On Some Regularities of Subject and Topic Prominence

Sang-Hwan Seong

Department of German Language Education

This paper investigates the prominence-typology of subject and topic in German and Korean, as opposed to those of English within the framework of Semantic Typology. We suggest that the grammatical properties of a given language can be identified along a continuum scalar model of typology of subject and topic parameter. By this typological parameter, we propose that grammatical relations of languages are coded with different motivations at both ends of the polarity. At the left extreme side of our system we find an English type language whose properties such as allegedly looser selectional restrictions for the verbs and greater freedom in the application of raising (i.e., a broader structural description of the rule) may be non-coincidentally related to the greater "opacity" specific to the system. These properties are argued to be closely linked to the presence of the structural subject position. Since this configurational system requires grammatical relations to be indispensible to identifying arguments of the clause, no cross-categorial mismatches are expected. At the opposite end of our system we find a Korean-type language in which a transparency principle motivates a more direct reflection of semantic roles in the morphology. Hence, when the clause is devoid of the most prime topical element such as agent, cross-categorial mismatches are expected to occur (e.g. dat - nom pattern including the word order). The relative degree of the cross-categorial mismatches is also reflected in this parameter. Furthermore, our system stipulates that this transparency principle encompasses the relative degree of "topic prominence" across the languages under investigation. Thus, the English subject is analysed as a "grammaticalized topic", whereas Korean retains an independent "topic category" in addition to the notion of subject. Prima facie evidence for the topic prominence parameter is presented via a historical account involving Germanic languages.

KEY WORDS : typology, syntax, semantics, grammatical relations, subject, topic, German, English, Korean.

I. Introduction

   This paper investigates the prominence-typology of subject and topic in German and Korean, as compared to those of English, within the system of Semantic Typology (cf. Hawkins 1986, Müller-Gotama 1994, Seong 1996b). Within the system of Semantic Typology, I consider grammatical relations "variable notions" relative to and definable within the system of Semantic Typology. Since one important assumption of this paper is that the semantic transparency of grammatical relations (e.g., subject and object) correlates with syntactic treatment of a given language (e.g., syntactic rules), we will reject the absolute separation of the syntactic level from semantic representation (i.e., autonomy of syntax in GB) in order to reach with more precision the nature of human linguistic competence. Instead we will develop a scalar model of typology to specify the differences in grammatical processes of the languages investigated. By this design, we can effectively explain the relative relationship between syntactic process and semantic representation among English, German, and Korean.

II. The Nature of the Grammatical Relations

   As Müller-Gotama notes (1994), high semantic transparency with rich material case-marking implies that languages which narrowly define the semantic content of the grammatical relations of subject and object also have few syntactic rules. In this respect, the rule of argument selectional restriction as a means of testing the semantic transparency is a highly useful working device to typologize a human linguistic system. However, we note also that the semantic hierarchy alone does not suffice to capture some grammatical components of Korean as the following anaphoric binding process demonstrates:

   (1) a. Mary-ga/nun casin-ul sarang-hanta.
        Mary-nom/top self-acc love-decl.
        `Mary loves herself.'

  b. [Johni-/un [Maryj-ga casini/j-ul sarang-hanta-go] mit-
   ess-ta]
   John-nom/top [Mary-nom self-acc love-decl-comp]
   believe-pret-decl]
   John believes that Mary loved him/herself.'
  c. [[Maryj-ga casini/?j-ul sarang-hanta-go] Johni-i/nun
   mit-ess-ta]
   Mary-nom self-acc love-decl-comp John-nom/top
   believe-pret-decl

The simple transitive monoclausal sentence (1a) tells us that
the nominative NP Mary-ga binds the accusative reflexive *casin*
properly. The problem crops up when we copy the structure of
(1a) into the embedded biclausal sentence (1b). Example (1b)
suggests that both the immediate nominative antecedent Mary-
ga in the embedded lower clause and the nominative/topic-
marked NP in the upper clause can bind the reflexive anaphor
casin in the lower clause. In (1c) in which the subject of the
upper clause is postposed, the reflexive anaphor *casin* in the
lower clause can be more readily construed as the bindee of the
NP *John* with a contrastive reading.[1] That is, the examples
presented in (1) demonstrate that the syntactic relation of a
noun phrase to the verb in a sentence is indeterminate, and that
the notion of "subject" or "case hierarchy" or "semantic case
hierarchy" is quite irrelevant in the description of the sentence.

