Relevance of the Extended Projection Principle in Tagalog

Drake Cottman

The Extended Projection Principle (EPP) states that every sentence must contain a subject. Though Romance and Germanic languages provide ample evidence to support this principle, the author argues that the syntax and morphology of Tagalog do not support the EPP's cross-linguistic relevance. He also argues that since Tagalog presents an exception to the EPP, there are likely other languages in which it is also not relevant.

Introduction

The Extended Projection Principle (EPP) states that every sentence must have a subject. There seems to be plenty of evidence in linguistic literature to support the EPP, but the evidence is mostly from Germanic or Romance languages. It appears that many of the world's languages are ignored, some of which may have evidence that the EPP is not relevant cross-linguistically. As a speaker of a language that does not always require a subject, I will give examples that illustrate how Tagalog gives evidence against the EPP. This analysis will not prove that the EPP is not relevant in languages other than Tagalog, but it can be assumed that the EPP is not always applicable cross-linguistically if the EPP is not relevant in Tagalog

This paper will be divided into sections including a literature review, an introduction to Tagalog syntax and morphology, an analysis, and a conclusion. All of the examples and sentences provided—both English and Tagalog—are my own creation and are not derived from any outside sources.

Literature Review

The Extended Projection Principle was introduced by Noam Chomsky in 1981. Though he did not call it the EPP at the time, Chomsky presented the idea he described as "the structural requirement that certain configurations … must have subjects…" (Chomsky 1982). This idea has evolved somewhat since 1981, and Chomsky has released more complex and sophisticated versions of this theory over the years. Many other scholars have given evidence to support the EPP. For example, Howard Lasnik used an in-depth analysis involving infinitival constructions to show evidence for the existence of the EPP (Lasnik 2001). The vast majority of this research is based on Germanic and Romance languages. But cross-linguistic

data must be considered in order to make the claim that the EPP is in fact relevant cross-linguistically.

Tagalog Syntax and Morphology

Tagalog is a VSO (verb-subject-object) language in which the ordering, function, and meaning of words in a sentence are largely determined by the verb. Tagalog is extremely dependent on morphology because it has a very intricate morphological system composed of prefixes, infixes, circumfixes, and suffixes. Another element of Tagalog is the process of focus or topic marking.

Most verbs in this paper will use one of the two actor/agent focus conjugation patterns. The first pattern is that of the *um* verbs. The *um* affix is used as a prefix in some cases and an infix in others, depending on the structure of the root word and the tense of the verb. The second pattern is that of the *mag* verbs. The *mag* affix is always used as a prefix. This basic introduction will help with understanding the words used in the examples as they would appear in surface structure.

English Analysis

Many experts believe that the EPP is relevant cross-linguistically. There is little evidence to disprove this in English. One sentence that illustrates this point is "It is raining." in which the subject *it* doesn't refer to anything. The subject *it* in this sentence is simply a dummy subject or expletive whose only purpose is to satisfy the EPP requirement of English. This sentence is diagrammed in surface structure in Figure 1. As diagrammed, the subject DP is inserted as the specifier of TP to check the EPP feature that exists in the T head. Normally, the subject DP is the specifier of the VP in the D-Structure in order to get its theta-role from the verb head; however, *raining* does not assign any

theta-roles because it has a valency of zero. The insertion occurs so that the EPP feature which exists in the T head can be checked by the subject DP. Without the expletive insertion, the EPP feature would not be checked and the sentence would be ungrammatical: "is raining" or just "raining."

This example is evidence that the EPP exists in English. But data from another language to be considered in order to conclude cross-linguistic relevance.

Tagalog Analysis

In Tagalog, there are no dummy subjects or expletives that are inserted when verbs have a valency of zero. We can look at the Tagalog translation of the sentence "It is raining." in (a).

(a) umuulan
    PRES.rain
    It is raining

There is only one word in the Tagalog sentence represented in (a). The tree for the S-Structure of this sentence is shown in Figure 2. As diagrammed, there are only two elements in the tree: the verb head and the tense morpheme, which starts in the T head and moves down to attach to the V head. This is a perfectly grammatical sentence and a good example of the existence of subjectless sentences in Tagalog. As further evidence, we can test this sentence by trying to add a subject pronoun. The closest subject pronoun to the English expletive *it* would be the pronoun *siya,* which can mean *he*, *him*, *she*, *her*, and sometimes *it*. If we try to use this pronoun as the subject of the sentence above, we come up with the sentence in (b).

(b) **umuulan siya
    PRES.rain it
    It is raining

This sentence is completely ungrammatical in Tagalog. This is further evidence that this particular sentence does not have a subject.

