

Prikazi knjiga
Book reviews
Rezensionen

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Bhaskararao, Peri & Karumuri Venkata Subbarao, eds. 2004. *Non-Nominative Subjects*. (Typological Studies in Language 60-61) Vol. 1 & 2. Amsterdam - Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 323 + 317 pp. € 250.00. ISBN: 158811533X.

This two-volume set contains 28 papers originally presented at the symposium *Non-nominative subjects*, which was organized in December 2001 at ILCAA Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. The short preface by the editors, repeated in the second volume, describes the aims of the symposium, but does not introduce the reader to the contents of the volume. It does not provide any explicit statements concerning the internal ordering of individual contributions, or their inclusion in one or the other part. The papers, typically ranging in length between 20 and 30 pages, simply follow in the alphabetical order of their authors.

The sheer length of the volume prevents from discussing all the contributions. Instead, I list the contributions and their authors, volume by volume, and then focus on a handful of papers and issues that I find to be of central concern.

Volume 1 carries the following contributions: Experiencer datives in Kannada (R.Armritavalli); Syntactic change and convergence (Harbir Kaur Arora and Karumuri Venkata Subbarao); Non-nominative subjects in comparison (Josef Bayer); The syntax of experiencers in the Himalayas (Balthasar Bickel); Oblique-case subjects in Tsez (Bernard Comrie); Some non-nominative subjects in Bangla (Probal Dasgupta); Non-nominative subjects in Hindi-Urdu, VP struc-

ture and case parameters Alice Davison; Experiencer objects in Iwaidjan languages (Australia) (Nicholas Evans); The diachronic relationship between quirky subjects and stylistic fronting (Susan Fischer); Case as agreement (Peter Edwin Hook and Omkar N. Koul); The possessor–experiencer dative in Malayalam (K.A. Jayaseelan); Acquisition of dative subjects in Tamil (B. Lakshmi Bai); The position of the accusative subject in the accusative-infinitive construction (Howard Lasnik); On the origin of non-nominative subjects (Anoop Mahajan); Southeast-Asian languages (Makoto Minegishi).

Volume 2 brings the following chapters: Subjecthood of non-nominatives in Gujarati (P.J. Mistry); Oblique main arguments in Hindi as localizing predications (Annie Montaut); Subjectless clauses in Irish (Michael Noonan); Instrumental subjects in Motuna (Masayuki Onishi); Genitive subjects in Japanese (Mamoru Saito); The indirect-influence marker in Balinese (Asako Shiohara); Icelandic non-nominative subjects (Halldór Ármann Sigurðsson); Non-nominative subjects in Telugu (Karumuri Venkata Subbarao & Peri Bhaskararao); Issues in case-marking (Tasaku Tsunoda); Acquisition of the non-nominative subjects in Telugu (A. Usha Rani & V. Sailaja); Non-nominative subjects in Marathi (Kashi Vali); Non-nominative subjects in Maithili (Yogendra P. Yadava); Non-nominative (major) subjects and case stacking in Korean (James H. Yoon).

As the editors state in the preface, the aim of the 2001 symposium was to study the nature of non-nominative subjects from theoretical and applied point of view in different theoretical frameworks from a wide variety of languages. A variety of theoretical frameworks is not always an advantage since papers written within different frameworks are not easily comparable. Thus, for example, Joseph Bayer argues that the differences between closely related languages like German (which does not have a dative subject construction) and Icelandic (in which datives exhibit a large number of subject-like properties) can be accounted for if it is postulated that German has a head-final VP and Icelandic a head initial VP because

... head-final languages do not project a functionally defined specifier such as SpecIP, AgrP, Spec TP etc. Checking is rather performed hand in hand with MERGE, i.e., without displacement. Checking in this way is possible if the verb encodes its functional features morphologically and agrees with its arguments via m-command. (Vol 1, p. 70).

On the other hand, some linguists simply list a number of canonical subject properties and compare them with the putative non-nominative subjects. The contributions to these volumes fall into three large groups: (i) papers written

within the Chomskyan framework; (ii) papers in which a non-nominative subject is taken for granted, and no evidence is given for postulating it; (iii) papers that adhere to the methodological framework put forth by Comrie. He argues that a grammatical relation is not a priori given in any language (see also the contribution by Tsunoda) and that in order to establish the relevance of a grammatical relation one must find a set of logically independent criteria that show the relevance of the putative grammatical relation. The application of this methodology to the analysis of non-nominative subjects means comparing them with the properties of canonical subjects and determining the extent to which non-nominative subjects have properties of canonical subjects. The extent to which non-nominative subjects exhibit properties of prototypical nominative subjects varies a great deal across languages and it appears that the unifying factor is semantic in nature rather than syntactic, that is, predicates taking a non-nominative subject express one of the following meanings (cf. Shibatani and Pardeshi, 2001):

- a. Possession/Existence
- b. Psychological states
- c. Physiological states
- d. Visual/auditory perceptions, including the notion of ‘appearance/seeming’
- e. Modal states of necessity and wanting including the notion of obligation (‘must’)
- f. Modal states of potentiality, including ability and the notion of permission (‘may’)

It seems that neither genetic relatedness nor areal contact guarantee the similarity of behaviour of putative non-nominative subjects. Bayer shows that even so closely related languages as Icelandic and German differ with respect to such syntactic processes as Control and Conjunction Reduction. In Icelandic the subject of the conjoined clause can be elided even when it is formally distinct from the subject of the first clause whereas in German such a mismatch is not allowed irrespective of whether the ‘quirky’ subject precedes or follows the nominative subject. Bickel shows that in the Himalayas Indo-Aryan and Tibeto-Burman languages differ quite considerably with respect to the syntactic behaviour of non-nominative arguments. In Indo-Aryan morphologically down-graded experiencers are banned from access to subjecthood. In Tibeto-Burman, on the other hand, morphologically downgraded experiencers are not excluded from subjecthood. It appears that Icelandic provides the most convincing case for postulating a non-nominative, or more specifically a dative subject. Sigurðsson mentions 7 tests for subjecthood (Reflexivization, Subject-verb inversion in V1

and V2 environments, Control, Conjunction Reduction, Exceptional Case Marking, Raising, Subject Floating) that apply to datives, and also refers to an earlier paper of his in which 16 such tests are listed. It is also interesting to note that Icelandic non-nominative subjects have more in common with non-nominative subjects in Maithili than with non-nominative subjects in the closely related language – German. Regardless of whether the subjecthood of non-nominatives is taken for granted or is argued for, these two volumes provide a wealth of data on the morphology, syntax and semantics of non-nominatives.

References

- Shibatani, Masayoshi, Prashant Pardeshi (2001). Dative subject construction in South Asian languages. Bhaskararao, Peri, Karumuri Venkata Subbarao, eds. *The Yearbook of South Asian Languages and Linguistics*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 311-348.