 In addition to the aforementioned rules for governing the
grammatical regularities, we need a well-defined construct to
include a "topic-prominence property". Thus, this observation
eventually leads us into the discussion of the interface of syntax
with semantics in a given language. In view of this move,
Comrie's (1988) insight helps us to further clarify the notions of
grammatical relations for our purpose.

 Comrie takes a middle position between two extreme views of
syntax and syntactic categories like "subject". One view holds
that syntax is entirely reducible to semantic and/or pragmatic
notions and therefore strictly speaking expendible, and the other
holds that syntax is in principle entirely independent of

---

1) Assuming that the unmarked position for the topic-marked NP in Korean is
 sentence-initial, it naturally follows that whenever the topic-marked NP
 moves out of this sentence-initial position, it triggers contrastive reading.

semantics and pragmatics. Representatives of the latter
approach include proponents of theories such as GB
(Government and Binding) and RG (Relational Grammar), while
Comrie considers Givón (1976, 1984) somewhere close to the
"functionalist extreme.[2] The problem with Givón's approach,
Comrie argues, is that "it is extremely rare across languages to
find a formal device that literally, in one-one correspondence,
encodes some pragmatic distinction or combination of pragmatic
(and semantic) distinctions. Thus, even those instances that
seem to be purely grammatical encoding of a pragmatic
distinction often turn out, on closer scrutiny, to involve some
degree of syntacticization away from the original pragmatic
distinction" (1988: 271). Comrie views autonomous syntax, on
the other hand, to be "a fallback position, the null hypothesis, to
be accepted only if we fail in valiant attempts to explain syntax
in pragmatic and/or semantic terms" (1988: 266). I find
Comrie's approach to be typologically balanced and sound.
Linguistic categories such as syntactic and semantico-pragmatic
categories are both motivated and conventional, with neither
characteristic contradicting the other. With respect to the notion
of grammatical relations, then, we can state that the partial
absence of "syntactic subject" properties of a given NP as a
controller of the denoted action does not necessarily mean that
we have to automatically abandon the analysis of this NP as a
"*subject*". This is exactly how I responded to the purely syntactic
categorial grammar approach of O'Grady (1991: 104) (cf. Seong
1996b). Consider the psych predicate construction (2a) and (2b):

> (2a) *Haksayingi- eykey twuli(-ekey) manhun ton-i philyoha-
> ta.
> student-dat two (-dat) much money-nom need
> "The two students need much money."
> (2b) Haksaying-ii ecey hakkyo-ey twuli o-ass-ta.

---

2) Givón 1976 uses data from a range of languages including African Bantu and
  other Niger-Congo languages. Givón argues that the development of
  grammatical agreement arises via the pragmatic de-marking of topicalization
  structures, which he sees as a gradual process only arbitrarily separable into
  discrete stages. He also provides a functional/semantic explanation for the
  hierarchical relationship among types of NP (as characterized in terms of
  grammatical role, person, animacy, and definiteness) in their likelihood of
  triggering agreement.

student-nom yesterday school-to two came
"Two students came to school yesterday."

O'Grady argues that the dative NP in (2a) is not a subject because a floated quantifier (QF) cannot be associated with it. However, even if we concede that QF is associated with the subjecthood test to a certain extent, the absence of this feature with the dative argument does not have to necessarily mean that it is not a subject when other subject properties accrue to it. We also note that in this construction the dative argument is readily construed with the semantically and topically prominent role such as "experiencer;" whereas, the nominative NP is typically associated with "theme". In this respect we will discuss more in detail the prominence typology.

Li and Thompson (1976) in their seminal article make a distinction between sentence-oriented languages and discourse-oriented languages. Discourse-oriented languages are more "topic-prominent," and sentence-oriented languages are more "subject-prominent," since topic is related more to the notion of discourse than subject, which is syntactic notion. In subject-prominent languages like English, all sentences must have subjects. This accounts for the presence of dummy elements like *it* and *there* in English. On the other hand, in topic-prominent languages such as Chinese, Japanese, and Korean, structural subjects are not a basic requirement of the sentence, and there are no dummy subjects. Instead the structure "topic-comment" abounds and must count as basic. Unlike Li and Thompson's hasty classification that German belongs to the subject-prominent languages, we demonstrate that German in fact shows important features of topic-prominence such as lack of expletive subject position.

