

**THE SHONA SUBJECT RELATION**

**BY**

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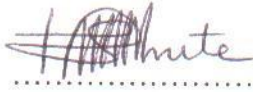
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**May 2011**

# DECLARATION

Student Number: 4678-929-4

I declare that **The Shona Subject Relation** is my own work and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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Signature

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study delves into the syntactic notion of subject relation in Shona with the aim of characterizing and defining it. This is done through analysing data collected from two of the Shona speaking provinces in Zimbabwe, namely, Harare and Masvingo. The data collection procedures involved the tape recording of oral interviews as well as doing selective listening to different speeches. The data were then analysed using the projection principle, noun phrase movement transformational rule as well as the selectional principles established for the subject relation in the other well researched natural languages. The research found out that there is no one single rule that can be used to determine the subject of every possible Shona sentence. One has to make use of all the seven selectional principles established in the well-researched natural languages. The research managed to assess the applicability of the selectional rules in different sentences. The rules were then ranked according to their reliability in determining the subjects of each of the various Shona sentences. It also came to light that the Shona subject relation has a number of sub-categories as a result of the various selectional rules involved in determining them. These were also ranked in a hierarchy of importance as they apply in the language. For instance, whilst some are assigned to their host words at the deep structure or underlying level of syntax, some are assigned at the surface structure level and can be shifted easily. It also emerged that the freedom of the subject relation in the language varies with the sub-category of the relation. It came to light as well that in Shona both noun phrases (NPs) and non-NPs are assigned the subject role.

### **Key Terms**

subject relation, syntactic notion, Shona language, oral interviews, selective listening, projection principle, NP movement transformational rule, selectional principles, hierarchy of importance, surface structure level, thematic relations, theta roles, thematic hierarchy, person animacy hierarchy.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

cl.	class	AGR	agreement marker
VR	verb root	TV	terminal vowel
NP	noun phrase	PP	projection principle
PAS	person animacy hierarchy	TH	thematic hierarchy
GB	government and binding theory	S	subject
V	verb	O	object
Wh-	all questioning words	Ed.	editor
Vol.	volume	et al	and others
VP	verb phrase	NP	noun phrase
Pres. Cont. T.	present continuous tense	LF	lexical function
AS	argument selection	Future T.	future tense
PAS	predicate argument structure	Neg.	negative
SUBJ	subject	SD	structural description
SC	structural change	SAI	subject auxiliary inversion
Aux	auxiliary	NV	noun verb
VN	verb noun	1 <sup>st</sup>	first
2 <sup>nd</sup>	second	3 <sup>rd</sup>	third
POSS	possessive	Habitual T.	habitual tense
EPP	extended projection principle	SVO	subject verb object
PASS	passive formative	REFL	reflexive formative

*	ungrammatical	COMPL	complimentary
Obj. M	object marker	PREP	preposition
iff	if and only if	Present T.	present tense
Past T.	past tense		

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### 1.0 Preamble

Syntax is a branch of linguistics focusing on the arrangement of words and their relationships in sentences (Crystal, 1969). Syntactic rules govern proper sentence structure. This study seeks to venture into the syntactic notion of grammatical relations focusing particularly on the Shona subject relation in a bid to come up with its detailed characterisation. Owens (2004) defines the term ‘grammatical relations’ as the relation between the head of a predicate and its argument phrases particularly subject and object in a sentence.

A subject is generally understood to be the syntactic argument acting on the object in a simple active sentence (Lee, 1974). For instance, in the following two sentences:

1a.(i) Mary apfura John.

Mary	a-	pfur-	a	John
cl.1	cl.1 AGR	VR ‘kick’	TV	cl.1

“Mary kicked John.”

1a.(ii) Mukomana afudza madhongu.

mukomana	a-	fudz-	a	madhongu
cl.1 ‘boy’	cl.1 AGR	VR ‘herd’	TV	cl.6 ‘donkeys’

“A boy herd donkeys.”

*Mary* as well as *mukomana* “boy” are the actors and, therefore, the subjects of the two respective sentences. However, it has to be noted that not all sentences have actors. For instance, in the following pair of sentences:

1b.(i) *Murume akafa.*

*murume*      *a-*              *ka-*              *f-*              *a*  
cl.3 ‘man’   cl.1 AGR    Past T.    VR ‘die’    TV  
“A man died.”

1b.(ii) *Danda ravora.*

*danda*    *ra-*    *vor-*    *a*  
cl.5 ‘decay’   cl.5 AGR    VR ‘decay’    TV  
“A pole has decayed.”

There are no actors in these sentences. *Murume* “man” as well as *danda* “pole” are far from performing any actions. Instead the two are victims of the actions referred to by the verbs in their respective sentences. They are, in other words, sufferers of the actions stipulated by the predicates in their sentence situation. Furthermore, in some sentences such as 1c. below, there are no participants capable of performing actions.

1c.(i) *Kunopisa.*

*ku-*              *no-*              *pis-*              *a*  
‘it’      Pres. Cont.T.    VR ‘hot’    TV  
“It is hot.”

1c.(ii) Zvinofadza.

zvi-                    no-                    fadz-                    a

cl.8 'it'      Pres. Cont. T.      VR "pleases"      TV

"It pleases."

In actual fact, in 1c.(i) and 1c.(ii) there is no participant. This makes it difficult to tell what their subjects are. However, according to the demands of the extended projection principle (EPP) that says for every sentence to be grammatical it must have a subject of some sort (Haegeman, 1998), such sentences have subjects too since they are grammatical and acceptable Shona sentences. The remaining question would then be: Which words or constituents are playing the subject role in such sentences and their selection is based upon which principles?

The current study delves into this area in a bid to come up with a complete characterisation of a Shona subject in its different possible sentence environments. The study comes up with a set of selectional principles capable of guiding one in identifying the subject for every possible Shona sentence. As demonstrated in chapter four, the possible Shona sentences include the actives as well as the various transformations that can be generated in the various possible situations in the language.

## 1.1 Background

The purpose of this sub-section is to provide a brief background for some of the most key notions in the current study. These include the subject relation as well as the Shona language.

### **1.1.1 Subject Relation**

As indicated earlier, the subject relation is a grammatical relation. Owens (2004) defines the term ‘grammatical relation’ as the relationship obtaining between the head of a predicate and its argument phrases particularly subject and object. A grammatical relation is, therefore, a syntactic notion. Syntax is a branch of linguistics focusing on the arrangement of words and their relationships in sentences. Little attention has been directed towards the area of grammatical relations in Shona. Most of these works have been directed towards the object relation at the expense of the subject relation. Kawasha (2002) supports this by noting that most scholars who have looked into grammatical relations in Bantu focused on the syntactic behaviour of double object constructions at the expense of the subject relation. These include Cook (1988), Kawasha (1999; 2002). The very few who look at the Shona subject include Tarugarira (1996) as well as Bliss and Storoshenko (2010).

