

## LOCATING THE SUBJECTS IN MANDARIN CHINESE<sup>\*</sup>

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This paper argues that subjecthood is a relevant concept in the grammar of (Mandarin) Chinese, i.e., Chinese is subject-prominent as well as topic-prominent, and the most appropriate way of characterising subjects is by determining their regular structural position in clause structure. Subjects are claimed to occupy a structural position distinct from, and to the right of, the typical position associated with topics. This position, furthermore, is shown to stand to the left of the whole predicate phrase, as well as preposed distributive-universal quantifiers, associated with the function word *dou*. The structural analysis is set in the clause-structural model of Beghelli – Stowell (1995, 1997). Apparent counterexamples to the linking of subjects to the determined subject position are discussed, too, and shown to pose no problem to the proposal laid out here.

*Key words:* subjecthood, generative grammar, topic, presentative construction, preposed object, middles.

### 1. Introduction

The notion of subject has been somewhat overlooked in the syntactic analyses of Chinese, ever since the classification of Mandarin Chinese as a [+topic-prominent] but [–subject-prominent] language (Li – Thompson 1976) gained currency. Generative grammatical models, though, have continued to make use of this allegedly universal (and universally important) notion, but usually without even attempting to give a pre-

\* This paper has its roots in the first part of Bartos (2002), but with significant modifications in the analyses and the presentation, incorporating suggestions from Waltraud Paul, and reactions to objections from Jo-Wang Lin (whose identity as a supposedly anonymous reviewer of a much earlier version has been accidentally exposed to me). I am grateful to both of them for their remarks, but they are not responsible for any remaining errors or inadequacies, of course. Finally, I wish to thank my informants, Xingshi Wang and Penghong Ye, for helping me with the Chinese data.

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cise characterisation or definition<sup>1</sup> – see e.g. Huang (1982) or Li (1990). In non-generative works, on the other hand, the usual practice has been either to equate *subject* with *topic*, i.e., use the label ‘subject’ for what is notionally the topic of the clause (e.g., Chao 1968), or to resort to some sort of semantic/thematic characterisation of subjects (e.g., Li – Thompson 1981), in terms like animacy, agentivity, or some other typical relation to the main verb of the clause.

Certainly, it is not an easy task even to *identify* subjects in Chinese sentences, since the most straightforward subject properties known from other languages are (at least overtly) unavailable in Chinese: there is no overt agreement or case-marking, or any other kind of suggestive morphology, but this should not necessarily lead to the conclusion that the notion of subject is absent from, or useless in, this language. Instead, one should not forget that morphology does not *determine* subjecthood, but merely *signals* it. That is, the search for a viable definition of subject in Chinese should proceed from the opposite direction, anyway: from semantic, or syntactic properties and considerations. Therefore the main objective of this paper is precisely to propose a structural characterisation of the notion ‘subject’, based on positional criteria, as fits the general practice in Chomskyan generative grammar – and positional characterisation appears to be available in Chinese, too, since this is a language with relatively fixed constituent order, i.e., observable structural locations.

## 2. Some historical background

In modern linguistic approaches to Mandarin Chinese, there have been three typical attitudes towards the notion of subject. One tradition, represented, e.g., by Chao (1968), holds that the only relevant notion of ‘subject’ is that of the logical subject, or topic, and it simply makes no sense to speak about any other concept of subject with respect to Chinese. This view builds on the fact that subjects in this sense, i.e., topics, play an eminent role in Chinese, having a designated structural position at the left periphery of sentences. This state of affairs, however, need not lead to the conclusion that subjects in a more “grammatical” sense are non-existent, or unimportant. What happened was that the obvious prominence of the notion ‘topic’, paired with the elusive nature of subjecthood due to the absence of relevant morphology, deemed the question of ‘subject’ relatively insignificant. Chao did not even consider the possibility of defining subjects, as distinct from topics, on syntactic grounds, only cared to argue against assigning any distinguished role to *agents*, as if this had been the sole determinative property of subjects.

This attitude has been carried to its extremity by Wang (1943/44), Lü (1979), and Li (1985), among others. They call any sentence-initial NP a subject, even those that would be aptly labelled as ‘object’ by virtue of their relation to the predicate, as soon as they appear at the left-edge, such as *zhe ben shu* ‘this book’ in (1b):

<sup>1</sup> In fact, this was the basic situation for the notion of topic, too, as pointed out by Shi (2000) in a study aiming to provide a formal definition of topics.

- (1) a. Wo yijing kan-wan-le zhe ben shu.  
 I already read-finish-PERF this CL book  
 'I have already finished this book.'
- b. *Zhe ben shu* wo yijing kanwan-le.  
 'This book I have already finished.'

On the other hand, pairs of examples like (2a, b) clearly show the advantage of this approach: these two sentences differ as to the perspective on the situation described by them, i.e., which participant assumes the role of the communicative point of departure, that is, the role of topic, while it remains perfectly obscure, in the complete absence of agentivity, as well as morphological clues, which element could be called the grammatical subject of the sentence.

- (2) a. Chuanghu yijing hu-le zhi. (Lü 1979, p. 73)  
 window already paste-PERF paper  
 'The window has already been pasted with paper.'
- b. Zhi yijing hu-le chuanghu.  
 'The paper has already been pasted on the window.'

The second typical approach, built on another semantic aspect of subjecthood, designates the agent or initiator of the event as the grammatical subject (see, e.g., Wang 1956, Tang 1989). Since the external argument is typically the "most active" one, this conception yields the intuitively correct result in the majority of neutral, non-derived sentences. However, it says nothing about cases where all arguments of the predicate are inactive or internal (such as unaccusatives), and may run into problems in derived sentences, like middles or passives, where the agent is either suppressed, or demoted, surfacing within a *bei*-PP inside the predicate phrase:

- (3) a. Jinnian de dianhuabu yijing chuban-le.  
 this.year DE phone.directory already publish-PERF  
 'This year's edition of the phone directory has already been published.'
- b. Wo de zixingche bu hui / meiyou bei (xiaotou) touzou.  
 I DE bicycle not will / not.PERF PASS (thief) steal-go  
 'My bicycle will not be / has not been stolen (by thieves).'