III. Expletives in English and German

As compared to English, the use of the German expletive equivalent, *es*, is considerably more restricted. In investigating the distribution of German *es* we will disregard the prefield position because it is a syntactic operator position in which a variety of topicalized constituents including the nominative NP

and even a clause can appear. Thus, unlike English, the expletives in (3) are *place-holders (Ger. Platzhalter)* which have nothing to do with the subject position.

> (3) a. Es wurde getanzt. (impersonal passive)
>   'There was dancing.'
>   b. Es sind zwei Studenten angekommen. (ergative verb)
>   'there have two students arrived'
>   c. Es wurde gestern ein Buch gestohlen. (passive)
>   'there was yesterday a book stolen'
>   d. Es hat gestern eine Frau angerufen. (unergative = accusative verb)
>   'there has yesterday a woman phoned'
>   e. Es hat *ihn gestern eine Frau betrogen.* (unergative = accusative verb)
>   'there has him yesterday a woman deceived'

The common property which German shares with English expletives is that the expletives contribute nothing to the semantic make-up of the sentence. However, the syntactic behavioral properties of the German expletives are shown to be completely different from those of English, when we embed the sentences in (3) into a subordinate clause:

> (4) a. daß (*es) getanzt wurde
>   'that there was dancing'
>   b. daß (*es) zwei Studenten gekommen sind
>   'that there arrived two students'
>   c. daß (*es) gestern ein Buch gestohlen wurde
>   'that there was yesterday a book stolen'
>   d. daß (*es) gestern eine Frau angerufen hat
>   'that there has yesterday a woman phoned'
>   e. daß (*es) ihn gestern eine Frau betrogen hat
>   'that there has him yesterday a woman deceived'

All the instance in (4) where *es* is inserted presumably into sentence-internal position turn out to be ungrammatical sentences.[3] In GB terms there is no (external) -role available to

---

3) Apparently, *es* as a sentential subject can appear in the sentence-internal position in the following examples:

be construed with *es* in (4a)-(4e). If *es* is an argument, it cannot occur in these configurations without violating the theta-criterion. There are two different representative views in the Generative literature on how to interpret the phenomena in (4). Haider (1985: 76) argues that the existence of an expletive empty category should be excluded as far as German is concerned. Additionally, he does not assume a structural [NP. IP] subject position in German due to its nature as a non-configurational languages.[4] In contrast with Haider, Cardinaletti (1990: 137) argues that since every sentence-internal es is an argument, it is not expected in (4) without violating the theta-criterion. Thus, according to her, only the expletive empty pronominal pro can occur here, as in (5):

> (5) a. daß pro/ *es gestern getanzt wurde
>   b. daß pro/ *es gestern zwei Studenten angekommen sind

Obviously the presence of the expletive empty category *pro* is forced by the Extended Projection Principle of Chomsky (1982), which dictates that a sentence must have a structural subject position at every syntactic level. According to this approach then, clause-internal instantiation of es and the invisible existence of empty expletive *pro* are in complementary distribution (cf. the Avoid Pronoun Principle of Chomsky 1981: 65). For the purpose of the present discussion, however, it suffices to say that the syntactic distributional behavior of the German expletive *es* is much more restricted than that of English and that the German expletive fails to occupy the sentence-internal argument position. We take the restricted behavior of the German expletive to be an important feature of the topic-prominency. In this regard, it is necessary to briefly understand how Germanic syntactic change has happened and to see what implications this change entails with respect to the typology of the subject and topic prominence.

---

a. Es fährt sich schnell auf dieser Autobahn.
   'it drives reflexive quickly on this freeway'
b. Es lebt sich gut als Sekretär in Bonn.
   'it lives reflexive well as secretary in Bonn'
4) See Grewendorf 1989 for empirical arguments supporting the presence of non-argument pro in German. For arguments in favor of the configurationality of German, see Webelhuth 1984.

