

# AN ARGUMENTAL POSITION FOR PREVERBAL SUBJECTS IN BULGARIAN

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## ABSTRACT

*Balkan languages present a relatively free word order that allows for the alternation of SVO/VSO in unmarked sentences. Current studies in generative grammar consider VSO to be the basic word order for languages such as Bulgarian and Romanian (see Rudin 1992 and Dobrovie-Sorin 1990); SVO is then derived through subject movement to a non-argumental preverbal position. This paper will argue that, in Bulgarian, the SVO word order is derived by NP-movement and not by fronting, and that the preverbal subject position is an argumental or A-position. Tests will show that the positions for fronted constituents are hierarchically and typically distinct from the position which receives the subject.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

In her study of Bulgarian preverbal positions, Rudin (1992) proposes an analysis of clausal structure according to which the preverbal subject position SPEC-IP is a non-argumental or A'-position. More precisely, this position is presumed to function as a focus position, to which subjects, as well as any other type of constituents, can be fronted when they carry specific intonational stress. Consequently, the derivation of SVO order in Bulgarian would result from subject movement to a focus A'- position corresponding to SPEC-IP.

In this paper I will argue against this analysis and claim that focus position in Bulgarian is hierarchically and typically distinct from the preverbal subject position; the former qualifies as an A'-position, and can occur higher or lower than SPEC-IP, whereas the latter is an A-position and corresponds to SPEC-IP. First, the investigation of focus constructions will indicate that fronted constituents occupy A'-positions distinct from SPEC-IP. Second, certain observations involving quantified NPs which undergo fronting to the focus position will substantiate the claim that SPEC-IP heads A-chains as opposed to A'-chains. Finally, constructions involving raising

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Olga Mladenova and an anonymous reviewer for helpful comments. This paper is part of a project financed by the University of New Brunswick, under research grant 26-45.

verbs, in which raised subjects trigger the formation of A-chains, will confirm the definition of SPEC-IP as argumental.

## 2. FOCUS AND PREVERBAL SUBJECTS

We can begin with evidence that VSO and SVO orders freely alternate in unmarked clauses:

- (1) a. Kupi            ni        *Marija*        cvet'a.  
           bought-3SG    us        Mary-NOM    flowers-ACC  
           'Mary bought us flowers.'
- b. *Marija*        ni        kup            cvet'a.  
           Mary-NOM    us    bought-3SG    flowers

In both (1a) and (1b) the intonation is neutral on the italicized subject. This subject receives nominative case, as shown by the contrast of pronominal forms in (2):

- (2) a. (*Az*)            kupih        cvet'a.  
           I-NOM        bought-1SG    flowers  
           'I bought flowers.'
- b. \**Mene*        kupih        cvet'a.  
           me-ACC        bought-1SG    flowers

Since the subject occupies a preverbal position in unmarked clauses, such as (1b), it is necessary to distinguish this position from the focus position compatible with constituents that carry intonational stress.

The first piece of evidence comes from constructions in which focused constituents cooccur with preverbal subjects. The paradigm in (3) adopts the positional test from Rudin (1992), where the interrogative morpheme *dali* occupies the head C and indicates a hierarchical distinction between topic position, which precedes *dali*, and focus position, which follows *dali* and precedes the inflected verb. The data in (3) will show that more than one position can be projected between *dali* and the inflected verb. The adverb *včera* bears focal stress and allows for a contrastive reading.

- (3) a. *Dali včera*        Ivan        polučī        pismata?    (ili dnes)  
           Q yesterday        John        received-3SG    letters-the    or today  
           'Was it yesterday that John received the letters, or today?'
- b. *Dali Ivan včera*        polučī        pismata?    (ili dnes)  
           Q John        yesterday        received        letters-the    or today  
           'Was it yesterday that John received the letters, or today?'
- c. \**Dali Ivan včera*        polučī        pismata, ili *Marija*, dnes.  
           Q John yesterday        received        letters-the or        Mary today

Sentence (3a) is judged as more heavily marked than (3b). The intonation on the subject in (3a, b) is neutral. In (3c) both the subject and the adverb are focused: note the double contrastive reading at the end of the clause. Double focus leads to ungrammaticality. In the grammatical clauses (3a, b), the focused adverb and the unmarked subject can exchange places in linear order. Apparently, two preverbal positions can alternate in receiving fronted constituents (subjects and non-subjects), irrespective of whether they are intonationally marked for focus or not.

