), Huang (2006) and Paul (2005, 2010). Modifiers (notated "X" in the tables below) are generally divided in two major types, simplex and complex (→ Adjectives). Simplex modifiers are simplex adjectives (SA), that is, typically monosyllabic or monomorphemic bisyllabic adjectives. The group of complex modifiers is bigger; it consists of: complex adjectives (CA), that is, reduplicated adjectives, or adjectives modified by intensifiers (Huang 2006:344), nominal modifiers (NM), relative clauses (RC), gapless relative clauses (GRC), prepositional phrases (PP) and non-predicative modifiers (NPM).

As to the objects of the modification (the modified), we also distinguish simplex from complex ones. The former are bare nouns, N, the latter phrases consisting of demonstrative-classifier-noun, [DEM CLF N].

Modifier and modified are often separated by a modification marker, MM, such as Mandarin *de* 的.

In some varieties of Chinese, but not in Mandarin, the modifier can directly precede a phrase consisting of a classifier and a noun, [CLF N]. This is the case in varieties which feature [CLF N] phrases with a definite reading (as in Cantonese in which *bun2 syu1* 本書 can mean 'the book'; Yue-Hashimoto 1993, Sio 2006).

1. Mandarin

In Mandarin, MM is optional when a simplex head is preceded by a simplex modifier.

1. 大(的)魚
   dà (de) yú
   big MM fish
   'big fish'

MM is optional in that both structures (with and without *de*) are grammatical, but it must be noted that they are associated with different meanings. Chao (1968:285) considers *de*-less [X_{SA} N] combinations to be quasi-compounds (for discussion, see Duanmu 1998 and Paul 2005). Cheng (1981:94–97) mentions syllabicity and frequency as important factors in determining the degree of desirability of the marker with SAS in Táiwān Southern Mǐn 閩; the same principles seem to apply in other varieties of Chinese as well.

When just one of the modifier and the modified is complex, MM is obligatory:

2. a. 大*(的)那條魚
      dà *(de) nèi tiáo yú
      big MM DEM CLF fish
      'that big fish'
   b. 非常大*(的)魚
      fēicháng dà *(de) yú
      extraordinarily big MM fish
      'very big fish'