IV. Subject- and Topic-prominence in Germanic

Vennemann (1974) presents a sweeping general proposal about the cause of word order change. He claims that SOV is universally the most "natural" basic word order, but that a shift to SVO may be brought about by a need to avoid ambiguity with the erosion of case endings. Since, in an SOV language that has lost its inflectional endings, a topicalization strategy that shifts the topicalized nominal to the front of the sentence would result in a sentence superficially indistinguishable from an unmarked structure with the grammatical roles reversed (i.e., in both cases there would be two nominals preceding the verb with no formal mechanism—barring suprasegmentals—distinguishing their grammatical roles), SVO word order arises due to the pressure to avoid such ambiguity. Other VO-harmonic structures subsequently arise as predicted by the "principle of natural serialization" (cf. Vennemann 1972). Further, the language may revert to the most "natural" verb-final order if sufficiently rich inflectional morphology develops. Vennemann's claims have been challenged by numerous analysts, including Li and Thompson (1974) and Harris (1984), all of whom cite cases of change from SOV that were not triggered by any loss of case inflection. Despite the criticism forwarded against Vennemann (1974), his proposal offers convincing explanation for Germanic word order change.

Noting that the structure of the Old English case system was much closer to that of German, it would follow that the once productive strategy of topicalization in Old English via word order freedom degenerated in the course of diachronic change, i.e., case-syncretism would have been a sufficient cause (cf. Hawkins 1986: 51 for further discussion).[5] It will suffice to cite a typical Old English sentence in order to demonstrate this point (quoted in Firbas 1992: 128 as taken from Gr nberg 1967):

(6) On am dagum com iohannes se fulluhtere and
in those days came John the Baptist-nom. and

---

5) This diachronic change in Germanic is directly linked to the fixing of the main stress on the first root-syllable.

bodode on tham westene iudee (Matt. 3.1)
preached in the wilderness Judean
'In those days John the Baptist came and preached in
the Judean wilderness (desert).'

The case examined here is taken from the West Saxon
translation of the gospel according to Mathew edited by
Grünberg (1967). The structure shows that the initial position
occupied by the temporal adverb is reserved for topicalization.
Thus, the more fixed word order of Modern English make it
impossible for the pragmatically sensitive differential ordering to
be available in many English structural types in which it is
available in case marked languages such as Russian, Czech and
German (cf. Firbas 1992: 125-134). In the absence of a case-
based topicalization strategy in Modern English, then, we would
expect the restructuring of the syntactic category "subject" with
"topic" as pragmatic notion to result from frozen word order
"SVO". Thus, the Modern English subject (i.e., viewed as bearing
semantic roles) has come to retain many more properties of
topicality, resulting in an opaque relationship between the
"subject category" and "topic". In other words, in the historical
change of English the two heterogeneous categories have
converged with each other. This claim is supported by
Kirkwood's (1978) observation that there are two forces at work:
Modern English has more fixed SVO word order than Old
English, yet there are certain universal pragmatic principles of
word order rearrangement, e.g. theme before rheme or given
before new, which seem to be operative to a certain extent in all
languages (cf. also Hawkins 1986). Of course, this linearity
principle is weakened as English develops its rigid SVO order. As
result, conflict is expected: the grammaticalized fixed word order
principle versus discourse-based linearity principle. The conflict
is resolved by permitting more types of NPs to become subjects
in preverbal position.[6] Thus, more thematic NPs have come to
occupy subject position. As Hawkins (1986: 69) notes, a

---

6) This is also supported by Lehmann (1976: 450), who writes that "if there
   were a syntactic change, leading to the requirement that a grammatical
   subject be expressed in a matrix sentence, the item often expressed as topic
   would be subject. A topic prominent language would in this way develop into
   a subject-prominent language... I propose that such a development took
   place in Indo-European."

semantically more diverse class of subjects results. What we have in mind with this expansion of the subject category in English is the following class of examples taken from Rohdenburg (1974) quoted in Hawkins (1986: 58-59). All instances represent grammatical non-agentive subjects in English with ungrammatical subject counterpart in German:

> (7) a. A few years ago a pfennig would buy two or three pins.
>   b. *Vor einigen Jahren kaufte ein Pfennig zwei bis drei Stecknadeln.
> (8) a. This hotel forbids dogs.
>   b. *Dieses Hotel verbietet Hunde.
> (9) a. The trial cannot proceed.
>   b. *Der Proze kann nicht fortfahren.
> (10) a. The latest edition of the book has added a chapter.
>   b. *Die letzte Ausgabe des Buches f gte ein Kapitel hinzu.
> (11) a. This tent sleeps four.
>   b. *Dieses Zelt schl ft vier.