There are many other sentences that have only a verb without a subject. Looking at sentences in tenses other than the present provides a better view of the possible sentences. The sentence in (c) is an example in the future tense.

(c) iinit
FUT.hot
It will become hot

In this example, the *um* morpheme is not present. This is because in the future tense, *um* verbs have a null tense morpheme. The pattern for *um* verbs is that the doubled first CV of the root (the root is *init* and therefore there is no C) coupled with the fact that the *um* is not present forms the future tense. This sentence is diagrammed in Figure 3. This example shows that sentences can be formed without subjects in various tenses.

The sentences given in Tagalog up to this point have been fairly simple—only one word in length. But subjectless sentences can also exist in Tagalog even if the sentence contains multiple words. Adverbs can be added to these one-word sentences, and still there would be a sentence without a subject. Some examples of this are given in (d) and (e). The word *nang* is a linker that connects the verb and the adverb together. It is represented by *L*. For our purpose of examining subjectless sentences, this is irrelevant in translation and we can ignore it.

(d) uminit nang mabilis
PAST.hot L quickly
It quickly became hot

(e) naglamig kanina
PAST.cold earlier
It became cold earlier

These sentences show that adverbs can be connected to verbs in Tagalog sentences in which there are no subjects. The tree for (e) is shown in Figure 4, which illustrates that the VP can have an adjunct AP. This is further evidence that even in sentences that have multiple words, a subject is not required.

This phenomenon of a subjectless clause also occurs in embedded complementizer phrases in Tagalog. An example of a complementizer phrase without a subject is shown in (f). *OF* stands for *object focus*, which means that this verb places the focus or emphasis on the object. *FOC* stands for *focus* and represents the marker that shows which word is the focus of the sentence (in this case *ilaw*).

(f) Nasira   ang   ilaw   kaya   nagdilim
    PST.OF.break FOC light so PST.dark
    The light broke so it got dark

In the above example, we can see that this embedded CP in English requires the expletive pronoun *it*; but in Tagalog, the clause does not require a subject. The pronoun *siya* can again be added to illustrate the grammaticality of the CP without a subject. This is demonstrated in (g).

(g) ** Nasira   ang   ilaw   kaya   nagdilim   siya
    PST.OF.break FOC light so PST.dark it
    The light broke so it got dark

This sentence would not be judged by a native speaker as acceptable. The data in (f) and (g) shows that subjectless clauses can also exist in an embedded complementizer phrase, giving further evidence to the lack of relevance of the EPP in Tagalog.

There is also a common construction in Tagalog that has neither a verb nor a subject. These sentences simply use an adjective to describe a state of being. The example in (h) illustrates this construction.

(h) malamig
　　cold
　　it is cold

This example shows that Tagalog allows a sentence with just an adjective, whereas English would require both the expletive *it* and the auxiliary verb *is*.

Conclusion

There is little debate as to the existence and relevance of the EPP in English. However, it is clear that the EPP is irrelevant in Tagalog. Therefore it is difficult to make the claim that the EPP is true cross-linguistically. Tagalog is one language that clearly does not require a subject in many different cases and constructions. Clauses without subjects can appear with just a verb, a verb and an adverb, as an embedded CP, or even with just an adjective. All of this is evidence that the EPP is irrelevant in Tagalog.

References

Chomsky, Noam. Some Concepts and Consequences of the Theory of Government and Binding. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1982.

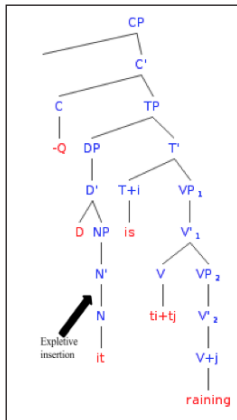Lasnik, Howard. A Note on the EPP. Linguistic Inquiry 32:356–362, 2001.

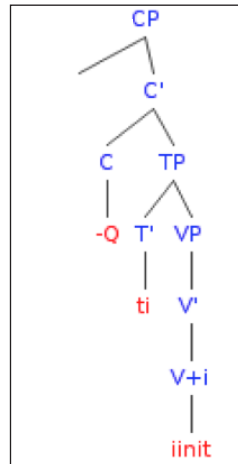# Apppendix

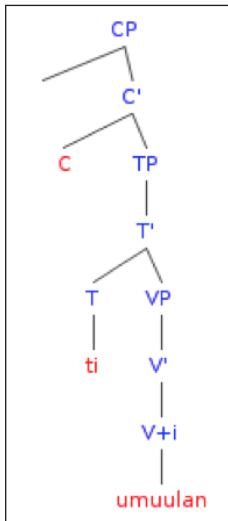Figure 1

Figure 3

Figure 2

Figure 4