Langacker (1991) observes the prevalence of differences of opinion among scholars of syntax on the definition and characterisation of the subject relation further commenting that their views are almost as many as the languages in the world. This is so because of the variations characterising the different natural languages in as far as the notion in question is concerned. According to Lee (1974), a subject is in its semantic sense the actor involved in the under transformation of actor –action – acted of the kernel sentence. A kernel sentence is a sentence constituting of a noun phrase (NP) and a simple verb phrase (VP), that is, before the employment of any of the optional transformational rules (Kuroda, 1976). However, as indicated earlier, it needs to be pointed out that not all languages have all sentences falling into this order of ‘actor–action–acted’. Some have no actors but have subjects that are selected basing upon principles



other than considering the actor of the action specified by the verb. This creates a position characterized by difficulties in as far as the identification of such syntactic notions in different languages is concerned. Hence, Cook's (1988) and Tarugarira's (1996) observation that so far the majority of the conclusions in the literature have been largely based upon implicational universals. Implicational universals are generalised conclusions based upon the information from a fraction of the languages and can at any moment be discredited by the discovery of some contradictory information.

It is the goal of this research to come up with an adequate characterisation of the subject relation in different Shona sentence types. It intends to come up with a full set of selectional principles or rules that can be employed in identifying a subject in any given Shona sentence. These selectional principles will be put into their hierarchy based upon their reliability in the various possible occurrences in the sentences of the language.

### **1.9.2 The Shona language**

According to Guthrie (1948), Shona (or ChiShona) is a Bantu language, native to the Shona people of Zimbabwe and southern Zambia. The term is also used to identify peoples who speak one of the Shona language dialects, namely Zezuru, Karanga, Manyika, Ndau and Korekore. Mutasa (1996) notes that some researchers include Kalanga whilst others recognise Kalanga as a distinct language in its own right.

It is a principal language of Zimbabwe, along with Ndebele and the official business language, English. Shona is spoken by a percentage of about 75% of the people in Zimbabwe. Mutasa (1996) notes that according to ethnologue, the five major dialects of Shona are natively spoken by 13.8 million people making it one of the largest Bantu languages. Other countries that host Shona language speakers are Zambia, Botswana and Mozambique. Shona is a written standard language with an orthography and grammar that was codified during the early 20th century and fixed in the 1950s. Shona is taught in the schools but is not the general medium of instruction in other subjects. It has literature and is described through monolingual and bilingual dictionaries (chiefly Shona - English). Mutasa (1996) further notes that modern Shona is based on the dialect spoken by the Karanga people of Masvingo Province, the region around Great Zimbabwe as well as Zezuru spoken by people of central and northern Zimbabwe.

Shona is a member of the great family of Bantu languages. In Guthrie's (1948) zonal classification of Bantu languages, zone S10 designates a dialect continuum of closely related varieties. It is this language that the current researcher intends to scrutinise and come up with a complete characterization of one of the controversial syntactic notions called subject. This background to the standard Shona orthography led the researcher to concentrate on some of the areas where the Zezuru and Karanga varieties are mainly spoken, namely Harare and Masvingo.

## **1.2 Research Problem**

The research problem behind the current study is that the grammatical notion of subject is an aspect that behaves differently in various languages leading to disagreements amongst the

scholars of syntax (Langacker, 1991). Langacker confesses that he has come to realise the unavailability of consensus between scholars even concerning what he originally believed to be the obvious concepts of the grammatical relations, that is, 'subject' and 'object' relations.

Furthermore, the subject relation has since received very little attention in the available literature on Bantu languages in general and Shona language in particular with the majority of the literature addressing the aspect of grammatical relations focusing on its counterpart, the object relation (Kawasha, 2002). Kawasha, as mentioned above, observes that most scholars who have looked into grammatical relations in most of the Bantu languages have focused on the behaviour of double object constructions at the expense of the subject relation.

Most of the few texts addressing the subject, as demonstrated in the area of study, have been focusing on languages other than Shona (Tarugarira, 1996). According to Tarugarira, this has generated a situation whereby most of the information characterising it in languages like Shona is based upon implicational universals. This position, in the current researcher's view, calls for an effort to establish the nature of the notion in most of the natural languages. It is this position that has triggered the current researcher's desire to explore the nature of the relation in Shona.

### **1.3 Aim of the Study**

This study intends to come up with a clear characterisation of the subject relation in Shona. A full set of selectional rules is going to be presented at the end of the study to guide people in

establishing subjects of different Shona sentences. These enable one to identify the subject of every Shona sentence encountered. The researcher intends to come up with a clear demonstration of the strengths and weaknesses surrounding some of the implicational universal characterisations put forward by researchers basing on languages other than Shona. The current research demonstrates how they succeed and fail to stand as useful explanations for the same notion in Shona. The research intends as well to find out the position of different phrases in as far as access to subjecthood is concerned.

### **1.3.1 Objectives**

The study's objectives are to:

- characterise the subject relation in Shona
- come up with a set of selectional rules applying to the language
- establish the relation's sub-categorisations and their hierarchy of importance
- find out the syntactic categories that are accorded the subject status in Shona
- examine how the relation is accommodated by the different behaviours of the sentence structures in the language.

### **1.3.2 Research questions**

The following are the questions the research intends to answer:

- What is a Shona subject?
- How does it manifest itself in Shona?

- How freely can it be moved in the language?
- What are its sub-categories in Shona?
- How can one determine the subject of every Shona sentence?

#### **1.4 Justification**

As mentioned in the area of study, little attention has been specifically directed towards the realisation of the Shona subject. Currently, as Kawasha (2002) observes, preference has been given to the object relation in most writings on Bantu languages. This position calls for a considerable look into the language's notion in question.

Furthermore, Chomsky (1965), Gazdar (1985) and Langacker (1991) observe that decades have lapsed with the notion of grammatical relations on the stage but no consensus has been reached on its basic concepts. Tarugarira (1996) following Cook (1988) observes that the explanation behind such a scenario remains that most conclusions that have been drawn were based upon implicational universals. This makes every new discovery likely to cause disagreements. The current researcher is of the opinion that researches need to be conducted in the majority of the natural languages in order to replace the conclusions based on implicational universals. This study could, therefore, be valuable in as far as this position is concerned or trigger other researches that may play the part.

In addition, as Harris (1976) observes and like many other linguistic theories and concepts, the

area of grammatical relations is language and dialect specific. In other words, the selectional principles or factors determining the assignment of the roles on to the participants, sub-categorisations of the relations, as well as their hierarchy of importance are, among other factors, believed to be often not cross-linguistic. This researcher is testing, using Shona examples, the position of the conclusions reached on such issues in some well-researched languages such as English and Japanese.

The work could also be valuable to students of Bantu syntax and Shona syntax in particular. For instance, the notion of grammatical relations may be understood better if more evidence from Shona becomes readily available. Since most of the works on the notion of grammatical relations in Bantu languages were by foreign scholars most of whom used cross-linguistic approaches (Tarugarira, 1996), the researcher believes there could also be some interesting observations that can surface on this area if looked at in the Shona language alone. This is so because not all linguistic aspects can surface adequately in studies that use comparative approaches (Panfilov, 1968).

### **1.5 Literature review**

Chomsky (1965) observes that when defining grammatical relations, it is necessary to make explicit the relational character of those notions by making language specific definitions. This is encouraged because relations are language specific and must, therefore, be handled from the angles of specific languages. This is the position shared by Panfilov (1968) who notes that the notions of the syntactic level of language, that is, ‘the grammatical subject’ and ‘the grammatical

predicate' are developed within a language as specific forms for expressing the logical categories of that specific language respectively.