Assuming that the Old English counterparts of the German examples above in which non-agentive subjects are not permitted had a similar tight, though presumably looser, argument selectional restriction, it would follow, then, that in a language such as Modern English, in which topic and semantic roles interact in a particularly complex and non-unitary manner to determine subject selection, grammatical relations are least isomorphic with the verbal arguments involved. In the English system, then, the reliance on grammatical relations to describe the morphological and syntactic process is most clearly indispensible. This line of argument is directly linked to Noonan's (1977) observation on subjects and topics.

Noonan provides functional definitions of subject and topic which permit the possibility of the former category varying among languages and even being absent from a particular language. Noonan distinguishes between two general (idealized) types of argument role coding systems, i.e. systems for coding arguments such that they may be matched with semantic or particular roles. On the other hand, we have "direct role marking systems," which correspond to Plank's (1983) "transparent" systems or, roughly, to Van Valin and Foley's "role-dominated"

systems (e.g. Lakhota): these are systems in which some form of overt coding (e.g. case marking) relates directly to semantic roles, without significant neutralization of role distinctions. Noonan contrasts these with "indirect role marking systems," in which syntactic slots and argument roles are arranged hierarchically à la Fillmore (1968: 33),[7] with the highest-ranking role mapped onto the highest-ranking slot rather than any particular slot (or other means of overt coding) being "reserved" for any single invariable role. In such a system, in other words, semantic roles are frequently neutralized on the surface. Given the lack of isomorphism between role and overt coding, Noonan (1977: 377) argues that these systems require the identification of a level of grammar not relevant to direct role marking languages, i.e., a level of grammatical relations (e.g., subject and object). This is, then, the sense in which Noonan uses the term "subject": "the highest ranking syntactic slot in an indirect role marking system". In our typology, the distinctive statuses of the two types of role-marking systems can be identified with English (indirect role marking system) and Korean (direct-role marking system) respectively. Noonan's understanding of "subject" in an indirect role marking systems falls into trouble when he faces the prototype interpretation of "subject" in English.

If we attempt to equate with topic the English subject category bearing semantic roles, the convergence should involve a semantic characterization of what the sentence is about. However, such a characterization would fail when confronted with a "dummy" or "expletive" *it* serving as grammatical subject. The expletive *it* clearly deviates from the description of subjecthood in terms of semantic characterization. Based on such cases, one might argue that the existence of the English expletive subject represents a counterexample to the claim that the subject category has anything but formal characterization. Consequently, this line of argument might support the view of subject as a superficial grammatical category with little semantic or cognitive import. In view of this clumsy argument Van Oosten's (1984) approach is enlightening to understand the concepts of subject, topic and agent in English. Van Oosten's approach is to view subject as a category with prototype structure, an approach which allows her to provide a semantic characterization of a core member of the category. Given that

category as a whole is not defined in terms of necessary or sufficient conditions for membership. the problematic nature of "expletives" vanishes entirely.

Van Oosten argues that the prototypical English subject is a prototypical "primary" (i.e., is highest on the hierarchy of Fillmorean case/semantic roles provided by the valence of the verb) and a prototypical topic. Many examples involving a deviation from this in fact involve special constructions that specify non-coincidence of primary and topic (or, that are used or invoked when the topic and primary fail to coincide). In each case, the "subject" specified by each of the special constructions deviates from the prototypical subject of a basic transitive clause. This simply means that it must be viewed as an extension or deviation from the prototype, rather than representing a challenge to the claim for the existence of a semantic characterization of the category as a whole.

It is also the case, however, that in so-called "basic sentences" (as in Keenan 1976, with the additional stipulation by Van Oosten that "the sentence exhibits the basic case frame of its verb," by which "John drove the car to London" would be more basic than "the car drives easily") the topic and agent sometimes fail to converge on the subject. Consider the following Chafe example frequently cited by Van Oosten:

> (12) -What happened to the lamp?
>   -The dog knocked it over.

While "it" is the topic, the dog is chosen here as subject. Consider also:

> (13) -Why isn't John here?
>   -I didn't feel like inviting him.

> (14) -Why did your wife paint the kitchen that color?
>   -*She* didn't do it, *I* did.