Nevertheless, the diagnostic test in (4) will show that there are two positions for focus: either before the subject (4d) or after it (4c). Thus, Bulgarian presents three preverbal positions between the complementizer (C) and the highest inflectional head: two focus positions (in free alternation) and one subject position. These positions are typically different: constituents in subject position head A'-chains, whereas constituents in focus position head A'-chains.

- (4) a. Koj polučī pisma?  
who received letters  
'Who received letters?'
- b. \*Koj pisma polučī?  
who letters received
- c. Dali n'akoj pisma polučī? (ili kolet)  
Q someone letters received or parcel  
'Did someone receive letters, or a parcel.'
- d. Dali pisma n'akoj poluci? (ili kolet)  
Q letters someone received or parcel

The examples in (4c, d) are very marked but grammatical; in discussion of their properties I refer to the definition of left dislocation in Cinque (1990). According to Cinque's analysis, A'-chains associated with topicalization and focus contrast through the absence (topic) or the presence (focus) of an Operator. Thus, constituents are base generated in topic position rather than moved into it; on the other hand, the focus position is the target for a type of WH-movement. This means that there can be no more than one focused constituent per sentence.

The definition of fronting to focus position as WH-movement captures the facts illustrated in (4). In (4a) the subject undergoes WH-movement to SPEC-CP and triggers an Operator-variable chain. In (4b) a parallel movement takes place: the object moved to the focus position creates an Operator-variable chain. It is well known that the kind of crossing of A'-chains which this analysis implies is generally quite impossible (perhaps as

a consequence of Rizzi's (1990) Relativized Minimality condition on antecedent-government). Hence the ungrammaticality of (4b) is predictable: A'-movement across a focused phrase is illicit.<sup>2</sup>

Consider now (4c, d): movement to focus position takes place in both clauses and it cooccurs with a bare quantifier *n'akoj* 'someone' in subject position. Bare quantifiers have intrinsic quantificational features, creating Operator-variable chains when they undergo movement to an A'-position. Thus, under the assumption that preverbal subjects occupy A'-positions, we would expect the bare quantifier *n'akoj* 'someone' in (4c, d) to trigger the formation of an Operator-variable chain. This chain would compete with the Operator-variable chain created through object fronting to focus position, and should lead to ungrammaticality, as in (4b). However, (4c, d) are grammatical sentences. This fact indicates that in the corresponding configuration, there is only one Operator-variable chain, the one created through object fronting to focus position. Hence, we can conclude that the subject has moved to an A-position. Furthermore, since bare quantifiers freely alternate with other classes of nouns in preverbal position, we can assume that this is an A-position in all contexts.

### 3. DIFFERENT SITES FOR FOCUS POSITION

The next question concerns the hierarchy of subject and focus positions. I claim that the subject occupies the SPEC·IP position, whereas focus is projected either higher or lower than SPEC·IP. If focus position is projected higher than SPEC·IP, we obtain the word order in (3a) and (4d); if focus position is projected lower than SPEC·IP, we obtain the word order in (3b) and (4c). The following paradigms will provide evidence for the possibility of adjoining the focus position at different maximal projections in the preverbal segment of the clause.

A focus position can be projected between the left periphery of IP and the head I, to which the inflected verb has raised. The exact configuration in which the projection of this position is allowed would require further in-

<sup>2</sup> Since Bulgarian is a Null Subject Language (NSL), I adopt the analysis of WH-movement from subject position proposed in Rizzi (1990): in NSLs, subjects are extracted from SPEC·VP, because an expletive *pro* is available to preserve the clause initial subject position. This property of NSLs justifies the lack of *that-trace* effects in these languages. For the ongoing analysis, subject extraction from SPEC·VP implies obligatory chain crossing with other constituents that would move through a similar process from postverbal positions.

vestigation of X-bar structure, which is beyond the scope of this paper. For expository purposes, I will assume that focus position corresponds to a second SPEC-IP with A'-status, in a configuration in which the I-head projects to I-MAX. The paradigm in (5) shows that languages other than Bulgarian display this option for projecting a focus position:

- (5) a. Dali Ivan včera poluči pismata? (ili dnes)  
Q John yesterday received letters-the or today  
'Was it yesterday that John received the letters, or today?'
- b. Oare Ion ieri a primit scrisorile? (sau azi)  
Q John yesterday has received letters-the or today  
'Was it yesterday that John received the letters, or today?'
- c. My friends seldom have helped me.

Bulgarian (5a), Romanian (5b) and English (5c) display the same word order, so that a stressed adverb surfaces between the subject and the inflected verb. The projection of focus position within IP (OR I-MAX) does not interfere with subject movement to SPEC-IP, which is defined as an A-position in Romanian (see Motapanyane 1994) and English (see Pollock 1989).

