

REVIEW

BELL, SARAH J. 1976. *Cebuano subjects in two frameworks*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia. Pp. x, 187.

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Accepting the assumption that there is a universal primitive called 'subject' *Cebuano subjects in two frameworks* (CSTF) investigates how this notion applies in Cebuano. The two theoretical models used are Transformational Grammar (TG) and Relational Grammar (RG). It is not surprising why these models were chosen. In both these models the notion 'subject-of' is basic. TG defines 'subject' configurationally, that is, it is the NP dominated by S in the rewrite rule

$$S \quad \rightarrow \quad NP \quad VP.$$

RG regards 'subject' as a 'pure' term (more of this later) that outranks the other 'pure' terms, viz. direct objects and indirect objects.

The study is divided into 4 parts as follows:

- Part 1 Voice in Philippine Languages
- Part 2 Relational Analysis of Verb-Containing Sentences in Cebuano
- Part 3 Consequences of the Transformational Subject Constraints in Cebuano
- Part 4 The Two Theories and Cebuano's Place in the World.

Bell's analysis of voice in Cebuano is basically the position taken by Wolff (1966). Parts 2 and 3 of CSTF constitute the major sections of the study. Part 4 summarizes the findings and draws implications for TG and RG and linguistic research in general.

The study is not so much interested in analyzing Cebuano subjects as in finding out whether Cebuano has subjects in the sense that they are defined in TG and RG, and, if it has, what nominals they are. Bell applies a number of RG rules that define subject-hood: reflexivization, equi-NP deletion, quantifier float, ascension, advancement and clause union. From the application of these rules she draws the conclusion that:

In relational grammar, the Action is the initial subject and the nominative NP is the final subject (182).

Essentially the same process is followed in discussing Cebuano subjects in the TG framework. Here, Bell invokes Ross's (1967) Sentential Subject Constraint, Chomsky's (1973) Specified Subject Condition, and Fiengo and Lasnik's (1976) Modified Specified Subject Condition. After an intensive discussion on how these rules apply or do not apply, Bell concludes that:

In transformational grammar, if the configurational definition of subject is retained, Cebuano should have neither deep nor surface c-subjects. If the configurational definition of subject is given up, then the nominative NP may be analyzed as the subject (182).

A good portion of the study is devoted to a discussion of the 'subject properties' heuristics exemplified by Schachter (1975, 1977). To these lists of subject properties, Bell says:

Although they may be heuristically useful, they should not be taken as authorities dictating the analysis of subjects (vi).

CEBUANO SUBJECTS IN TWO FRAMEWORKS

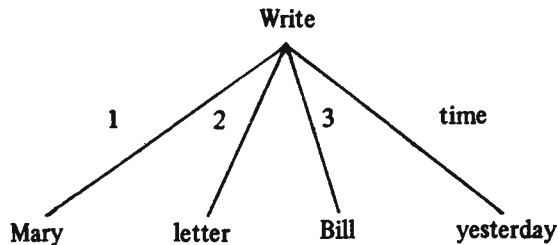
When considered from the standpoint of relational grammar, lists of 'subject properties' confound so many variables as to be useless (179).

A major problem I find with CSTF (and with other studies in RG used for this review) is its failure to give a clear-cut definition of subject. It is a slippery thing one chases from beginning to end, a case of now-you-see-it-now-you-don't. We are told that it is a grammatical relation which a nominal holds with a verb but what characterizes that grammatical relationship we are not told. Johnson (1974:153-156) offers some criteria for determining subjecthood; a nominal that participates in the following is said to be a subject: B-Raising, A-raising, Complementizer Placement, and Verb Agreement. These, however, do not satisfy the question.

Why is it necessary to distinguish between a deep subject and surface subject? How is the surface subject different from the deep subject? It seems that subject, as conceived in RG, is a moving target; no wonder Shibatani (1977) warns of the tendency to confuse grammatical relations (subject, direct object and indirect objects) with surface case (nominative, accusative, dative).

In the diagram below, the grammatical relations look like Fillmorean cases. (Subject is 1, direct object is 2, indirect object is 3.)

(1)



However, Johnson (1974: 153-156) denies that grammatical relations are equivalent to Fillmorean cases on basically two counts: (a) they do not have an invariant interpretation, and (b) they are important syntactically at more than one level of the grammar.

In Part 4 of CSTF, Bell investigates the question of whether or not RG is a notational variant of TG. She has not shown that it is not but feels not quite ready to admit that it is. To me, RG is merely an attempt to rescue TG, an expensive enterprise at theory streamlining.