A combination of the above two conceptions defines subject as the single NP preceding the predicate if there is one such NP, and if there is more than one, then the one denoting [+human/+animate] and/or being closer to the predicate is the subject (Li 1972, cf. also Tsao 1977<sup>2</sup>). The latter clause, however, may lead to contradic-

<sup>2</sup> Tsao's (1977) definition of subject as "the first unmarked animate NP to the left of V" is free of the problem illustrated in (4a), but suffers equally from that shown in (4b), unless "un-

tion if, for example, there are two NPs in front of the predicate, one of which denotes [+human], but being farther away from the predicate than the other one, with a [-human] denotation: (4a). Even worse, it yields a strongly counterintuitive result in cases where a [+human]-denoting object is preposed to a position following the subject: (4b).<sup>3</sup>

- (4) a. Wo zhe ben shu meiyou kan-guo.  
 I this CL book not.PERF read-ASP  
 'I have not read this book.'
- b. Wo zhe xie ren meiyou qing lai.  
 I this few man not.PERF ask come  
 'I have not invited these people.' [NOT: 'These people have not invited me.']}

Finally, a third typical approach is instantiated in Li – Thompson (1976, 1981). In their earlier paper they claim that it is impossible to identify subjects in general. Although there might exist individual cases of "subject properties" (Keenan 1976) converging on a particular NP, "the subject is not systematically codified in the surface structure of Mandarin sentences" (Li – Thompson 1976, p. 479). Later, in their reference grammar (Li – Thompson 1981), they concede that the notion of subject is definable for Chinese, in semantic terms, but it plays no structural role whatsoever, hence it is perfectly immaterial for the grammar.<sup>4</sup>

Probably the most complete development of this radical standpoint is found in LaPolla (1993), where detailed arguments are put forth against the relevance of the notion of grammatical subject in Chinese. His main point is that although it might be possible to define subjecthood in Chinese semantically, on the basis of argument roles, it would not lead to anything meaningful, since 'subject' is primarily a (morpho)syntactic notion. The set of properties determining this notion in many other lan-

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marked" is understood as "non-preposed". But more seriously, it simply does not apply to inanimate NPs, which amounts to claiming that, for example, (i) and (ii) are structurally different, contrary to common sense – the NP *Lisi* in (i) is a subject under Tsao's definition, but the NP *zhuozi* in (ii) is not:

(i) Lisi zai wuzi li. L. be.at room inside 'Lisi is in the room.'	(ii) Zhuozi zai wuzi li. table be.at room inside 'The table is in the room.'
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<sup>3</sup> At first sight, this construction seems to involve an internal topic in Paul's (2002) sense (see below in more detail), but in fact it is derived by *external* topicalisation, followed by the topicalisation of the subject over the fronted object, rather than by leaving the subject in situ, and preposing the object to an internal topic position. The latter option is only available for NPs denoting [-human] entities (W. Paul, p.c.).

<sup>4</sup> In their own words: "The *subject* of a sentence in Mandarin is the noun phrase that has a 'doing' or 'being' relationship with the verb in that sentence." (Li – Thompson 1981, p. 87). This definition is remarkably imprecise: they keep the reader in the dark about the exact nature of the "doing or being relationship", and the use of the definite article in "the noun phrase" is infelicitous – there may be more than one NP in a clause whose relationship with the predicate can be characterised as 'being' or 'doing'.

guages do not seem to converge on any particular constituent in Chinese syntactic structure, because some of them are simply irrelevant in this language, others define a function coextensive with some other, better established one (such as ‘topic’), yet others are divergent, pointing at different syntactic entities.

LaPolla’s (counter)arguments are not above suspicion; however, here I will not take issue with them, but present the question of subjecthood from a perspective not argued against by LaPolla – instead, he simply rejects this approach as *a priori* wrong, without adducing any empirical evidence to his claim: “Syntactic functions play no part in the determination of the order of constituents in a [Chinese] sentence” (LaPolla 1993, p. 5). As opposed to this, in the following sections I will show that there *is* a designated position in the Chinese sentence structure for certain constituents not uniformly identifiable either by their semantic/thematic role (such as agent), or semantic feature (like [+human/animate]), or their communicative function (e.g., topic). The particular position hosting this class of constituents could, in principle, be labelled by any term, avoiding the use of the word ‘subject’, but since the items occurring here are intuitively on a par with subjects in those languages where this notion has a clear, undisputed standing, it makes some sense to still keep calling it a subject position, as well as calling the grammatical function of the items filling this position ‘subject’, *pace* LaPolla, and Li – Thompson.

### 3. Subject position in Chinese

Keenan (1976) took stock of the typical subject properties in various languages, and came up with an implicational hierarchy of these properties (*op. cit.*, p. 324), in which the topmost rank belongs to *position*. That is, if in a given language, subjects possess any of the lower-ranking properties, they are also bound to appear in a syntactic position specific to subjects.<sup>5</sup> Therefore it makes sense to start the search for subjects in Chinese, too, by examining if there is any particular structural position that hosts items which can reasonably be called subjects. Moreover, this perspective is consonant with the attitude of Chomskyan generative grammar, in which subjecthood is primarily a positional concept. Subjects are NPs sitting in a well-defined subject position, immediately dominated by S or IP, in the terms of classic transformational grammar, or in the specifier of a structural domain responsible (in many languages) for

<sup>5</sup> Keenan’s hierarchy pertains to *derived* subjects (“the Promotion to Subject Hierarchy”), i.e., it is devised to determine what properties characterise the subjects of non-basic sentences, often originating, in a derivational sense, as non-subjects at some underlying level (e.g., d-structure, as in Chomsky 1981). However, since derived subjects display a subset of properties associated with “basic subjects” in the given language, the properties of the former are more telling about the nature of subjecthood: those are the properties that all subjects of that language possess, and furthermore, they are the properties that original non-subjects must acquire in order to qualify as subjects after some point in the derivation of the sentence they occur in.

subject-type morphology (agreement, case),  $\text{Agr}[\text{eement}]P[\text{hrase}]$  in the terms of recent minimalist models (e.g., Chomsky 1995).<sup>6</sup>

Since the precise articulation of the Chinese clausal functional domain is still an unsettled issue in the literature, with questions about the relevance of notions like agreement, case, tense (i.e., inflection in general), I will avoid referring to the position associated with subjecthood as any standard functional category, simply noting that if abstract, structural subjective Case is operative in Chinese, then the subject position is likely to be the one where subjective Case is assigned/checked. Instead, I will just locate this position with respect to other, better-established positions of Chinese phrase structure, such as the regular slots of adverb placement, or the position of (inner and outer) topics, or the position of the universal-distributive marker *dou* and its associate NP/QP.

### 3.1. *Telling subjects and topics apart*

As a first step, we may easily establish that Chinese subjects, at least in the unmarked cases, are preverbal, more precisely: they precede the whole predicate phrase, including all of its modifiers (e.g. modals or negation).<sup>7</sup> At the same time, subjects must follow non-subject topics, since topics are, by definition, clause-initial elements.<sup>8</sup> Put in somewhat more technical terms, using the structural framework of Beghelli – Stowell (1995, 1997), the subject position falls between the  $\text{Ref}[erential]P[\text{hrase}]$  domain (which hosts topics) and the predicate phrase – these linearity observations are schematised in (5):<sup>9</sup>

- (5) a.  $\text{XP}_{\text{topic}}(\text{s}) \dots \text{YP}_{\text{subject}} \dots \text{predicate phrase}$   
b.  $[\text{RefP}^* \text{XP}^* \dots [\text{ZP} \text{YP} \text{Z}^0 \dots [\text{PredP} \dots$

To incorporate into the analysis the insight that among the NPs appearing in front of the predicate phrase, the subject NP is relatively close to the predicate phrase,

<sup>6</sup> Note that Chomsky (1995, Ch. 4, and subsequent work) has abandoned the idea that there are specific agreement-projections in phrase structure, but agreement (covering case-checking) still takes place in some particular functional domain, be it the projection of  $\text{T}[\text{ense}]$ , or any other category – the issue, as well as the name of the relevant category, are immaterial in the present discussion, all the more so since Chinese displays no case or agreement morphology, anyway. What matters is the locus of the subject position, relative to other functional projections.