Often, agency, or, more generally, "primaryhood" wins out over topichood in English in subject-selection in basic, active sentences. It is in this sense that Bates and MacWhinney (1982: 204) claim that, "when the overlap [of agent and topic] does

break down, agency is more likely to dominate in assignment of subjectivization" (cited in Van Oosten 1984: 17). As Van Oosten points out, however, this claim is only valid for basic active sentences. The passive construction is used precisely in cases where a non-agentive topic beat out the agent (or primary) for subject-selection, and English also has other constructions such as *it*-cleft, *there*-existential, and tough movement motivated by a deviation of the primary from prototypical topichood. In this sense, topichood prevails over agency in English subject-selection, as claimed by Foley and Van Valin (1980). In a theory which requires that a category be defined in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions, all these examples present serious problems.

The historical rise of the opaque relationship between "subject category" and "topic" in English is also confirmed by the development of a sister Germanic language such as Scandinavian. Faarlund (1992) argues that the "subject" category in Scandinavian has changed from a relatively "nonprototypical" to a "prototypical" one as Scandinavian languages have moved from nonconfigurationality to configurationality. He assumes an association of the nominative case in Old Scandinavian with subjecthood, and discourse- or reference-related strategies involving theme-rheme organization being entirely independent of case marking and therefore subject selection was made. Specifically, the nominative-marked NP in modern Scandinavian languages has acquired many reference-related (i.e., topicality in Chafe's term; cf. also Foley and Van Valin 1977, 1984) "subject" qualities that Old Scandinavian nominatives lacked. For example, while in Modern Scandinavian "the subject is always definite in some (specifiable) sense," Old Scandinavian nominatives are often indefinite (Faarlund 1992: 161). Often this means that "expletives" are used in the modern translation of Old Scandinavian indefinite nominative subjects. Thus, in Old Scandinavian topicality and primarihood (cf. Van Oosten 1984) are coded with completely different formal means.

German as a conservative Germanic language reserves the prefield for topic position. The crucial German property for topicalization is the existence of "V-Second". The prefield can be filled by a variety of topicalized constituents, not limited to the nominative NP, including a sentential constituent:

(15) a. Daß er groß ist wissen wir alle.
　　　"that he big is know we all'
　　b."Du bist ein Dummkopf," sagte er.
　　　"you are a fool said he'

Since the prefield position reserved for topicalized constituents remained intact in the diachronic change of German, the extreme blend of "subject" and "topic" which we witnessed in the evolution of English is not expected in German (cf. [7]-[10]). Thus, we expect the German grammatical counterparts of English in (16)-(117) to fill the topic position with oblique thematic NPs. This is indeed the case:

(16) a. *The latest edition of the book* has added a chapter.
　　b.*In der letzten Ausgabe des Buches* ist ein Kapitel hinzugefügt.
(17) a. *My guitar* broke a string mid-song.
　　b. *An meiner Gitarre* riß mitten im Lied eine Saite.

This strategy found in German can be easily equated with the sentence-initial Korean topic construction with *un/nun* providing the formally different and independent marking strategies for subject and topic. This strategy along with the availability of rich morphological case-markers implies that there is far greater argument selectional restrictions in Korean than in German.[8] Despite the fixing of the strict "Verb-Second" rule in German (X-Vf-Y) where only one constituent may occupy the prefield, we expect the productive explicit encoding of pragmatic functions (i.e., theme-rheme ordering principle or topic-comment structure) in German as compared to English

---

8) One typical example of the subject selectional restriction can be demonstrated as follows:

Ga. Der Regen	nahm	ihr	die Freude	am	Fest.
the rain	took	from her	the joy at		the party

Kb. *Pi-ga　kunyu-ekeyse　chanchi-uy　jolgoum-ul　pe ass-ess-ta
　　the rain　her-from　　party-gen　joy-acc　　take-pret-decl
　　Lit. 'The rain took away the joy of party from her.'

Kc. Pi-taemune　　kunyu-nun　chanchi-uy　jolgoum-ul　il-ess-ta.
　　rain-because of　she-top　　party-gen　joy-acc　　lose-pret-decl.
　　Lit. 'Because of the rain she lost the joy at the party'

It is generally agreed that inanimate NPs are low in becoming subjects in Korean as opposed to English and German (cf. Klaiman 1988).

with the grammatically prescribed XSVO pattern. Of course, this encoding strategy of pragmatic function does not mean that we find the sort of topic-comment structure which are attested in the topic-comment languages such as Korean or Japanese.