To exemplify on the above, one can consider Kuno's (1973) comment that Japanese does not impose most of the restrictions that English places on its grammatical relations. For instance, Japanese can accept all possible word orders provided the verb is placed sentence-finally. This demonstrates the need to make attempts at defining or characterising the notion in most languages if the efforts to define it are to yield positive results and, hence, the reason the study intends to focus on the subject relation in the Shona language alone.

Tarugarira (1996:24) comments that "it is in fact a presupposition that every existing language has grammatical relations." She shares Cook's (1988) claim that most aspects of the notion of grammatical relations have been based upon implicational universals. Tarugarira (1996) acknowledges the presence of the subject in Shona but does not make an effort to come up with its detailed characterisation.

The general position above is supported by Langacker (1991) who observes the absence of a consensus concerning even the most basic aspects of the notion of grammatical relations. Langacker says scholars cannot agree even on what he previously thought to be the cornerstones of the notion, that is, 'subject' and 'object' relations. Blake (1982:73) shows much support for this picture by noting that "the existence of thematic roles is inevitable but grammatical relations

are not and one can easily imagine a language without them”. Blake (1982:63) further points that “...direct object is not as firmly established as the frequent use of the term suggests, and subject is certainly not universal”. These comments are made due to the variations in the behavior of grammatical relations rampant in the languages. It is these variations that have also influenced Burling (1992:112) to claim that “...what is difficult and still a long way to be accomplished is the production of a grammar that accounts for all the sentences in all the languages of the world.” This shows that it is due to implicational universals that the characterisation of relations has remained in a vague state for so long. This background points to a considerable need for researches that can clarify most of the issues in the area.

Robins (1991) claims that the terms ‘subject’ and ‘object’ have been variously applied in different languages with equal validity. Robins further notes that in English and German the term ‘subject’ may be applied to the noun, equivalent word or word group found in the minimal basic exocentric sentence type represented, for instance, by the italicised entity in:

1d. *John* anoshanda.

<i>John</i>	a-	no-	shand-	a
cl.1a	cl.1 AGR	Present T.	VR ‘work’	TV

“John works.”

In example 1d., *John* is the noun phrase (NP) referring to the entity accomplishing the action specified by the verb and in agreement with it. This is, therefore, a simple sentence with a subject and a predicate. Robins (1991) further observes that in Latin the same term may be defined by



reference to the concord of person and number that is found between one noun, pronoun or corresponding word group in the nominative case and the verb, not between the verb and any other noun.

According to Chung (1976), it must not be assumed that subjects and predicates will be formally identifiable in all the sentences of a language. For instance, in Shona one can have sentences of the imperativial type such as:

1e.(i) Mubate!

mu-            bat-            e

cl.1 AGR    VR 'catch'    TV

“Catch him or her!”

1e.(ii) Mhanya!

mhany-        a

VR 'run'      TV

“Run!”

These two examples above are acceptable Shona sentences with covert subjects. This makes the position much clearer that one can easily imagine or even come across a language without them. It is this scenario leading Robins (1991:237) into asserting that “...the relation is, however, by no

means language universal”.

Ouhalla (1994) asserts that structural relations that determine grammatical functions are encoded in Phrase Structure rules. For instance, subject is the NP encoded in the phrase structure (PS) rule, which expands into:

Subject       $\longrightarrow$       Noun Phrase Auxiliary Verb Phrase

This is the subject in its structural sense. Lee (1974) similarly describes the subject relation in its structural sense as the ‘actor’ involved in the under transformation of ‘actor-action-acted of the kernel sentence’. A ‘kernel sentence’, as indicated earlier, is that simple statement to which no optional transformational rules would have been applied. Whilst this may be true, it needs to be mentioned that these are neither the only types of sentences in all the languages nor are they available in all the languages. This makes it necessary for the situations evident in all the languages to be closely examined before people make much bigger universal conclusions on the notion.

Hudson (1984) points to subject relations as deserving special treatment compared to all other grammatical relations. Hudson comments that this unique status is appropriate in view of the special properties they possess in most languages of the world. Hudson however, admits the existence of difficulties hindering the compilation of a set of necessary and sufficient conditions for the relation in all the languages. Catell (1976) also points out that whilst Classical Latin, with a very free word order, can achieve a like effect by changing word order, German has more

marking of subjects and objects by morphological means. Kuroda (1976) also notes that in non-configurational languages, it is also assumed that the typical, or proper, function of the nominative case is to indicate the subject of a proposition. All this serves to demonstrate the variedness of the ways through which languages mark their words or phrases for prominence, a feature that Noonan (1985) claims to be marking the topical subject in most languages. This also demonstrates how languages vary in their handling of prominent sentential entities and, hence, how differently they may represent their subject relations in sentences.

Brown and Miller (1985:69) discuss another type called the ‘logical’ or ‘semantic subject’. They describe it as “the referent because it is the entity to which the verbal complex or predicate refers.” It is this view that has been incorporated by Allen (1992) as well who describes the subject relation as a noun or its equivalent about which a sentence is predicated and with which the verb agrees.

Another description of a semantic subject more related to this one is attainable from Hopper and Thompson’s (1982) characterisation of a prototypically transitive construction. They say a prototypically transitive construction is one in which an action is carried over from an agent to a patient and the action must have a direct effect on the patient. In such a case, the agent or the carrier of the action will be acting as the semantic or logical subject. The patient becomes the object of the action. This demonstrates that the subject can be looked at from various perspectives since it behaves differently in different environments and, hence, the need to look at its nature in Shona.

Kuroda (1976) notes that there are a number of ways through which languages mark their relations adding that some of the languages use word order more than morphological markings, which is the case in English and Japanese respectively. Others also have no definable word order and use only morphological markings, which is the case with Walpiri and Malayalam (Langacker, 1991). Considering such variations in languages, it will be a mere presupposition to argue that all natural languages of the world fit into the classes established this far. There could be a group of languages without fixed word orders, and well-pronounced case or morphological markings. It appears upon such a situation that anchors Robins (1991) the argument that it is a mere presupposition that all languages have grammatical relations, a position that is equally assumed by Tarugarira (1996).

Bliss and Storoshenko (2010) demonstrate the connection between the topical gap and the subject relation in Shona proving as well that agreement is subject driven. They, however, leave other things out raising the suspicion that they understand this relation in Shona as explainable fully in topical and morphological terms only. Kawasha (2002:31) supports this connection when he points that in Lunda, a Bantu language spoken in Zambia, that “in simple sentences, the subject comes before the verb, whereas the direct object is an unmarked post-verbal NP”. The current research intends to come up with a detailed characterisation of the notion in Shona. It is noteworthy that the provision of a more detailed review of the literature published to date on aspects related to the current research is the total business of chapter two.

## **1.6 Research methods**

This section is divided into two broad sections, namely, data collection and data analysis procedures.

### **1.6.1 Data collection**

In the field, the researcher used two data collection methods, namely, the questioning form of the interactive elicitation method as well as the selective listening device of corpus collection.

