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Languages often differ in the nature of the correspondences between different dimensions of linguistic representation. Theoretical syntax needs to be more cognizant of the degree of variation.

Thematic roles — grammatical functions

The basic mapping of a canonical transitive clause is universally Agent \leftrightarrow SUBJ and Patient \leftrightarrow OBJ. But for other types of verbs there are different types of languages.

For example, in the mapping of the sole argument of an intransitive verb (S): Most languages map this argument to the grammatical function SUBJ, regardless of its thematic role. But some languages (called **active**) map S to SUBJ if its thematic role is Agent and to OBJ if its thematic role is Patient.

Note the agreement patterns in the following languages:

(1) Lakhota

- a. Ma- ya- kte.
1sgPAT- 2sgAGT- kill
'You kill me.'
- b. Wa- i'.
1sgAGT- arrive
'I arrived.'
- c. Ma- si'ca.
1sgPAT- bad
'I am bad.'

(2) Acehnese

- a. Ji= kap= keuh.
3 bite 2
'It'll bite you.'
- b. Gopnyan ka= geu= jak u= keude.
he already 3 go to market
'He went to market.'
- c. Gopnyan sakêt= geuh.
he sick 3
'He is sick.'

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Pragmatics — Constituent Structure / Grammatical functions

In languages like English, one element of the sentence has a special prominence (functional and often structural). This element is the one that has the grammatical function SUBJ. Such languages are called **subject-prominent** languages.

In other languages, the prominent element of the sentence is based instead on pragmatic roles: the prominent element (again, functionally and often structurally) is the one with the pragmatic role of TOPIC. These are called **topic-prominent** languages.

Here are some sentences from topic-prominent languages.

- (3) a. Lahu
 [Hɛ chi tɛ pɛʔ] ɔ̄ dɑʔ jɑ.
 field this one CLASS rice very good
 ‘This field, the rice is very good.’
- b. Mandarin
 [Nei- chang huǒ] xìngkuì xiāofang- duì lái de kuài.
 that- CLASS fire fortunate fire- brigade come PART quick
 ‘That fire, fortunately the fire-brigade came quickly.’
- c. Korean
 [Siban- in] hakkjo- ga manso.
 now- TOP school- NOM many
 ‘The present time, there are many schools.’
- d. Japanese
 [Gakko- wa] buku- ga isogasi- kat- ta.
 school- TOP I- NOM busy- PST
 ‘School, I was busy.’

Pragmatic roles — Case

Note that in (3c,d) the Case is determined by pragmatic role.

Grammatical functions / Thematic roles — Case

We will be discussing the typology of Case (and its relation to grammatical functions) later in the course. But it is interesting to note that, in addition to being related to grammatical functions, Case is sometimes related to thematic roles. (This is known as semantic Case, quirky

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Case, or inherent Case.) For example, in Icelandic elements bearing the thematic role of Experiencer have dative (or sometimes accusative) Case.

- (4)
- | | | | | |
|----|----------------------------|------------------|---------|-------------------|
| a. | Mig | langar | að | fara til Íslands. |
| | me.ACC | long.3SG | COMP | go to Iceland |
| | 'I long to go to Iceland.' | | | |
| b. | Mig | velgir | við | setningafræði. |
| | me.ACC | be.nauseated.3SG | with | syntax |
| | 'Syntax turns my stomach.' | | | |
| c. | Mér | sýndist | álfur. | |
| | me.DAT | thought.saw.3SG | elf.NOM | |
| | 'I thought I saw an elf.' | | | |
| d. | Mér | býður | við | setningafræði. |
| | me.DAT | be.nauseated.3SG | with | syntax |
| | 'I abhor syntax.' | | | |

Grammatical functions — Constituent structure

We will cover this in detail on the next handout.