<sup>7</sup> The *ba*-phrase and the *bei*-phrase are both within the predicate phrase, witness the fact that modals and negation precede them (see, e.g., Sybesma 1999).

<sup>8</sup> Obviously, since there can be more than one topic in a clause, not all of them can be clause-initial, so the positional definition of topics must be recursively extended in such a way that apart from absolutely clause-initial XPs, it should include those NPs, too, which are right-adjacent to some other topic NP.

<sup>9</sup> The \* (Kleene-star) sign on  $\text{RefP}$  and  $\text{XP}$  marks iterability, i.e., it means “a sequence of any number (0, 1, or more) of ...”;  $\text{Z}$  is whatever functional category hosts subject as its specifier;  $\text{Pred}$  is whatever category occurs topmost in the predicate phrase (CAUS, *v*, *V*,  $\text{Pr}$  – pick your favourite model), i.e., the label “ $\text{PredP}$ ” is used in a somewhat pretheoretical manner here.

i.e., it is often the rightmost of these preverbal NPs (cf. Tsao's (1977) definition in footnote 2; see also Li 1972), let us say that the subject position is almost immediately to the left of PredP – the only NPs that regularly intervene between an unmarked subject and PredP are bare preposed objects (BPOs),<sup>10</sup> and certain quantifier NPs. BPOs have been proposed to occupy some functional specifier to the left of PredP by Paul (2002), *contra* Ernst – Wang (1995), who assumed that all sorts of preposed objects are VP- (or AuxP-)adjoined. While Ernst – Wang may well be right that emphatic preposing, as in (6), takes the object to a position adjoined to V/AuxP, BPOs are clearly outside the PredP (i.e., AuxP or VP), witness the facts that they always precede auxiliaries: (7), and that they fall outside the scope of question operators – in yes/no questions, they are part of the presupposed information: (7a+b), and they cannot be wh-phrases: (8).

- (6) a. Ta [AuxP hui [VP *shenme dou* [VP *jujue*]]].  
he will what all refuse  
'He will refuse everything.'
- b. Ta [AuxP *shenme dou* [AuxP hui [VP *jujue*]]].  
'=(6a)'
- (7) a. Ta zhongyao hui jujue ma?  
he Chinese.medicine will refuse Q  
'Will he refuse Chinese medicines?'
- b. Ta zhongyao kending bu hui jujue.  
he Chinese.medicine definitely not will refuse  
'He definitely won't refuse Chinese medicines.'
- (8) \* Ta *shenme hui jujue*? (cf. Ta *hui jujue shenme*)  
he what will refuse 'What will he refuse?'  
'What will he refuse?'

The general properties of BPOs, including the points just given, suggest that BPOs are essentially topics, as argued for by Paul (2002). Paul, however, distinguishes them from outer, "external" topics, assigning them to a distinct, post-subject position, and regards them as "internal" topics, with slightly different properties than those of the external ones. But the "subject – BPO – PredP" surface order of constituents does not warrant the conclusion that BPOs occupy a slot between the regular subject position and the predicate. This is only true if the subjects of these sentences do in fact appear in the canonical subject position. But there are data that suggest other-

<sup>10</sup> BPOs must be distinguished, on the one hand, from topicalised objects (the former are to the right of preverbal subjects, and there can be only one of them per clause), and, on the other hand, from objects preposed in emphatic constructions, like the *lian ... dou* construction (BPOs are interpreted as topical, while the latter are interpreted with narrow scope with respect to certain S-level operators, such as yes/no-Question); see Paul (2002). BPOs are 'bare' in the sense that they are solitary NPs, not accompanied by the preposition *ba*, or any other element, like *ye* 'also' or *dou* 'all'.

wise: the subjects of BPO-clauses, like (7) above, have left the subject slot, and moved over the BPOs to a clause-initial topic position. There are three key arguments to this point. One, these pre-BPO subjects can always be followed by the optional prosodic topic-markers: a short pause, or a topic particle like *ne*, *a*, *ba*, etc. These particles are rather strange after non-topic subjects, e.g., subjects preceded by a topicalised element; compare:

- (9) a. Ta ne, zhongyao ne, kending hui jujue.  
 he PRT Chinese.medicine PRT definitely will refuse  
 'As for him, Chinese medicine he will definitely refuse.'
- b. Zhongyao ne, ta (??ne,) kending hui jujue.  
 'Chinese medicine, he will definitely refuse.'

Second, subjects following a preposed (topicalised) object can be focused with the focus/cleft marker *shi*,<sup>11</sup> while subjects in front of a BPO, as well as the BPOs themselves, cannot (Tang 1988, p. 134):

- (10) a. *Shi* wo zuotian kanwan zhe ben shu de.  
 FM I yesterday read-finish this CL book PRT  
 'It is me who finished this book yesterday.'
- b. Zhe ben shu *shi* wo zuotian kanwan de.  
 '=' (10a)'
- c. \**Shi* wo zhe ben shu zuotian kanwan de.  
 '=' (10a)'
- d. \*Wo *shi* zhe ben shu zuotian kanwan de.  
 'As for me, it is this book that I finished yesterday.'

This goes to show that BPOs and subjects preceding them are topics (topic-hood is, by definition, mutually exclusive with focus, the former constituting "old information" by way of which the contents of the sentence are linked to the preceding discourse, while the latter is the core of "new information" conveyed by the sentence; also cf. Paris 1998). Moreover, (10a, b) plainly indicate that non-topicalised subjects, i.e., subjects in their regular position, are not necessarily topics, since they can be focused. Thus there must be a post-topic, pre-predicate subject position which is not identical with any kind of topic position, and subjects appearing to the left of BPOs

<sup>11</sup> Whether *shi* is a focus marking particle here, or occurs in its usual copula function creating a cleft construction, and whether 'bare' *shi* is the same entity as in the *shi* ... *de* ('cleft') construction is immaterial here – whatever its correct analysis, it clearly marks the constituent immediately following it as informationally focused.

are not in the plain subject position, but have, in fact, moved to the front of the clause, to a topic position.