#### **1.6.1.1 Questioning form of the interactive elicitation device**

The questioning form of the interactive elicitation device involves face-to-face questions to which informants are requested to respond in their respective Shona varieties. This is an oral interaction that has the advantage of providing both the interviewer and the interviewee with the opportunity to ask for clarifications. At the same time, it provides the interviewer with the opportunity to extract ready responses together with the suprasegmental information, that is, information concerning the tonal patterns as well as the intonations involved. It is noteworthy that Shona is a tonal language in which some words are differentiated solely by tone. It can be found performing a lexical function in Shona terms like *guru* “big”, *guru* “hole” and *guru* “rough tripe”. The first one has high tones in both syllables, the middle one has low tones in both syllables and the last one has low tone in the first syllable and high tone in the second syllable. One can also have tone playing a grammatical function in Shona expressions such as *vadya* “those who ate” and *vadya* “they ate”. In the former, both syllables have a low tone whilst in the

latter there is a high tone in the first and a low tone in the second syllable. More importantly to the current research, the interviewer was enabled by this method to seek for the transformed versions of the sentences provided.

The researcher's intention was to extract from the field sentences formulated in ways that are closer to those of the typical Shona varieties. As evident in appendix 1, informants were asked questions on aspects such as their history, past experiences, interests, cultures' current position in relation to the whole discourse of continuity and change, beliefs, challenges, difficulties as well as their most sensitive times in life. Such issues were believed to be capable of making them revert to the original versions of their mother tongues. This position was adopted following the general belief that for people to express things like emotions, they will revert to the original versions of their mother tongues.

#### **1.6.1.2 Selective listening device**

Samarin (1967:54) describes the selective listening device as "...an effective way of collecting various examples of a particular linguistic element". As Samarin notes, a study by this device is best carried out by listening to prolonged discourses. In this case, the researcher relied mainly upon prolonged discourses such as political speeches, folk tales as well as testimonies at trials. The researcher just listened and selected statements of different types for analysis.

### **1.6.1.3 Choice of informants and recording of data**

This section is subdivided into the selection of informants as well as the data recording procedures in the field.

#### **1.6.1.3.1 Choice of informants**

Though different age groups have been considered, most of the informants were those elderly people in positions of power who know much on clans' histories and who often make public speeches. These were considered most because of the nature of the desired data. As pointed earlier, there was need to collect data that reflect what the original Shona was or was almost like. Such could hardly be extracted from the younger generation that has strongly been influenced by language contact. The position of the researcher is not that there are no such influences in the elderly but it is somehow not as much as it is in the bilingual youngsters. The researcher visited Harare and Masvingo provinces of Zimbabwe where the two main Shona varieties, namely, Zezuru and Karanga are spoken to gather data for analysis. These are the varieties that the researcher understands well which made the data easier to analyse.

#### **1.6.1.3.2 Recording of data**

For want of the extraction of data that reflects what is really on the ground, the researcher did not conscientise the informants on the data recording process until it was completed. He just commanded a JVC tape recorder to record the conversations or the speeches on TDX tapes. This was done to avoid people from compromising some of their original language compositions

which are often the cases once they get aware that some recording exercise is taking place. Such compromises emerge, for instance, because due to the conjoining of the five Shona varieties, some varieties have come to be looked down upon. This is currently often leading people into trying as much as they can to be identified with the high status varieties such as Zezuru or even the English language.

## **1.6.2 Data analysis methods**

The data analysis exercise is divided into the sentence selection procedure as well as the actual assessment of the data in the light of the notion in question.

### **1.6.2.1 Sentence Selection**

This involves the selection of the different types of sentences from the recorded tapes used in the field. The researcher tried to capture as many sentence types as possible. This enabled him to view the subject relation in a variety of environments to make the characterisation not based upon a limited set of possible situations.

### **1.6.2.2 Data analysis**

The process of data analysis involves the use of a theoretical framework consisting of Chomsky's NP movement transformational rule, projection principle (PP), as well as the seven different selectional principles established for the subject relation in well researched languages. The use of the PP sees the predicate argument structures (PASs) of the predicates as well as the



features of the arguments involved being considered first to see if they are the ones recommended by the verbs' respective lexical entries. Each example presented in the data analysis section, therefore, has its predicate's argument structure presented therewith. The use of the NP movement transformational rule sees an initial presentation of the recommended stages and rules in the derivation of the necessary respective transformations in which the behavior of the relation in question is observed and analysed. This is meant to ensure that no erroneous sentence transformations are involved in the data analysis, a condition that is believed to ensure correct conclusions in the end.

It is important to note that PP and the NP movement rule are being used in defining the entities that are worth consideration for analysis. The selectional principles are acting as tools for analysing the manifestation of the subject phrases within the approved sentence structures.

### **1.7 Theoretical framework**

The researcher understands a theory to be some kind of tested and established truth against which researches can be tested. This generates a situation where following the trend shows that the case study (in the current situation the Shona language) shares the features established in the other tested ones and failure to agree shows signs of a different behaviour or composition characterising it. The theoretical framework for the current research, as indicated earlier, is divided into three sub-parts, namely, the projection principle (PP), the noun phrase movement transformation and the selectional principles established on the relation in question in other languages.

### **1.7.1 The projection principle (PP)**

Haegeman (1998) quoting Chomsky's Lectures on Government and Binding Theory (GB) describes the PP as a part of the GB theory. It is the one that is used as a part of the theoretical framework for this study. GB theory, as Haegeman (1998) puts it, claims the presence of a government relationship between predicates and their grammatical relations. In other words, predicates are pre-equipped with the duty to control the type, number and ordering of the grammatical relations in a sentence. Dembetembe (1976:46) also notes that "the noun phrases have to obey the selectional restrictions imposed by the verbs".

Wilkins (1988) also observes that the PP requires that each level of syntactic representation be a projection from the lexical representation in observing the sub-categorisation properties of the lexical items heading it. It ensures that many aspects of the syntax of a clause are determined by the syntactic complement taking properties of the predicate heading it. Therefore, as Grinder (1973) observes, the PP entails that the lexical information of lexical items, should be accurately reflected in the structural representations they take part in. In addition, as Ouhalla (1994:56) asserts, "...the representations at each syntactic level are projected from the lexicon in that they are supposed to observe the sub-categorisation properties of the lexical items and any arrangement not observing the order would automatically be marked ungrammatical."

The framework in this case is used to guard against false conclusions that may come out of the use of incorrect structures in the data analysis exercise. For instance, it is used to ensure that the phrases under analysis are the ones being called for, in terms of their number and types, by the

lexical entries of the verbs in the respective statements. This is meant to avoid conclusions based on sentences that are ungrammatical in as far as the rules of the Shona language are concerned. GB theory will be chosen basically because it is characterized by language universal principles. It is worth noting that in each Shona example presented in the data analysis section, the verb's argument structure will be presented in angle brackets with the features of its participants in square brackets. Their presentation will be meant to act as a yardstick against breaching demands of the projection principle.

### **1.7.2 The noun phrase movement transformation**

Three types of the noun phrase movement transformational rule are used in this data analysis exercise for defining some sentence structures that are typical to Shona. These include passivisation, reflexivisation as well as wh-question formation. The transformational rules generally alter the forms of and occasionally move lexical items around deriving various word orders in sentences. It is from such reordering and alterations of Shona sentences and their participants that the researcher gets the platform for assessing the restrictions and freedoms associated with the relation in question.

### **1.7.3 The selectional principles**

Seven selectional rules will be considered as the analytical tools for the gathered data in order to establish the nature of the subject relation in Shona. These include 'word order' asserting that the subject in Subject Verb Object (SVO) languages occurs word-initially in simple active sentences. The other one is that of 'morphological reasons' indicating that in sentences a subject is the

element controlling agreement. Another one is the ‘semantic reasons’ stating that in a sentence a subject is the entity acting upon another or the entity volitionally initiating and carrying the action to its logical conclusion. There is also a ‘thematic hierarchy’ which ranks the semantic functions played by sentence participants according to their preferences towards subjecthood from Agent to Patient, as specified in chapter three. ‘Person animacy hierarchy’, again as shown in chapter three, is another hierarchy considered and ranks all entities in the world to which sentences can refer in an order that also shows their preferences to subjecthood.

