

## On some properties of Russian “quirky subjects”

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“Quirky subjects” (QS) have become a useful tool in identifying subject properties and what subjecthood is (Bhaskararao & Subbarao 2004). Poole (2015, 2016), based on data on QS in several languages (Hindi, Icelandic, Laz, German, among others), argues that certain subject properties obey a hierarchy and are linked to certain structural positions. Drawing on data from Russian, I show in this paper that the distribution of these properties is not restricted hierarchically and has more to do with the way these properties work in a given language.

Following McCloskey (1997), Poole argues that the notion of subject can be “decomposed” into several structural positions that are linked derivationally. He also proposes that at least some of the subject properties discussed in the literature, such as reflexivization, being PRO, raising, etc. (Sigurðsson 2002, 2004), are tied to these positions.

Poole identifies three reliable subjecthood tests that are universal across languages with QS: binding subject-oriented anaphora (SOA), being PRO, and, a novel diagnostic, undergoing relativisation in reduced relatives (RR). He observes that these properties are hierarchically organized: if a DP can undergo relativisation in RR, it can be PRO and bind SOA, and if a DP can be PRO, it can bind SOA:

(1) binding >> PRO >> reduced relatives

To account for this implicational hierarchy he proposes that these properties are linked to certain functional heads, viz. Voice<sup>0</sup>, T<sup>0</sup>, and Prt<sup>0</sup> (the latter is responsible for RR). This structure allows him to develop a typology of QS languages according to how high a DP can raise. Russian QS under his view can only bind SOA and therefore only raise to VoiceP:

(2) *Sashe<sub>i</sub> ne nraivilis' svoi<sub>i/\*j</sub> brat'ja*  
Sasha.DAT not like.PAST.3PL self.NOM.PL brothers.NOM  
'Sasha didn't like his brothers'

However, there are some (sometimes marginally acceptable) cases of QS in RR in Russian:

(3) [<sub>e</sub>ACC *Stošnivšego na sebja*] *Sergeja vyveli iz komnaty*  
Vomited on himself Sergey.ACC took-out from room  
'Sergey, who vomited on himself, was taken out of the room'

The verb *stošnit* “vomit” always requires an accusative QS in its finite form, so in (3) the relativised element can only be accusative. At the same time Russian QS are not able to be PRO, thus providing a counter-example to Poole’s implicational hierarchy. I also discuss other problems with this approach such as the assumptions that only subjects can be relativised in RR and that SOA can be used as a universal subjecthood test.

The notion of subject may not be applicable at all in certain languages, e.g. Tagalog, Niuean (Schachter 1976, Massam 2001), where there is not a single element corresponding to the traditional subject. The Russian data suggests that “subject properties” are not restricted in the way predicted by (1) and, though they can probably be associated with certain structural positions, their distribution may vary across languages leading sometimes to this inapplicability.

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