Third, it can be shown that NPs that cannot serve as topics because of their inherently non-referential nature only occur to the right of preposed/topicalised objects, or any other kind of topics, never to the left. There is a subset of the class of weak quantificational NPs (or counting quantificational phrases, Beghelli – Stowell 1997, Szabolcsi 1994, cf. the non-G-specific NPs of Liu 1990), the semantically decreasing (or right downward monotonic) quantifiers (DecQPs) built with determiners like *few*, *fewer than x*, *at most x*, which behave exactly this way.<sup>12</sup> Observe, first, that when the subject is a strongly referential NP (e.g., a pronoun or a proper name), whereby it can be topicalised with ease, it can occur in either position, subject or topic – in this particular case either after or before a time adverbial: (11a). In (11b), however, the subject is a DecQP, resisting topicalisation by virtue of its semantics, so it can only occur after the time adverbial, in the subject slot:

- (11) a. {Women/Zhangsan} zuotian {women/Zhangsan} huiqu le.  
we / Zhangsan yesterday we / Zhangsan return-go LE  
'We/Zhangsan returned yesterday.'
- b. {\*Hen shao ren} zuotian {hen shao ren} huiqu le.  
very few man yesterday very few man return-go LE  
'Few people returned yesterday.'

The same effect is attested with respect to BPOs. Strong NPs can either precede or follow BPOs, being either in a topic slot, or in the regular subject position: (12a), but once we place a DecQP subject in the sentence, it can only occur after the fronted object, but not before it:<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> From Liu's (1990), Beghelli–Stowell's (1997), and Szabolcsi's (1994) generalisations about counting QPs, it follows that none of them should be able to serve as a sentence topic, however, my informants' judgements indicate that this limitation only applies to the decreasing ones, for which I have no explanation. But what matters here is that there *is* a set of NPs that are definitely barred from the topic position in spec of RefP, but can nevertheless stand in a preverbal non-topic position, whereby the existence of such a position can be verified.

<sup>13</sup> Jo-Wang Lin has raised doubts about the validity of these DecQP-subject data, claiming that DecQPs like *hen shao ren* 'few people' do occur to the left of time adverbials and BPOs, as in (i):

- (i) a. Hen shao ren qunian mei qu-guo Xianggang.  
very few man last.year not go-EXP Hong Kong  
'Few people didn't go to Hong Kong last year.'
- b. Hen shao ren pingguo mei chi-guo.  
very few man apple not eat-EXP  
'Very few people have never eaten apples.'

My informants, however, fail to confirm this judgement, and consider such sentences ill-formed, unless *you* 'exist' is inserted between *shao* and *ren*: *hen shao you ren*. But in this case *hen shao* is not the determiner of *ren* any more: it is an adverb modifying the verb *you*, i.e., the structure of the subject NP is quite different – it is a *you*-NP, and the distribution of preverbal *you*-NPs

- (12) a. {Ta/Zhangsan} [naxie shu]<sub>x</sub> {ta/Zhangsan} hen xihuan *t<sub>x</sub>*.  
 He/Zhangsan those book he/Zhangsan very like  
 'Those books he/Zhangsan likes very much.'
- b. {\*Hen shao ren} [naxie shu]<sub>x</sub> {hen shao ren} xihuan *t<sub>x</sub>*.  
 very few man those book very few man like  
 'Those books, few people like (them).'

In sum, the above considerations force us to posit a separate (subject) position between topics (which include BPOs), and PredP, which is *not* a topic position at the same time.

### 3.2. Do internal topics strike back?

Contrary to my claim laid out above, several authors have proposed that preposed objects are not on a par with clause-initial topics, and should therefore be assigned structural positions lower than (or to the right of) the locus of subjects. Of these, Ernst – Wang (1995) (and also, implicitly, Ernst 1994) treat emphatic fronting (such as the *lian* ... *dou* construction) and bare object preposing indiscriminately, which has been shown, by Paul (2002), to be a flawed generalisation. Ernst – Wang's arguments for the VP-adjoined locus of preposed, post-subject objects are valid only for the emphatic fronting cases, which are not at stake here, as such NPs are very clearly inside PredP, hence they fall under my generalisation that subjects are separated from the left edge of PredP only by minimal material.

The problems posed by Paul's (2002) analysis of BPOs may, on the other hand, be real. If she is right in claiming that BPOs are crucially different from (external) topics, and necessitate a treatment which assigns to them a post-subject position outside PredP, then the subject position must be defined with respect to the functional projection BPOs appear in – which is rather difficult a task, given that even Paul fails to specify the precise nature of that projection, and its exact whereabouts in the Chinese clause structure. Furthermore, under such a scenario, subjects preceding BPOs are not necessarily topicalised – although if they are not, the data in (9–12) remain to be explained somehow. But there are reasons to doubt that BPOs must have a special position below ordinary subjects.

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patterns with that of strong NPs, such as definites. Moreover, the fact that *hen shao* can determine postverbal nominals proves that it is really an NP, not reducible to (or derivable from) *hen shao you*, the latter being entirely excluded from the postverbal domain:

- (ii) Jintian de wanhui, wo yaoqing le hen shao (\*you) ren.  
 today DE party I invite ASP very few exist man  
 'For today's party, I have invited few people.'

Paul bases her analysis of distinguishing internal topics (including BPOs) from external ones on three peculiar properties of internal topics not shared by external ones.

1. There can be at most one internal topic per clause, while there can be any number of external topics.
2. Personal proper names and pronouns are not acceptable as internal topics, while they are often seen as external ones.
3. Clauses cannot occur as internal topics, but they are fine as external topics.

Let us treat these properties one by one. Property 1 follows from the uniqueness of the specifier position of the particular functional projection hosting internal topics in Paul's account. But it is also easily derived in a model assuming the topicalisation of subjects across a preposed object, as in (9a), or even across a base generated internal topic, as in (13):

- (13) Ta<sub>x</sub> [nei jian shi] t<sub>x</sub> hai mei zuo jueding ne.  
 he that CL matter still not make decision PRT  
 'Concerning that matter, he still has not made a decision.'

The subject, I assume, raises over the internal topic in order to acquire topic status. This happens even when there is a base generated (left-dislocated) 'loose' topic in the sentence, as shown by Tang (1990, p. 340, ex. 180b):

- (14) Wo, hua, zui bu ai meiguihua.  
 I flower most not love rose  
 'I, as far as roses are concerned, dislike roses most.'

But for it to acquire topic status, it is sufficient to raise over just one topic (of any kind), if topics (whether external or internal in Paul's sense) are situated in *ReffP*-specifiers (or if one assumes a linear positional definition of topics as given in footnote 7). Therefore economy considerations (see, e.g., Chomsky 1995) will prevent moving the subject any further up/left in the structure, since any such move would not yield a distinct semantic interpretation, but would incur more derivational cost. Thus the fact that one will see at most one 'internal' topic to the right of the subject follows.