The sixth is the ‘intransitivity assumption’ asserting that if a sentence has a solitary participant that automatically wins the subject status. Lastly, there are ‘dummy subjects’ which are entities like ‘it’ in English which are just placed as place holders in sentences where no subject can make sense. These principles have been established in other natural languages and this research tries to use them as a guide in the analysis of the Shona data. Conformity of the data to the trend established in the other languages will be taken as a pointer to the principle also applying to the language. Any failure of the data to follow the trend that has emerged from other natural languages would be pointing towards a possible distinctive behavior and, therefore, drawing attention of the researcher in his efforts to come up with a detailed characterisation of the Shona subject relation.

## **1.8 Scope of study**

The study characterises the Shona subject relation. This is done through analysing data gathered from two Zimbabwean provinces where the two main Shona varieties, that is, Zezuru and

Karanga, are traditionally spoken. The data is analysed using the projection principle, noun phrase movement transformational rule as well as the seven selectional rules established in other languages for grammatical relations as the theoretical framework. The research project comprises five chapters, the first of which introduces the research. It presents the aims, objectives, research questions, justification, research methods as well as the theoretical framework of the study. Chapter two reviews the direction the literature produced on the concepts related to the study in question to date is taking. Chapter three analyzes gathered Shona data in the light of the notion in question. It considers the selectional principles associated with the notion, its sub-categories, and the word types typically assigned the role in question. Chapter four further analyses data considering the way the notion is handled by selected NP movement transformational rules. Chapter five is the conclusion to the whole study. It summarises

the issues discussed in this thesis and recommends areas that may require further investigation.

## **1.9 Conclusion**

This chapter has demonstrated that the current study focuses on coming up with a characterisation or definition of the Shona subject relation. This is done through analysing data gathered from the Shona language speakers which is then analysed using the projection principle, noun phrase movement transformational rule as well as the selectional principles established in other languages. The chapter also presents a short review of related literature showing the gap the current research is intended to fill before a bigger version of the literature review is presented in chapter two.

### **1.9.1 Definition of key terms**

These are some of the key terms one would come across in this research:

- cross-linguistic – relating to different languages.
- grammatical relation – a syntactic connection or relationship between participants in a sentence (Crystal, 1969).
- implicational universals - those universal claims based on evidence from a number of languages and can be discredited at any time in future by the discovery of some negative evidence from one or so languages (Cook, 1988; Tarugarira, 1996).
- selectional rule – the consideration behind passing a judgement on the status of a sentence participant (Dictionary.Com/AbstractSyntax. 1998-2004).
- Shona – a southern Bantu language traditionally spoken mostly in Zimbabwe and its neighboring countries such as Botswana, Zambia and Mozambique.
- subject relation – a sentence participant realized differently in languages but associated mainly with the sentence initial position in active sentences of subject verb object (SVO) languages (Dictionary.Com/AbstractSyntax. 1998-2004).

### **1.9.2 Thesis lay out**

Chapter one, chapter two, chapter three, chapter four and chapter five.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.0 Preamble**

Whilst the foregoing chapter has already introduced the area of investigation as well as the way data have been sourced and analysed, it has to be noted that this study does not venture into an area that is new to literature. As indicated earlier, several writings, such as Bliss and Storoshenko (2010) as well as Tarugarira (1996) have already addressed the notion of grammatical relations in Shona. In addition to these, more studies have been done in Bantu languages, the family to which Shona belongs, and a lot more have been done in well-researched languages such as English and Japanese. It is found recommendable for one who is delving into such an area to begin by reviewing in greater detail some of these works, a stance that introduces the reader to the direction that the researches are taking thus far. This stance is also adopted to enable the researcher to show the gap the current research is meant to fit in.

### **2.1 Grammatical relations**

Chomsky (1965) describes ‘subject’, ‘object’ and ‘predicate’ as distinct from the notions ‘noun phrase’ (NP) and ‘verb phrase’ (VP) because they designate grammatical relations. This shows that they are syntactic relations rather than syntactic categories, the class to which the latter two belong. The former are syntactic rather than morphological notions. Ouhalla (1994) also notes that terms such as ‘subject’ and ‘object’ refer to the grammatical functions of categories. They are not categorical labels, therefore, should not be confused with the categorical labels such as

NP and VP. The position is also shared by Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) who argue that the subject has the grammatical function in a sentence of relating its constituent, a noun phrase, by way of the verb to any other elements present in the sentence, that is, objects, complements and adverbials.

Owens (2004) also defines the term ‘grammatical relations’ as the relationship existing between the head of a predicate and its argument phrases particularly subject and object. However, Chomsky (1981) notes that when defining grammatical relations, it is necessary to make explicit the relational character of those notions by making language specific definitions. This position demonstrates that relations are language specific and, therefore, need to be handled from the angles of specific languages. This is the position shared by Panfilov (1968) who notes that the notions of the syntactic level of language, that is, the grammatical subject and the grammatical predicate are developed within a language as specific forms for expressing the logical categories of that specific language respectively. For example, Kuno (1973) observes that Japanese does not impose most of the restrictions that English places on its grammatical relations. Japanese can accept all possible word orders provided the verb is placed sentence-finally. This demonstrates the need to research on such notions in most of the languages if the efforts to characterise them fully are to yield positive results. This is the motivation behind carrying out this study.

However, whilst this is the general picture that languages handle their relations differently, Mohanan (1988:230) argues that “...relations are a property of the structure of all natural languages of the world and every language exhibits some fundamental processes dependent on



them”. For example, Mohanan describes these relations as a universal notion whose different ways of realization are currently acting as the basis for the typological distinction between configurational and non-configurational languages.

Reiterating to this, Bresnan (1982) argues that grammatical functions are universal primitives of syntax, not derived from phrase structure representations or from semantic notions. He rather perceives grammatical functions as lexically encoded in predicate argument structures (PASs) of all languages in varying ways and constituent structure categories are universally decomposed into features. Therefore, grammatical functions are syntactically encoded directly in surface representations of phrase structure, according to structuring configurations or morphological features.

Everaert, Van Riemsdijk, and Goedemans (2006) support the position above by commenting that in contrastive linguistics the subject was first defined to be the main argument of a proposition and since then, linguistic theories have been developed to describe languages all over the world. They further note that some of the theories, such as ‘systemic functional theory’, claim that all clauses must have a subject no matter what language is being described. They say this is evident in languages such as English where every clause has at least an implied subject.

Contrary to the argument that grammatical relations are a language universal notion, Tarugarira (1996:24) comments that “it is in fact a presupposition that every existing language has

grammatical relations”. She, therefore, shares Cook’s (1988) claim that most aspects of the notion of grammatical relations have been based upon implicational universals. Implicational universals, as noted in the preceding chapter, are those universal claims based on evidence from a number of languages and can be discredited at any time in future by the discovery of some negative evidence from one or so languages. This position is shared by Langacker (1991) who, despite his original belief in cross-linguistic aspects characterising this notion, later came to conclude that there is no consensus concerning even the most basic aspects of the notion of grammatical relations. He says scholars cannot agree even on what he previously thought to be the cornerstones of the notion, that is, ‘subject’ and ‘object’ relations.