Unlike Romanian and English, Bulgarian allows for the projection of the focus position higher than the subject, as in (3a), repeated below as (6a) for convenience. Furthermore, SPEC-CP functions in certain configurations as a focus position, as in (6b), where *li* occupies the C-head position.

- (6) a. Dali včera Ivan poluči pismata? (ili dnes)  
Q yesterday John received-3SG letters-the or today  
'Was it yesterday that John received the letters, or today?'
- b. Včera li poluči Ivan pismata? (ili dnes)  
yesterday Q received John letters-the or today

The question morpheme *dali* does not have quantificational features and is compatible with a [-WH] C-head. Consequently, (i) it allows for free alternation between SVO/VSO orders in the clause and (ii) it does not license SPEC-CP as a landing site for Operator-like elements. The property (ii) is illustrated in (7):

- (7) a. \*Včera dali Ivan poluči pismata? (ili dnes)  
yesterday Q John received letters-the or today
- b. \*Koga dali poluči Ivan pismata?  
when Q received John letters-the
- c. Včera dali pisma poluči Ivan? (ili kolet)  
yesterday Q letters received Ivan or parcel  
'Was it letters that John received yesterday, or a parcel?'

Since the C-head *dali* has [-QU], [-WH] features, the constituents preceding it in (7) must also head [-QU], [-WH] chains. This is possible when the constituent is a topic, as in (7c); on the contrary, the constituent in (7a) requires focal stress, and rules out the sentence. Thus (7a) and (7b) are excluded in the structural environment of *dali* because of feature incompatibility: both the focus phrase *včera* and the WH-phrase *koga* head A'-chains with [+QU], [+WH] features, which need licensing by a C-head with similar features.

The C-head with [+QU], [+WH] features is the bound morpheme *li*. I refer the reader to Rudin (1993) and Rivero (1993) for ample discussion on the distribution and syntactic behaviour of *li*. The property of *li* that is relevant for this discussion lies in its capacity to license SPEC-CP as a landing site for structural Operators, such as those created through fronting to focus position (8a) or WH-movement (8b). Thus, the grammaticality judgments of the sentences in (7) will be reversed in the presence of *li*, as shown in (8):

- (8) a. Včera li(\*Ivan) polučí (Ivan) pismata? (ili dnes)  
 yesterday Q received John letters-the or today
- b. Koga li polučí Ivan pismata?  
 when Q received John letters-the
- c. \*Včera li pisma polučí Ivan? (ili kolet)  
 yesterday Q letters received John or parcel
- d. Včera pisma li polučí Ivan? (ili kolet)  
 yesterday letters Q received John or parcel

Since C has [+QU],[+WH] features in the presence of *li*, obligatory verb-subject inversion is expected, as observed in studies on WH-constructions (for example Kraskow 1992). SPEC-CP receives structural operators, such as the focused adverb in (8a) or the WH-element in (8b). (8c) indicates that the focused constituent cannot follow *li*; changing the linear order, as in (8d), makes the sentence grammatical. I assume without further elaboration that the contrast between (8c) and (8d) follows from a requirement on *li* and the focused constituent to be in a SPEC-head configuration in overt syntax, with *li* in head position. To conclude this section, the paradigms in (6) to (8) show that a focused constituent can occupy three positions: two within I-MAX, and one in SPEC-CP. Unlike the focused constituent, the preverbal subject moves to an argumental SPEC-IP position in all contexts.

#### 4. CONSTRUCTIONS WITH RAISING VERBS

If SPEC-IP is an A-position, it should trigger NP-movement in constructions with raising verbs. This prediction is confirmed by the evidence presented below.

Some modal verbs trigger movement of the subject from the embedded clause in Bulgarian, as shown in (9):

(9) a. Az tr'abvaše [da četa.]  
I had DA read-1SG  
'I had to read.'

b. Ti tr'abvaše [da četeš.]  
you had DA read-2SG  
'You had to read.'

(examples from Rudin 1983: 13)

The modal verbs in (9) select subjunctive complements; a mood marker *da* precedes the subjunctive verb, inflected for subject agreement. I adopt Rudin's (1983) conclusion that *da* is an inflectional morpheme and not a complementizer. Although the embedded subject moves to matrix in (9a, b), the matrix verb does not display marks of agreement. Hence, it is not clear whether matrix SPEC-IP is an A or an A'-position.