Property 2, the ban on personal names and pronouns as internal topics is illustrated in (15):<sup>14</sup>

- (15) a. ?\*Wo Zhangsan<sub>x</sub> bu renshi t<sub>x</sub>.  
 I Zhangsan not know  
 'Zhangsan I don't know.'

<sup>14</sup> The strings in (15a, b) are much more acceptable on readings where the first NP is the topicalised object, and the second one is the subject, but these are irrelevant readings here, and the coindexation is meant to exclude them.

- b. \* Zhangsan wo<sub>x</sub> bu renshi *t<sub>x</sub>*.  
Zhangsan I not know  
'Me, Zhangsan doesn't know.'
- c. ? Wo [zhexie ren]<sub>x</sub> bu renshi *t<sub>x</sub>*.  
I these man not know  
'These people I don't know.'
- d. Wo Shanghai<sub>x</sub> mei qu-guo *t<sub>x</sub>*.  
I Shanghai not go-EXP  
'Shanghai I haven't been to.'

Traditionally, the ill-formedness of (15a, b) has been put down to a condition on preverbal NPs which disallows a sequence of two [+human] NPs there, however, as has been pointed out by Paul (1996) as well, the condition does not apply to [+human] denoting common nominals, witness the relative well-formedness of (15c), and note, also, the gradedness of grammaticality, (15a) being slightly more tolerable than (15b). Furthermore, as (15d) testifies, non-personal proper names are entirely unproblematic as internal topics. These data are rather suggestive of some parsing effect: as long as there is a clear asymmetry between subject and object with respect to thematic roles, i.e., confusion cannot arise about the identification of thematic role linking, for instance because there is a difference in animacy which matches the assignment of thematic roles, as in (15d), the sentence is judged perfect. On the other hand, in cases of equal animacy, as in (15a–c), the determination of linking relations on parsing becomes ambiguous – in a relationship of *know(x,y)*, if the representatives of *x* and *y* are both animate-denoting NPs, in the absence of clear morphological or syntactic cues, a possible confusion arises, which immediately renders these sentences more or less unacceptable. Along with the binary cut between animates and non-animates, there is a further factor: what Kuno (1976) phrased as "speaker's empathy". According to this factor, personal pronouns referring to the participants of the discourse (speaker and hearer) figure very prominently in linking, so that *wo* 'I' in (15a–c) will be more naturally interpreted as the more prominent argument of the predicate, which helps resolve the ambiguity, hence the relatively less degraded status of (15a, c), which match the empathy expectations, as opposed to (15b), which links the roles inversely. Finally, the acceptability difference of (15a) vs. (15c) probably has to do with the empathically less distant nature of the proper name.

But such vague functional notions aside, even at the level of syntax, there seem to be ways to capture the generalisation about the major split. In an account consistent with Paul's (2002) analysis, the condition ruling out (15a, b) will have to bar movement of [+personal name/pronoun] NPs to the particular position of internal topics. In a minimalist mood, this amounts to saying that the head of the domain hosting internal topics attracts NPs *without* this feature – this is a somewhat unnatural

case of “negative” attraction.<sup>15</sup> But this would be just a technically sophisticated description of the facts, and not a real explanation of why such NPs cannot move to a closer ‘internal’ topic position, while they can freely access the ‘external’ one. In contrast with this, I would claim that all of the NPs in question can be *topicalised*, making no significant distinction between ‘external’ and ‘internal’ topicalisation – this is not where the problem lies. Recall, instead, that in the analysis presented here, the subject–object surface order in the preverbal domain results from the subject’s raising across the topicalised object, and in fact this is the key to the split behaviour. Obviously, the generalisation is that subjects cannot take this step across [+personal name/pronoun] NPs. What this observation can be related to is some sort of “promotion to topic” hierarchy, which is reminiscent of a combination of Kuno’s (1976) empathy hierarchy, and an animacy hierarchy, on which:

- (16) {animates pers. pron.  $\geq$  pers. name  $>$  human-denoting common nom.}  $>$   
 {inanimates ...}

If an item X outranks another item Y on this scale, X has priority over Y in promotion to topichood. In actual terms, this either bars topicalising Y over X if X is a topic, or directly determines the relative order of multiple topics. As such, it will not apply to non-topic subjects, i.e., NPs sitting in the canonical subject position, below RefP(s), so any sort of NP can be freely topicalised over them. However, the raising of either the subject, or any other NP to a second/third/... RefP specifier is licit only if it will not violate the above hierarchy constraint. While this is not a very satisfying solution to the problem, it is not more stipulative than the one available under Paul’s analysis, and can at least relate the effects to other, independently known factors. Thereby Property 2 of ‘internal’ topics also favours the analysis of subjects defended in this paper.

Turning finally to Property 3, i.e., the unacceptability of clauses as ‘internal’ topics (which remains unexplained in Paul’s account) can be put down to their non-referential nature. The RefP domain hosts only referential expressions, i.e., simple or extended NPs, but not clauses. If there is such a thing as a topic clause (as claimed, e.g., by Gasde – Paul 1996), it is in some external position, possibly adjoined to the highest RefP, but the subject, or any other NP, cannot raise across it, there being no target position for them above the highest RefP specifier. Thus the “... [subject] [clausal topic] ...” order, that is, the clause-as-internal-topic configuration has no way to arise.

Adding up the scores on the three properties thus gives preference to the proposal laid out in section 3.1 over Paul’s proposal, albeit by a narrow margin.

<sup>15</sup> In a Government-Binding setting things would be slightly less discouraging – movement being essentially free, a filter disallowing the [+personal name/pronoun] NPs in that specifier would yield the right result, though in a rather stipulative way.

### 3.3. The order of subjects and certain quantifiers

After the digression on the locus of internal topics, showing that in fact they stand to the left of the subject position explored in this paper, let us come back to the other case where some XP apparently intervenes between the subject and the left edge of PredP. This particular type of XP is none else than the associate of the distributive-universal marker *dou*, with which it composes semantically into a distributive-universal quantifier.<sup>16</sup> Some illustration is given in (17):

- (17) a. Lisi gei *mei* *ge* *pengyou* *dou* *hui* *xie* *xin*.  
 Lisi to every CL friend DOU will write letter  
 'Lisi will write a letter to every friend.'
- b. Lisi *shenme* *dou* *bu* *xihuan*.  
 Lisi what DOU not like  
 'Lisi does not like anything.' [lit.: As for Lisi, everything is such that he does not like it.]