Blake (1982:63) shows much support for this general picture when he notes that “the existence of thematic relations is inevitable but grammatical relations are not and one can easily imagine a language without them”. Blake (1982:73) further points that “...direct object is not as firmly established as the frequent use of the term suggests, and subject is certainly not universal.” All this shows that there are a lot of disagreements characterising the area in question and, hence, the suggestion that it is due to implicational universals that the characterisation of relations has remained in such a vague state for so long. It is such variations that have also induced Burling (1992:112) into observing that “...what is difficult and still a long way to be accomplished is the production of a grammar that accounts for all the sentences in all the languages of the world.” Blake (1982) notes, for example, that in English and German the term ‘subject’ may be applied to the noun, equivalent word or word group found in the minimal basic exocentric sentence type represented, for instance, by the highlighted entity in:

2a. *John anoshanda.*

*John*      *a-*                                  *no-*                                  *shand-*                                  *a*

cl.1a    cl.1a AGR.    Pres Cont T.    VR 'work'    TV

"John works."

This is a simple sentence made up of the action and the performer. That performer, in the above example *John*, is performing the subject function.

In Latin, Blake (1982) further notes that the same term 'subject' may be defined by reference to the concord of person and number that is found between one noun, pronoun or corresponding word group in the nominative case and the verb, not between the verb and any other noun. This demonstrates the differences characterising languages when it comes to the notion in question and, therefore, the need to look into most of the languages so closely.

Chung (1976) also comments that it must not be assumed that subjects and predicates will be formally identifiable in all sentences of a language. For instance, one can have sentences of the imperatival type such as the two sentences below:

2b.(i) *Mubate!*

*mu-*                                  *bat-*                                  *e*

cl.1 AGR.    VR 'catch'    TV

“Catch him or her!”

2b.(ii) Mhanya!

mhany- a

VR. ‘run’ TV

“Run!”

Examples 2b.(i)-2b.(ii) show grammatical and acceptable Shona sentences that have covert subjects. Grammaticality is hereby understood to mean conformity to syntactic rules whilst acceptability is understood to refer to conformity to the judgments of the native speakers’ intuitions (Crystal, 1969). Of course what makes the two examples grammatical is the existence of the covert subject *iwe* “you” in both cases, but the sentences’ ability to exist without them is noteworthy here. This makes the position raise the suspicion that one can easily imagine or come across a language without them. In support of this possibility, Robins (1991:237) asserts that “...the relation is, however, by no means language universal”. This is the reason Everaert, van Riemsdijk, and Goedemans (2006) note that, in response to the general argument that all sentences have subjects, other theories have since surfaced in contrastive linguistics claiming that there is no such category that is consistent for all languages.

As evident in the review above, scholars are far from agreeing in their opinions concerning this notion of grammatical relations. The current researcher is of the opinion that researches should be carried out in most of the natural languages of the world to ensure that conclusions based on

tangible evidence put an end to controversies based on implicational universals. This is the opinion fuelling the current desire to explore the nature of the subject relation in Shona.

## **2.2 Subject relation**

Chomsky (1965) notes that whilst an object is an internal sentential argument, a subject is an external argument. Crystal (1969) defines internal argument as one realised internal to the maximal projection heading it whilst external argument refers to one realised external to that maximal projection. Hudson (1984) also comments that due to this special position of a subject in a sentence, it deserves some special treatment compared to all the other grammatical relations. She comments that this unique status is appropriate in view of the special properties they possess in most languages of the world. Hudson (1984), however, admits the existence of difficulties hindering the compilation of a set of necessary and sufficient characteristics for the relation in all the natural languages.

Blake (1982) claims that the subject is a well-founded entity showing up in rules of word order, agreement, case assignment as well as rules of deletion such as infinitival complements. This seems to be the reason Hageman (1998:191) comments that a subject is only definable as "...a noun phrase dominated by syntactic configurations rather than an entity on its own right".

To shed more light on the general properties of the subject relation, it appears advisable to consider some of the various sub-categories of this relation as they surface in the literature

produced so far. The subject noun phrase has to be original, preceding the verbal complex and agreeing with it (Hudson, 1984). It, thus, has to occupy the position that Ouhalla (1994) terms the ‘subject position’, that is, the position immediately preceding the auxiliary in an active sentence. Brown and Miller (1985) forward a similar account for the type of subject they call the grammatical or morphological subject. The name stems from the fact that it dictates the morphological composition of the predicate failure of which ungrammaticality will result. For instance, noting that from this point all entities controlling agreement and the agreement markers are italicised, the following example must be as follows:

2c.(i) *Dare rapera.*

<i>dare</i>	<i>ra-</i>	<i>per-</i>	<i>a</i>
cl.5 ‘court session’	cl.5 AGR	VR ‘end’	TV

“The court session has ended.”

2c.(i) is grammatical because of the concordial agreement between *dare* “court session” and *ra-* “has” both of which are class 5. it is noteworthy that Shona class 5 agreement marker is (*ri-*). When it is used together with the past tense marker one will have it as *ra-* “has” as in example 2c.(i) above. However, if it is used together with future tenses, for example, one will have forms like *rinopera* “it will end” in which it is realised as *ri-*. The future tense marker in this case is *no-* “will”. 2c.(i) will be marked as ungrammatical if by any chance one puts it as follows:

2c.(ii) \**Dare wopera.*

<i>dare</i>	<i>wa-</i>	<i>per-</i>	<i>a</i>
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cl.5 ‘court session’ cl.1 AGR VR ‘end’ TV

“The court session has ended.”

The asterisk \* is marking ungrammaticality. This ungrammaticality stems from the absence of concordial agreement this time between class 5 *dare* “court session” and class 1 *wa-* “has”.

In addition to its special entailment outlined by Ouhalla (1994) above, Brown and Miller (1985) specify that this NP’s positional location makes it the automatic controller of agreement within the sentence further pointing that in most languages it achieves this effect by prefixing its marker onto the verbal complex. For instance, in 2c.(i) the class 5 NP *dare* “court session” has been given the opportunity to impose the class 5 agreement marker *ra-* on to the verbal complex thereby promoting grammaticality. 2c.(ii) is ungrammatical because of the failure to do so. They, thus, agree with Kuroda (1976) who refers to the logical subject as normally playing the surface subject role. Kuroda (1976:110) asserts that “...we may agree to understand by surface subject that constituent of a sentence determining the surface form of the verb, that is, the constituent of a sentence that the main verb agrees with in number and person.”

Włodarczyk and Włodarczyk (2008) also note that a subject in English typically matches two types of patterns, that is, agreement and word order. It both agrees with the verb group of its clause and is positioned in certain particular ways. The agreement is one of two different forms of the verb (three in the case of the verb ‘be’) depending on the number and person of its subject. For instance, if a subject is singular and is third person, that is, it is neither the speaker nor the

listener, one chooses the form ‘has’ of the verb ‘have’; otherwise one chooses ‘have’. Please see examples below noting that since the focus is on the behavior of English verbs in these examples, the Shona translation comes after the English one:

2d.(i) “*She has gone.*”

*Aenda.*

*a-          end-      a*

cl.1 AGR.  VR. ‘go’  TV

2d.(ii) “*They have gone.*”

*Vaenda.*

*va-          end-      a*

cl.2 AGR  VR. ‘go’  TV

As evident in the translations, Shona behaves in the way English behaves in as far as this respect is concerned. In 2d.(i) there is *a-* “has” because the covert subject is singular whereas in 2d.(ii) there is *va-* “they” since the covert subject is plural.