V. Conclusion

In a grammatical theory dealing with typologically distinctive languages, we need to construct a syntactically, semantically and pragmatically balanced meta-linguistic apparatus according to which the grammatical properties of each language can be measured and tested. With respect to the controversial notion of "subject", we can construct a working scalar device to incorporate into the system of Semantic Typology the subject and topic properties of the languages under investigation:

(18) Typology of subject and topic parameter
English   Old English   German   Korean

◄──►

subject prominent   subject and topic prominent
subject ≈ grammaticalized topic   subject ≠ topic
structural expletive   no expletive
categorial match   categorial mismatch
low semantic transparency   high semantic transparency
(=more grammaticizing)   (=less grammaticizing)
structural VP   discontinuous VP
VO(=head-initial)   OV(=head-final)
fixed word order   free word order
no material case-marking   rich material case-marking
preposition   postposition

Our scheme (18) suggests that the grammatical properties of a given language can be identified along a continuum scalar model of typology of subject and topic parameter. By this typological parameter we propose that grammatical relations of laguages are coded with different motivations at both diametrically opposed ends of the polarity. At the left extreme side of our system we find an English type language whose properties such as allegedly looser selectional restrictions for the verbs and greater

freedom in the application of raising (i.e., a broader structural description of the rule) may be non-coincidentally related to the greater "opacity" specific to the system. These properties are argued to be closely linked to the presence of the structural subject position. Since this configurational system requires grammatical relations to be indispensible to identifying arguments of the clause, no cross-categorial mismatches are expected. At the opposite end of our system we find a Korean-type language in which a transparency principle motivates a more direct reflection of semantic roles in the morphology. Hence, when the clause is devoid of the most prime topical element such as agent, cross-categorial mismatches are expected to occur (e.g. dat - nom pattern including the word order). The relative degree of the cross-categorial mismatches is also reflected in this parameter. Furthermore, our system stipulates that this transparency principle encompasses the relative degree of "topic prominence" across the languages under investigation. Thus, the English subject is analysed as a "grammaticalized topic", whereas Korean retains an independent "topic category" in addition to the notion of subject. Prima facie evidence for the topic prominence parameter is presented via a historical account involving Germanic languages.

References

Abraham, W. 1985. Wortstellung und das Mittelfeld im Deutschen, in: Abraham, W. (ed.) *Erklärende Syntax des Deutschen*. Tübingen: Günther Narr. 27-52.

Bach, E. & Harms, R. T.(ed.) 1968. *Universals in Linguistic Theory*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc.

Bierwisch, M. 1963. Grammatik des deutschen Verbs (Studia Grammatika 2.). Berlin: Akademieverlag.

Burridge, K. 1993. *Syntactic Change in Germanic*, Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Chafe, W. L. 1976. Givenness, Contrastiveness, Definiteness, Subjects, Topics and Point of View. in: Li, C. (ed.) 25-55.

Chomsky, N. 1981. *Lectures on Government and Binding*. Dordrecht: Foris.

Chomsky, N. 1986. *Barriers*. Cambridge. Mass.: MIT Press.

Comrie, B. 1988. Topics. Grammatical Topics, and Subjects. in: *BLS* 14, 265-279.

Faarlund, J. T. 1992. The Subject as a Thematic Category in the History of Scandinavian. *Folia Linguistica* **XXVI. 1(2)**. 151-68.

Fillmore, C. 1968. The Case for Case. in: Bach, E. & Harms, R. (eds.) *Universals in Linguistic Theory*. 1-88.

Fillmore, C. 1977. The Case for Case Reopened. in: Cole, P. & Sadock, J. M. (eds.) 59-82.

Firbas, J. 1992. *Functional Sentence Perspective in Written and Spoken Communication*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Foley, W. A. and Robert D. van Valin. 1977. On the Viability of the Notion 'Subject' in Universal Grammar. *BLS* **3**. 293-320.

Foley, W. A. and Robert D. van Valin. 1984. *Functional Syntax and Universal Grammar*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Givón, T. 1976. Topic, Pronoun, and Grammatical Agreement", in: Li, C. (ed.) 149-88.

Givón, T. 1984. *Syntax: A functional Typological Introduction* **1**. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Grewendorf, G. 1989. *Ergativity in German*. Dordrecht: Foris.