That these XPs, as well as *dou* itself, are outside PredP is indicated by the fact that they precede modal auxiliaries (like *hui* 'will') and the negative adverb *bu*.<sup>17</sup> The main question we are concerned with, though, is whether they precede or follow non-topic subjects. On the face of it, they seem to stand after the subject in examples like (17), but (i) the subjects may have undergone topicalisation, and (ii) the associates of *dou* often show up to the left of the subject, as in (18):

- (18) a. *Mei* *ge* *laoshi* Lisi *dou* *taoyan*.  
 every CL teacher Lisi DOU hate  
 'Lisi hates every teacher.'
- b. *Shenme* *dongxi* Lisi *dou* *xihuan*.  
 what thing Lisi DOU like  
 'Lisi likes every kind of thing.'

<sup>16</sup> Naturally, the associate of *dou* can be the subject itself, but it is near impossible to determine whether in those cases the subject QP is situated in the regular subject position, or between this position and the locus of *dou*. In the former case, such examples are of no direct interest to us, in the latter case they cannot be used for testing, so they will be ignored in the discussion.

<sup>17</sup> Note, though, that *dou* and its associate may sometimes appear inside PredP, as in (i) below – the *ba*-phrase, as is well-known, is inside PredP, hence the "XP+*dou*" unit cannot be PredP external, either. However, such cases are simply irrelevant to our point, which concerns PredP-external occurrences of *dou*.

(i) Lisi *ba* *pengyoumen* *dou* *dabai* *le*.  
 Lisi BA friend-PL DOU defeat PERF  
 'Lisi has defeated all of his friends.'

What is clear in these examples, however, is the fixed locus of *dou* – it stays in place, no matter where its associate moves, even if it leaves its clause:

- (19) *Mei ge laoshi, wo zhidao, Lisi dou taoyan.*  
 every CL teacher I know Lisi DOU hate  
 'I know that Lisi hates every teacher.'

There is a tradition in the literature, of associating *dou* with the Dist[ributivity] category of Beghelli – Stowell (1995, 1997), and assume that it heads its own functional projection in phrase structure: DistP, the specifier position of which is then related to distributively interpreted universal quantifiers, i.e., the associates of *dou* (Xu 1997, Lin 1998, Bartos 2002).

Xu (1997, pp. 152ff.) argues that DistP is situated below TenseP in phrase structure, and so far as tense is associated either with finiteness and thus subjective Case, or with modals, this amounts to saying that DistP, with *dou* in its head position, is to the right of the regular subject position. If the argument, and the accompanying assumptions are valid, then the subject *Lisi* in (18, 19) may well be in a non-topic subject position, and *dou*'s associate must have moved up to topic position. Note that placing DistP below the regular subject position is in line with Beghelli – Stowell's hierarchy proposed for English, too, which is in accordance with the hypothesis of a universal hierarchy of functional projections (see, e.g., Cinque 1999).

Unfortunately, no direct evidence about the relative order of (non-topic) subject and DistP can be gained from the scopal behaviour of non-subject distributive-universal quantifiers (DUQPs), because there is a general isomorphism effect in Chinese (Huang 1982): scope relations largely correspond to surface order (except between complements, and in passives, both irrelevant here), i.e., subjects will not behave as distributive shares under object DUQPs, unless *dou*, associated with the 'object' DUQP, precedes the 'subject' in a biclausal configuration where, in fact, the DUQP is the subject and the external argument of the contentful verb is the object of the existential verb *you*:<sup>18</sup>

- (20) *Mei ge wenti dou you san ge xuesheng huida.*  
 every CL question DOU exist three CL student answer  
 'For every question there are/were three students answering it.'  
 [lit.: 'Every question has/had three students answering (it).']

Therefore we may simply note that Xu's assumption of DistP located below the place we assign to regular subjects is consistent both with the Chinese data, and the theoretical assumption of the universality of functional structure, albeit not forced

<sup>18</sup> Cornilescu–Paris (2003) have claimed that there is scope variability between a subject QP and an object DUQP when the latter stays postverbally in the absence of *dou*, but even if they are correct, these examples show nothing about the whereabouts of the subject with respect to DistP.

by them as the only possible conclusion.<sup>19</sup> This way the regular subject position has been determined to fall between RefP(s) and DistP, in a clausal architecture in the mood of Beghelli – Stowell (1995, 1997).

In the following sections, we must treat two potentially problematic cases of subjecthood: middle constructions and postverbal “subjects”.

#### 4. Challenges to the positional identification of subjects

##### 4.1. Middles

The question of the middle construction,<sup>20</sup> sometimes referred to as (pseudo-)passive or ergative, has often perplexed linguists dealing with the problem of subjecthood in Chinese:

<sup>19</sup> Interestingly, the combination of object DUQPs and focusing of the subject will not help us settle the issue: instead of the mysteriously unavailable “canonical” constructions in (i), one must resort to other ones, as in (ii), to express such a combination:

- (i) a. \*Shi wo mei ge wenti dou da-dui le.  
FM I every CL question DOU answer-right ASP  
'It's me who answered every question correctly.'
- b. \*Shi Lisi shenme cai dou xihuan.  
FM Lisi what dish DOU like  
'It's Lisi who likes every kind of dish.'
- (ii) a. Shi wo da-dui le mei ge wenti.  
FM I answer-right every CL question  
'It's me who answered every question correctly.'
- b. Shenme cai dou xihuan de shi Lisi.  
what dish DOU like NOM COP Lisi  
'Who likes every kind of dish is Lisi.'

<sup>20</sup> I use the term ‘middle’ here irrespective of the distinction made between middles and ergatives by Keyser–Roeper (1984). Morphological clues are unavailable in Chinese for drawing a distinction between the two potentially different classes, and there seems to be no such genuine distinction in Chinese. Assuming the semantic underpinnings of Keyser–Roeper’s categorisation, Chinese middles treated here resemble English ergatives, not middles (the statements made with them are not generic, but eventive; they can occur without an adverb; and they may not resist progressivisation), but the derivational distinction between the two classes (lexical *vs.* syntactic) is far less clear in Chinese. My main point for labelling them here as middles is to avoid the further escalation of terminological confusion: Y. A. Li (1990) calls the predicates of presentatives (cf. section 4.2) ‘ergative’, though they correspond to ‘unaccusatives’ known from Indo-European languages, but she refrains from using the latter label because she claims that they do assign accusative case. However, her ‘ergatives’ are distinct from Keyser–Roeper’s ‘ergatives’. On the other hand, my ‘middles’ may parallel Li’s ‘ergatives’ in that they may have case-assigning potential, too, provided that examples like (i) belong to this class, too:

- (i) a. Jiu he le san bei.  
wine drink PERF three cup  
'Of wine, three glasses have been drunk.'

- (21) a. Lisi de shu yijing chuban le.  
 Lisi DE book already publish LE  
 'Lisi's book has already been published.'
- b. Wo de zixingche tou-zou le.  
 I DE bicycle steal-walk LE  
 'My bicycle has been stolen.'