Noonan (1985) makes use of positional terms describing the relation as the topical subject. In this case, the relation is expressed as the occupant of the sentence-initial position, that is, the one referred to by Ouhalla (1994) above as the subject position. Kawasha (2002) reiterates to this by noting in Lunda that in simple sentences the subject comes before the verb whereas the object is an unmarked post-verbal NP. This is the most pronounced gap in a sentence. Robins (1991:230) comments that in English “...a word or phrase can be placed in this initial position for the sake of



prominence by a number of devices”. However, it is worth pointing out that this is not the only way through which prominence could be assigned to entities. Robins (1991) clearly notes that most, if not all natural languages, have their own special means of focusing attention onto a particular word or phrase for stylistic or other communicative reasons. For example, Kuno (1973) argues that whilst Japanese attaches a particle after the first word or phrase for prominence’s sake, a number of languages of the Philippines make an extensive use of such particles and verb morphology to mark the semantic focus of different constituents of a sentence.

This is supported by Catell (1976) who points that whilst Classical Latin, with a very free word order, can achieve a like effect by changing word order, German has more marking of subjects and objects by morphological means. Kuroda (1976) notes as well that in non-configurational languages, it is also assumed that the typical, or proper, function of the nominative case is to indicate the subject of a proposition. All this serves to demonstrate the variedness of the ways through which languages mark their words or phrases for prominence, a feature that Noonan (1985) claims to be associated with the topical subject in most languages. This demonstrates how languages vary in their handling of prominent sentential entities and hence the need to carryout language oriented researches on them.

Bliss and Storoshenko (2010) demonstrate the connection between the topical gap and the subject relation in Shona also proving that agreement is subject driven. They, however, leave other things out raising the suspicion that they understand this relation in Shona as explainable fully in topical and morphological terms alone. Brown and Miller (1985:69) discuss another type

called the ‘logical’ or ‘semantic’ subject. They describe it as the ‘referent’ because it is the entity to which the verbal complex or predicate refers. It is this view that has been incorporated by Allen (1992) as well who describes the subject relation as a noun or its equivalent about which a sentence is predicated and with which the verb agrees. Marantz (1981) points that the term ‘logical subject’ involves a confusion of distinct levels of representation. Marantz rather views it as the ‘thematic argument’ of a predicate that has the feature [SUBJ] assigned to it in the unmarked distinctive lexical form.

Lee (1974) describes this type of subject relation in its structural sense as the actor involved in the under transformation of ‘actor-action-acted of the kernel sentence’. Another description of this semantic subject is attainable from Hopper and Thompson’s (1982) characterization of a prototypically transitive construction. They say “a prototypically transitive construction is one in which an action is carried over from an agent to a patient and the action must have a direct effect on the patient” (Hopper and Thompson, 1982:67). In such a case, the agent or the carrier of the action will be acting as the semantic, thematic or logical subject. The patient becomes the object of the action.

Interesting to note at this moment is Comrie’s (1981:116) claim that “if a non-subject entity is promoted to the canonical subject position through passivisation transformational rule, given that a sentence cannot have two subjects, the actual subject is deleted or demoted to the oblique object position.” Comrie (1981), thus, refers to the logical subject as the actual subject, the reason behind the term being its possession of the power to have direct effect on the object in a

sentence. Furthermore, no other entity can have such an effect on the patient role or direct object (Cook, 1988). This appears to be the reason Hudson (1984:71) refers to it as the obligatory or impossible subject because no other participant can take over and assume its full power in relation to another in a sentence.

Haegeman (1998:220) observes that every sentence must meet the demand of the extended projection principle (EPP) that “every sentence must have a subject of some sort”. Stockwell (1977) notes that due to that obligation, in cases where no real subject makes sense, dummy subjects come into use. These act as placeholders and add nothing to the semantic composition of the sentence for they refer to none of the entities in the real world. They serve a purely syntactic function. In English the role is played by ‘there’ or ‘it’ (Hudson, 1984). This puts the subject in a very special position in sentences for it cannot be left out for no apparent reason.

Comrie (1981) seems to have anchored the intransitivity assumption upon this extended projection principle. The assumption asserts that if a sentence has a single argument, that argument is automatically accorded the subject status no matter its thematic role. Grinder (1973) shares the position by noting in languages like English the obligation for every sequence to undergo the agreement transformational rule. This transformational rule ensures subject-verb agreement in every sequence. Related to this is Givon’s (1991) assertion that the agreement of the verb with the singular or plural feature of the grammatical subject in Ute is also an obligatory process. Ute is an Australian language of the Pama-Nyangan family (Givon, 1991). This shows how widespread the notion is amongst most of the natural languages.

Therefore, as Kuroda (1976) notes, there are a number of ways through which languages mark their relations. Some of the languages use word order more than morphological markings, which is the case in English and Japanese respectively. Others have no definable word order and use only morphological markings, which is the case with Walpiri and Malayalam (Langacker, 1991).

Considering such variations in languages, it will be a mere presupposition to argue that all natural languages of the world fit into the classes established this far. There could be a group of languages without fixed word orders, and well-pronounced case or morphological markings. It appears to be upon such a situation that scholars like Cook (1988), Robins (1991) and Tarugarira (1996) base the argument that it is a mere presupposition that all languages have grammatical relations further commenting that the disagreements among the scholars of syntax suggest that the conclusions they are working with so far have largely been based upon implicational universals.

It, therefore, appears difficult for one to establish a clear-cut definition for the subject relation applicable to all the natural languages of the world at the moment. All one can do is to establish the characteristics coming out of the literature on the family into which the language under scrutiny falls. In this case, Shona is a Bantu language. Bantu languages, as Hyman and Duranti (1992) note, fall into the class of configurational languages. In Shona and most of the Bantu languages, they note that “one can establish without controversy the relations of subject, direct object and oblique object” (Hyman and Duranti, 1992:132). They define the oblique object as the

by-phrase that is created by the employment of the passivisation transformational rule in a sentence.

Givon (1991) observes that in most of these languages, the subject precedes and conditions agreement on the verb, which in turn is directly followed by the direct object. An oblique object then follows and is normally preceded by a preposition. This researcher, however, sees the need to venture into researches verifying how smoothly the majority of the languages of the family fit into such implicational conclusions.

### 2.3 Thematic roles

Ouhalla (1994) describes thematic roles as the interface between syntax and semantics. Frawley (1992) goes further noting that it is a term used to express the meaning that a noun phrase has in relation to the action or state described by a sentence's verb. For example, in the sentence:

2e. *Susan adya epo.*

*Susan*     *a-*             *dy-*             *a*             *epo*

cl.1a     cl.1a AGR.   VR. 'eat'   TV     cl.5 'apple'

“Susan ate an apple”

In example 2e. *Susan* is the doer of the eating, so she is an agent; *epo* “apple” is the item that is eaten, so it is a patient. There are various types of semantic roles that a syntactic relation may be

playing in a specific sentence. Therefore, in a sentence a participant has both a syntactic role such as subject and a semantic or thematic role such as agent.