There is, however, one modal verb that undergoes inflection: *šte* 'would'. Subject movement to the matrix SPEC-IP in *šte*-sentences triggers double agreement, on both the embedded and the matrix verb:

(10) a. Az št'ah [da četa.]  
I would-1SG DA read-1SG  
'I was going to read.'

b. Ti šteše [da četeš.]  
you would-2SG DA read-2SG  
'You were going to read.'

(examples from Rudin 1983: 12)

The subjects in (10) agree with the matrix verb, indicating that they occupy SPEC-IP and that this position enters into a local SPEC-head relation with the inflection I. Thus, the invariable form of the modal in (9) is independent of the status of SPEC-IP and can be attributed to a different degree of verb movement to I (as, for example, verb movement to T (tense) instead of AGR (agreement) position in analyses resorting to an exploded I-node). In both (9) and (10) the SPEC-IP position receives the subject, which undergoes NP-movement. As noted by an anonymous reviewer, the constructions in (10) disallow VSO in the matrix:

(10) c. \*šteše ti [da četeš.]  
would-2SG you DA read-2SG

The ungrammaticality of (10c) indicates that a SPEC-VP position for subjects is not available with the verb *šte*. These sentences therefore present properties of true raising constructions.

The paradigm in (11) supplies further evidence that subject movement to the matrix SPEC-IP in (9) and (10) is NP-movement, as opposed to WH-movement. Some verbs lacking a subject theta-role do not trigger subject raising in Bulgarian; the exclusion of this operation coincides with the fact that the sentential complements of these verbs are always indicative clauses with a lexical complementizer *če* 'that':

- (11) a. *Izgležda [če studentite organizirat stačka.]*  
 seems that students-the organize-3PL strike  
 'It seems that the students are organizing a strike.'
- b. \**Studentite izgleždat [če organizirat stačka.]*  
 students-the seem-3PL that organize-3PL strike

The ungrammaticality of (11b) would not be expected under the analysis in which subjects move to an A'-position: this type of movement is allowed to cross a lexical complementizer in Bulgarian, as shown in (12):

- (12) a. *Koj mislis [če se obadi po telefona?]*  
 who think-2SG that REFL called on phone  
 'Who do you think called each other on the phone?'
- b. ?*Studentite li izgležda [če organizirat stačka?]*  
 students-the Q seems that organize-3PL strike  
 'Are the students those who seem to organize a strike?'
- c. *Studentite dali izgležda [če organizirat stačka?]*  
 students-the Q seems that organize-3PL strike  
 'The students, do they seem to organize a strike?'
- d. \**Dali studentite izgležda [če organizirat stačka?]*  
 Q students-the seems that organize-3PL strike

As a Null Subject language, Bulgarian allows subject extraction across a lexical complementizer, as shown in (12a), and the formation of an A'-chain headed from an A'-position in the matrix. Movement to SPEC-CP focus position in (12b) creates the same type of A'-chain and is therefore grammatical (although extremely marked) in the presence of a complementizer. In (12c) the subject is interpreted as topic and precedes the morpheme *dali*; as argued above, constituents in topic position do not undergo movement, and head an A'-chain with non-quantificational features, linking them to an IP internal position in the embedded clause.

This type of A'-chain is also allowed in the presence of a complementizer. (12a, b, c) contrast with (12d), which displays subject movement to matrix SPEC-IP. The subject in (12d) carries a neutral intonation and does

not trigger agreement on the matrix verb. (12d) is intended to show subject movement to matrix SPEC·IP in a configuration with an A'-SPEC·IP. According to the results in (12a, b, c), movement to an A'-SPEC·IP position should be allowed across the complementizer. Thus, the ungrammaticality of (12d) confirms that (i) subject raising to matrix involves NP-movement and the formation of A-chains that cannot cross lexical complementizers; and (ii) SPEC·IP is always an A-position and cannot head other types of chains (i.e., subject agreement is obligatory).

#### CONCLUSION

The tests proposed in this paper contrasted NP-movement with fronting to preverbal positions, and demonstrated that subjects undergo A-movement to an argumental SPEC·IP in Bulgarian. This conclusion has important theoretical implications. It correctly predicts that Bulgarian subjects observe the syntactic pattern of Null Subject Languages (NSLs) in general (i.e., free inversion, WH-extraction from subject position, null subjects with atmospheric verbs). Thus SVO in Bulgarian can be attributed to the same process which derives SVO in other NSLs. Implicitly, this paper predicts that word order variation between Bulgarian and other NSLs in the preverbal segment of the clause (e.g., placement of focus, recurrent adjunction) must follow from other parametric settings, and it is independent of the option for the Null Subject Parameter.

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