CSTF is better looked at not as a partial grammar of Cebuano (accounting for subjects) but as a theory-building exercise. As a grammar CSTF hardly offers new insights; as an investigation of theoretical constructs it is excellent.

One interesting thing I find about CSTF's treatment on Cebuano is the analysis of the causative sentence and the following generalization:

- (2) INS voice [i.e. ipa-/qipa] is a side effect of the nonterm advancement rule (84).

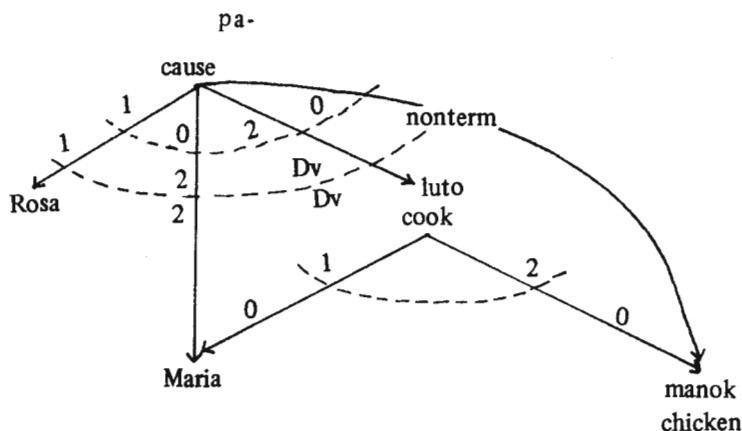
The case may be illustrated by the sentence (105 f in Bell)

- (3) Ipaluto ni Rosa kang Maria ang manok.

Rosa will have Maria cook the chicken.

diagrammed as follows (106b in Bell):

(4)



To understand (4) above one needs to understand certain RG postulates. RG recognizes two classes of grammatical relations: the 'pure' grammatical relations consisting of subjects, direct objects and indirect objects, and the 'impure' grammatical relations such as instrumental, benefactive and locative. NPs holding 'pure' grammatical relations are called *terms* while all other NPs are *nonterms*.

In (4) above *manok* is 2 in the lower S but a nonterm with respect to the higher V, the verb on which it is grammatically dependent being a 'dead' verb. Bell admits that RG does not make clear how a verb, and consequently its dependents, become 'dead' (see Footnote 20 on page 126) but one of the consequences of 'deadness' seems to be that the verb ceases to be affected by the nominal selected to surface in the nominative. When the nonterm, by virtue of the fact that it is a nominal dependent on a 'dead' verb, assumes the grammatical relation 1 with respect to the higher verb, rule (2) operates.

A good number of Bell's Cebuano sentences are contrived. It is apparent from this contrivedness that the rules rather than the utterances were the starting point of the analysis. Some examples are:

(5) Nagpadagan si Go. Abaya kang Alfredo. (Bell's 90a)

Mr. Abaya is letting Alfredo run.

(6) Ningsugo ako kang Rosa sa pagdagan. (Bell's 26a)

I ordered Rosa to run.

(5) will be acceptable only if a direct object appears with the V in the lower S. Thus

(7) Nagpadagan si Go. Abaya ug serbesa kang Alfredo.

Mr. Abaya had Alfredo run for the beer.
(That is, run to buy/pick up beer.)

(6) should read

(8) Gisugo nako si Rosa sa pagdagan.

Some sentences are either outright ungrammatical or assigned the wrong reading as in (9) and (10) below:

- (9) *Gihunahuna ni Lito sa pagsulat ni Maria ang balita kang Jose.* (Bell's 142).

Maria's writing the news to Jose was being thought about by Lito.

- (10) *Gihunahuna ni Lito sa pagsulat ni Maria sa balita si Jose.*

Maria's writing the news to Jose was thought about by Lito.

To get the reading above, (9) and (10) should be:

- (11) *Gihunahuna ni Lito ang pagsulat ni Maria sa balita kang Jose.*

Otherwise (9) would have (12) as a reading and (10) would have (13).

- (12) *The news to Jose was thought about by Lito when/while Maria wrote.*

- (13) *Jose was thought about by Lito when/while Maria wrote the news.*

Fortunately, except for those that apply to the verb *hunahuna* 'think' (see pages 109 and 111), these sentences have not negated Bell's generalization.

Although I am sure CSTF has something useful to contribute to RG literature, I find that it has very few insights to offer about Cebuano. Unless RG can say more than it does now about grammatical relations, specifically about subjects, I have to agree with Schachter's conclusion that 'the assumption of the universality of subjects is, in the case of Philippine languages, something of a Procrustean bed, and see nothing to be gained by forcing languages into this bed' (1977:305).

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