Grünberg, M. 1967. *The West-Saxon Gospels*. Amsterdam: Sheltema and Holkema.

Haider, H. 1985. The Case of German. in: Toman, J. (ed.) 65-101.

Harris, M. B. 1984. On the Cause of Word Order Change. *Lingua* **63**. 175-204.

Hawkins, J. A. 1986. *A Comparative Typology of English and German*. Texas: University of Texas Press.

Keenan, Edward. L. 1976. Toward a Universal Definition of Subject. in: Li, C. (ed.) 303-34.

Kirkwood, H. W. 1978. Options and Constraints in the Surface Ordering of Noun Phrases in English and German. *Journal of Pragmatics* **2**. 225-45.

Klaiman, M. 1988. Affectedness and Control: a Typology of Voice Systems. in: Shibatani, M. (ed.) *Passive and Voice*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. 25-83.

Lehmann, W. P. 1976. From Topic to Subject in Indo-European. in: Li (ed.) 47-66.

Li, C. N. (ed.) 1976. *Subject and Topic*. New York: Academic Press.

Li, C. N. & Thompson, S. A. 1974. Historical Change of Word Order: a Case Study of Chinese and its Implications. in: Anderson and Jones (eds.) 199-217.

Li, C. N. & Thompson, S. A. 1976. Subject and Topic: A New

Typology of Language. in: Li, C. N. (ed.) 457-89.

Müller-Gotama, F. 1994. *Grammatical Relations: A cross-linguistic Perspective on their Syntax and Semantics.* Mouton de Gruyter.

Noonan, M. 1977. On Subjects and Topics, *BLS* **3**. 372-85.

O'Grady, W. 1991. *Categories and Case: The Sentence Structure of Korean.* New York: John Benjamins.

Plank, F. 1983. Transparent versus Functional Encoding of Grammatical Relations: a Parameter for Syntactic Change and Typology. *Linguistische Berichte* **86**. 1-13.

Primus, B. 1987. *Grammatische Hierarchien,* München. Wilhelm Fink Verlag.

Reis, M. 1982. Zum Subjektbegriff im Deutschen. in: Abraham, W. (ed.) *Satzlgieder im Deutschen.* Tübingen: Günther Narr. 177-211.

Rohdenburg, G. 1974. Sekundäre Subjektivierung im Englischen und im Deutschen: Vergleichende Untersuchung zur Verb-und Adjetivsyntax. *Projekt für angewandte kontrastive Sprachwissenschaft.* PAKS Arbeitsbuch **8**. Bielefeld: Cornelsen-Velhagen und Klasing.

Seong, S. H.1996a. Review of Grammatical Relations by Müller-Gotama. *Interdisciplinary Journal for Germanic Linguistics and Semiotic Analysis* **1(2)**. 354-360.

Seong, S. H. 1996b. *Extended Semantic Typology with Special reference to German. English and Korean.* Unpublished Doctoral Diss. University of California, Berkeley.

Seong, S. H. forthcoming, Semantic Transparency and its Implicationsg with Special Reference to German and Korean as SOV type. Rauch, I. and Carr, G. F.(eds.) forthcoming.

Toman, J. (ed.) 1985. *Studies in German Grammar.* Dordrecht: Foris.

Van Oosten, J. 1984. *The Nature of Subjects, Topics and Agents: A Cognitive Explanation,* Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation. Univ. of California, Berkeley.

Van Valin, Robert D. 1990. Semantic Parameters of Split Intransitivity. *Language* **66(2)**. 221-260.

Van V. Robert D. and William F. 1980. Role & Reference Grammar. in: Moravcsik, E. & Wirth, J. (eds.) *Syntax & Semantics* **13**: *Current Approaches to Syntax.* New York: Academic Press. 329-52.

Vennemann, T. 1974. Topics, Subjects, and Word Order: from SXV to SVX via TVX. in: Anderson, J. M. & Johns, C. (eds.) *Proceedings of the First International Conference on Historical Linguistics.* Amsterdam: North Holland. 339-76.

Vennemann, T. 1982. Remarks on Grammatical Relations. *Linguistics in the MorningCalm: Selected papers from SICOL-1981*. The Linguistic Society of Korea (ed.) 233-68.

Webelhuth, G. 1984. German is Configurational. *Linguistic Review* 4. 203-246.