They are distinct from genuine passives, which are overtly marked by the morpheme *bei*, and are capable of naming the actor of the event optionally, unlike middles:

- (22) a. Lisi de shu yijing bei (X chubanshe) chuban le.  
 Lisi DE book already BEI X publisher publish LE  
 'Lisi's book has already been published (by X publisher).'
- b. Wo de zixingche bei (xiaotou) tou-zou le.  
 I DE bicycle BEI thief steal-walk LE  
 'My bicycle has been stolen (by a thief).'

The nature and structure of genuine passives have been extensively discussed in the literature, but are of no direct relevance for us here – we must focus on the question whether the preverbal NP in middles (like *Lisi de shu*, *wo de zixingche* in (21)) is a subject, or a non-subject topic, as suggested, though not argued for, by Li – Thompson (1981, pp. 88, 498): they regard such NPs as non-subject topics simply because they do not fit Li – Thompson's semantically based definition of subjects (see footnote 4). LaPolla (1993), likewise, argues against treating them as subjects, claiming that they are purely topics, and that is why they appear preverbally. While they are indisputably interpreted as information-structural topics, just like any other clause-initial subject, I maintain that they are also subjects – subjects of a middle construction, somewhat like the NP *these apples* in the following English example, although the properties of the middle construction in the two languages are quite different:

- (23) These apples sell well on hot days.

- 
- (i) b. Ta qie-chu le liuzi le. (LaPolla 1993, 2.32.)  
 he cut-out PERF tumour LE  
 'He has had his tumour cut out.'

I am less than convinced that these are true instances of 'middles', especially (ia), but if they are (or (ib) is), then the postverbal NP must be case marked by V, which favours a lexical formation of 'middle' argument structure, however, the fact that *ta* in (ib) is clearly not an argument of V (only an underlying possessive NP [*ta* (de) *liuzi*] is) either favours a syntactic transformational derivation of middles, or places such examples in line with the *pro*-subject, non-middle cases discussed in this section.

Note, first, that the strings in (21a, b) are in fact ambiguous. They may indeed be construed with the overt preverbal NP as a topicalised object, and with a subject understood, inferred from the context, but left phonetically unexpressed, a *pro* (unpronounced personal pronoun) in terms of Chomskyan grammar: (24a). But this construal is entirely different from another one, in which there is no understood/inferred agent whatsoever, i.e., the sole syntactic and semantic argument of the predicate is the preverbal NP: (24b). The latter construal corresponds to the middle construction.

- (24) a. Lisi de shu *pro* yijing chuban le.  
           ‘Lisi’s book I/you/he/they/... has/have already published.’ ≠ (21a)
- b. Lisi de shu yijing chuban le.  
           ‘Lisi’s book has been published.’ = (21a)

LaPolla (1993) obviously fails to distinguish the two cases, and that is why and how he arrives at the conclusion that sentences like (21) involve the topicalisation of the sole, non-subject, argument of the predicate.<sup>21</sup>

Secondly, there is a clear difference in availability between the two constructions, such that the availability of the *pro*-subject construction coincides with the possibility of topicalisation across overt subjects/agents, whereas the availability of the middle construal, as in (24b), is rather limited: it is clearly restricted to certain types of predicates or argument structures. While verbs like *chuban* ‘publish’, *touzou* ‘steal’, *mai* ‘sell’, etc. participate in all of these constructions, other predicates, such as *xihuan* ‘like’, *yaoqing* ‘invite’, *zhidao* ‘know’ can never occur in sentences construed as middles, but can be topicalised with ease:<sup>22</sup>

- (25) a. Lisi de shu, tamen/*pro* yijing chuban le. – topicalisation  
           ‘Lisi’s book, they/X have/has already published.’
- b. Lisi de shu yijing chuban le. = (24b) – middle
- (26) a. Lisi de shu tamen/*pro* xihuan le. – topicalisation  
           Lisi DE book they/X like LE  
           ‘Lisi’s book they/X have/has grown to like.’
- b. \*Lisi de shu xihuan le. – middle  
           ‘Lisi’s book has come to be liked.’

<sup>21</sup> Moreover, in his argumentation against the grammaticalised concept of subject in Chinese, ha also treats on a par the preverbal NPs of the (21)-type with both bare and emphatic preposed objects, whereas Paul (2002) has convincingly shown that the latter two are radically different syntactic entities themselves.

<sup>22</sup> And, albeit irrelevantly here, they can mostly occur in *bei*-passives, too.

- (27) a. Naxie ren wo/pro (dou) yaoqing le. – topicalisation  
 those man I/X DOU invite LE  
 'Those people I/X have/has not invited.'
- b. \*Naxie ren (dou) yaoqing le. – middle  
 'Those people has been invited.'

Topicalisation is insensitive to the particular thematic role of the NP targeted, or to the argument structure of the predicate. So under a topicalisation analysis of the (b) sentences above, à la Li – Thompson (1981), or LaPolla (1993), this varied behaviour of predicates is totally unexpected. Such lexical differences, especially if they are linked to particular thematic roles (which seems to be the case here, though further detailed inquiry would be needed before such a claim could be established), indicate some (lexical or syntactic) transformation that involves argument structure – as is the case with middles in general. Middle formation as a lexical operation is characterised by the deletion of the external (agentive) thematic role, and the promotion of the internal one (theme or patient), and applies to a particular class of predicates, e.g., those with a physically affected internal argument.<sup>23</sup> The externalised argument will then surface as the subject in the middle construction, as would any other external argument do in any sentence.

In view of the above, there is every reason to consider the preverbal NPs in sentences like (21), on the middle construal, to be subjects proper, rather than topicalised non-subjects.

#### 4.2. Postverbal 'subjects'

As is well-known from the literature, there is a class of predicates, often labelled as "presentative", including verbs of placement, existence, and (dis)appearance (e.g., Tang 1988, pp. 109ff., Y. A. Li 1990, pp. 134ff.), whose sole argument NP occurs postverbally under certain circumstances, but intuitively correspond to subjects of similar sentences/constructions in other languages:

- (28) a. Jin-lai le yi ge ren.  
 enter-come PERF one CL man  
 'There entered a man.'
- b. Xia yu le.  
 descend rain LE  
 'It has started to rain.'

<sup>23</sup> This criterion is only tentative here, but if it turns out to be valid, it neatly ties in with the restriction on predicates allowing the *ba*-construction.

This construction would pose a problem to the proposed definition of subjecthood if they were shown to be genuine subjects in a genuine postverbal position. This is probably not the case, though. There have been proposals rejecting both parts of the possible counterargument. Y. A. Li (1990) analyses such NPs as internal arguments of ergative (unaccusative) predicates, assigned accusative Case, and occupying a complement position, while the subject position (and function) is assumed by time or place adverbials, or a *pro* bound to a (possibly empty) discourse topic with locative or temporal reference:

- (29) a. Ta jia lai le yi ge ren.  
he home come PERF one CL man  
'There came a man to/from his home.'
- b.  $[\text{TOP } \emptyset_x] e_x \text{ lai le yi ge ren.}$   
'There arrived a man (at a location/time salient in the discourse).'
- c. Waimian xia yu.  
outside descend rain  
'It is raining outside.'
- d.  $[\text{TOP } \emptyset_x] e_x \text{ xia yu.}$   
'It is raining (at a location/time salient in the discourse).'

In essence, if Y. A. Li's (1990) analysis is on the right track, then the NPs in question are just not subjects, hence it comes as no surprise if they appear outside the regular subject position.

Bartos (2002) offers alternative analyses, whose common assumption is that these NPs *are* subjects in some sense, but they still observe the generalisation that subjects must be linked to the regular preverbal subject position in syntax. That paper argues that Y. A. Li (1990) mistakenly identifies the locative/temporal phrases with subjecthood – those phrases are topics, but not subjects: they are adjuncts, not arguments or expletives, and they are optional, just like ordinary adjuncts, so they do not qualify as proper grammatical subjects. Their optionality cannot be explained by positing empty subject NPs in their place, referentially bound to a (likewise unexpressed) discourse topic, because if this were a licit way of filling the subject position then the very examples her counterarguments against expletive *pro* subjects is built on become unexplainable:

- (30) a.  $[\text{Ta hui qu nar}] \text{ hen rongyi ma?}$  Y. A. Li (1990, p. 129) (30b)  
he will go there very easy Q  
'Is that he will go there easy.'
- b.  $*e \text{ hen rongyi } [\text{ta hui qu nar}].$  Y. A. Li (1990, p. 129) (31b)  
'= (30a)'

- c. [Ta lai zher] hen zhongyao. Y. A. Li (1990, p. 130) (33a)  
 he come here very important  
 'That he comes here is important.'
- d. \*e hen zhongyao [ta lai zher]. Y. A. Li (1990, p. 130) (33b)  
 '=(30c)'

Y. A. Li claims that the reason why (30b, d) are ungrammatical is the lack of a *pro* expletive in Chinese. But these sentences could equally well contain the empty locative/temporal subject she posits in presentative sentences, thus they should be well-formed, contrary to fact. In fact, the "empty discourse topic plus empty subject" solution is not very attractive in general, because spatiotemporal location is such a pervasive property of all sorts of events that it is highly unlikely for them to be grammaticalised as arguments, witness the universal rarity of spatial, and especially temporal arguments.

On the other hand, positing an expletive *pro* in the preverbal subject slot of presentatives, coindexed with the postverbal NP, constituting an expletive–associate chain in a way rather similar to the English *there*+associate construction, has the advantage that no specially licensed empty element need be posited as subject in the absence of an overt locative/temporal adverbial, and the definiteness effect observed in presentatives (as illustrated in (31)) can be explained in the same way as in English. The ungrammaticality of (30b, d) can only be used as an argument against *it*-type (clausal) expletives, but not against *there*-type (nominal) expletives, anyway – the two have quite different properties in English, too. Finally, the Case-theoretic problem of the *there*-associate construction, emphasised by Li (1990, p. 144), has been resolved in general, as well; see Lasnik (1999). Thus under this assumption the structure of presentatives is as illustrated in (31):

- (31) a. *pro<sub>x</sub>* jin-lai le [yi ge ren]<sub>x</sub>.  
 enter-come PERF one CL man  
 'There entered a man.'
- b. *pro<sub>x</sub>* xia yu<sub>x</sub> le.  
 descend rain LE  
 'It has started to rain.'

Bartos (2002) points out two other possible analyses, as well, for the presentative sentences. In one, the surface order of V preceding the subject is derived by the raising of V (together with its aspectual affixes) to a position left of the regular subject position, possibly *Ref<sup>0</sup>*. This way, a parallelism can be drawn between presentatives, and sentences with subjects introduced by *you* 'exist', as in (32):

- (32) *You* yi ge ren jin-lai le. cf. (28a)  
 exist one CL man enter-come PERF  
 'A man entered.'

$\text{Ref}^0$ , on this account, has two alternative ways of lexicalisation: either by inserting *you*, or by raising V there. The two options slightly differ in interpretation: *you* renders the subject NP specific, while it is strictly non-specific in the V-raising case. This bifurcation is reminiscent of English *there*-expletive vs. overt NP-raising contrast, as indicated by the translations for (28a) vs. (32): the associate of *there* is preferably interpreted as non-specific, while the overtly raised subject NP of the unaccusatives has a more salient specific reading. Moreover, the definiteness effect characteristic of the presentative construction (Y. A. Li 1990, pp. 144ff) can get an account assuming that a verbal lexicalisation of  $\text{Ref}^0$ , the host category of definites, excludes the licensing of any definite argument NP in the clause.

Finally, a third possibility is to derive the presentative constituent order via PredP-raising across the subject in its regular position, i.e., in (28a) it is the whole of PredP that moves to the left of the NP. On the general assumption that PredP is V-final except for complements, and given that presentative predicates are monadic, it immediately follows that no other postverbal material is found in presentatives than the argument NP (as claimed by Huang 1982: 45ff).<sup>24</sup>

While neither of these latter suggestions is without problems, and need to be worked out in a more exact fashion, they appear to be viable alternatives to both the *pro*-expletive solution, and Y. A. Li's (1990) analysis. But no matter whether Y. A. Li's (1990) or one of Bartos's (2002) analyses is the correct one, in any of these cases the generalisation about subjects occurring in a designated position to the left of PredP can be maintained, either because alleged postverbal 'subjects' are not subjects, or because they are postverbal only in the surface string, but situated in a structural position to the left of the original copy (trace) of V(P).

## 5. Conclusion

As there has been shown to exist a specific subject position in Chinese clause structure (possibly identifiable with the specifier of InflP in Ernst's (1994) sense), and given the binding theoretical prominence of subjects (see, e.g., Huang 1982, p. 446, Huang – Tang 1991, p. 265, Y. Li 1993, p. 135, *pace* LaPolla 1993), which also argues in favour of a hierarchically prominent locus for subjects, we are now in a position to claim that Chinese subjects behave much the same way as their counterparts in other subject-prominent languages, i.e., some designated argument of the predicate (the external argument, if there is one) will leave its likely site of base generation within PredP and raise to a position located in the (Beghelli-and-Stowell-style) functional extension of clause structure between  $\text{RefP}(s)$ , which host topics, and  $\text{DistP}$ , which hosts DUQPs, and is headed by *dou*. So Chinese can find its due place among subject-prominent languages, after all, as opposed, e.g., to Hungarian, which is a purely topic-prominent language, without any designated structural role or position

<sup>24</sup> VP-adverbials are presumably adjoined to PredP, or are internal to it, so they must be carried along with PredP.

associated with subjecthood, even though subjects are clearly identified morphologically, via both case and agreement (É. Kiss 1982, 1987 and *passim*).

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