The types of roles to be found in a sentence are dictated by a verb's predicate argument structure (PAS). For instance, the verb 'hit' takes an agent (one who does the hitting) and a patient (the item being hit). Ouhalla (1994) observes that the relationship between the thematic properties of lexical items and their syntactic representations is mediated by a syntactic principle called the theta criterion, which applies at lexical functional (LF) level but the effects of which extend to other syntactic levels by virtue of the projection principle (PP). LF is the level where sentences are assigned semantic representations, and, thus, the level where thematic relations are determined.

Dowty (1991) presents the principle of Argument Selection (AS) that appears to be of considerable importance at this point in as far as the determination of what argument plays the subject role is concerned in different situations. It claims that the more prototypical agent entails a participant has in relation to the other participants in the sentence, the greater the chances of being encoded as the subject relation it has. The other entity becomes the automatic object of that sentence. Agent is the highest entity on the thematic hierarchy (TH). Kangira (2001) describes the TH as an arrangement of the thematic roles in relation to each other. Kangira comments that there is disagreement on the order in which the roles should take in the TH. However, adopting from Jackendoff (1972), Kangira presents it as follows:

Agent > Beneficiary or Benefactor > Maleficiary Malefactor > Goal or Source > Experiencer > Instrument > Theme or Patient > Location

This means that the agent takes precedence over the others for purposes such as determining their access to subjecthood in active clauses. The agent has the highest number of proto-subject entailments and the location has the least number. It is this relationship that Tarugarira's (1996) research meant to demonstrate. "A prototype is a central member of a category and the other entities are classified according to their degree of similarity to it" (Kangira, 2001:99). In other words, all the other participants on the hierarchy exhibit these entailments in varying amounts leading to their different priorities in as far as the subject status is concerned. The roles are, thus, set in a continuum that runs from agent to location in as far as priority to subjecthood is concerned, and also from location to agent in as far as preference to objecthood is concerned.

Dowty (1991) presents the following proto-agent and proto-patient entailments:

**Table 1: Proto-agent and Proto-patient entailments**

<b>Proto-agent entailments</b>	<b>Proto-patient entailments</b>
Volition	Causally affected
Sentience	Undergoes change of state
Causation	Stationery relative to the subject
Existence independent of the action	No independent existence
Movement towards the patient	No movement towards

In this case, ‘volition’, as pointed earlier, refers to the entailment that the participant willingly or voluntarily initiates the action referred to by the verb and carries it to its logical conclusion. ‘Sentience’ refers to the entailment of making a conclusion based on feelings and thoughts in favor of the action. ‘Causation’ entails that the entity causes the action to occur and is the opposite of being ‘causally affected’. ‘Independent existence’ concerns the entailment that the participant can exist independent of the action in question. ‘Movement towards’ refers to the characteristic that in the course of carrying out the action, the entity performing the action moves in the direction of the one that is being acted upon.

The foregoing discussion makes it clear that whilst grammatical relations (subject, object, and oblique, among others) are morphosyntactic in nature, semantic roles such as (agent, patient and instrument) are conceptual notations. It is noteworthy that semantic roles do not correspond directly to grammatical relations (Dowty, 1991). For instance, a great variety of thematic roles can be expressed as topical subjects as shown in table 4 bellow:



**Table 2: Participant’s grammatical relation and semantic role**

Sentence	Grammatical relation	Semantic role
<p>1. <i>Shumba yadya mhembwe.</i></p> <p>shumba ya- dy- a mhembwe            cl.9 ‘lion’ cl.9 AGR VR. ‘eat’ TV cl.9 ‘bushbuck’</p> <p>“The lion ate a bushbuck.”</p>	Subject	Agent
<p>2. <i>Kiyi yavhura gonhi.</i></p> <p>kiyi ya- vhur- a gonhi            cl.9 ‘key’ cl.9AGR VR. ‘open’ TV cl.5 ‘door’</p> <p>“The key opened the door.”</p>	Subject	Instrument
<p>3. <i>Mukomana haana kuona gudo.</i></p> <p>mukomana haana ku- on- a gudo            cl.1 ‘boy’ Neg. cl.15 VR. ‘see’ TV cl.5 ‘baboon’</p> <p>“The boy did not see a baboon.”</p>	Subject	Experiencer
<p>4. <i>Mabagwe adyiwa nembeva.</i></p> <p>mabagwe a dyiw- a ne- mbeva            cl.6 ‘maize’ cl.6 AGR VR ‘eaten’ TV ‘by’ cl.10 mice</p> <p>“Maize have been eaten by mice.”</p>	Subject	Theme
<p>5. <i>Vashandi vapiwa mari.</i></p> <p>vashandi va- piw- a mari            cl.2 workers’ cl.6AGR VR ‘be given’ TV cl.9 money’</p> <p>“Workers have been given money.”</p>	Subject	Beneficiary

Frawley (1992) notes that the number and type of thematic roles varies with scholars summarising what he calls the major thematic roles as follows, noting that in each example italics indicate the subject and the agreeing affix whilst bold mark the entity being discussed like agent in the next example :

**Agent:** It is the entity that deliberately performs the action. For instance, one can have:

2f.(i) *Bill* akadya muto wake akanyarara.

*Bill* a- ka- dy- a muto wake akanyarara

cl.1a cl.1a AGR Past T. VR 'eat' TV cl.3'soup' Poss. 'quietly'

"Bill ate his soup quietly."

In 2f.(i), Bill is the person who volitionally initiates and carries the action specified by the verb to its logical conclusion.

**Experiencer:** This is the entity that receives sensory or emotional input. For example:

2f.(ii) *Mweya wehuchi wazadza* **mhino dzaJenifer**.

*mweya* we- *huchi* wa- zadz- a **mhino dza- Jenifer**

cl.3 'smell' Poss cl.12 'honey' cl.3 AGR VR 'fill' TV cl.10 'nose' Poss. cl.1a

"The smell of the honey filled Jennifer's nostrils."

*Mhino dzaJenifer* "Jennifer's nostrils" is in this case the receiver of the smelling honey and, thus, the experiencer.

**Patient:** It is the entity that undergoes the action but does not change its state. For instance, one can have:

2f.(iii) *Mary akapfura John.*

<i>Mary</i>	<i>a-</i>	<i>ka-</i>	<i>pfur-</i>	<i>a</i>	<b>John</b>
cl.1a	cl.1a AGR	Past T.	VR 'kick'	TV	cl.1a

“Mary kicked John.”

*John* is the patient since he is the sufferer of the kicking in that sentence. He is not moving towards the person carrying out the action which is another characteristic of a patient.

**Theme:** This is the entity that undergoes the action and changes its state. This is sometimes used interchangeably with patient because there is the common element of undergoing an action.

2f.(iv) *Mabwe akawa akapwanya mota.*

<i>mabwe</i>	<i>a-</i>	<i>ka-</i>	<i>w-</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>a-</i>	<i>ka-</i>	<i>pwany-</i>	<i>a</i>	<b><i>mota</i></b>
cl.6 'stones'	cl.6 AGR	Past T.	VR 'fall'	TV	cl.6 AGR	Past T.	VR 'crush'	TV	cl.3 'car'

The falling rocks crushed a car.

*Mota* “car” is the sufferer of the action whose state has been changed in the event. It is, therefore, the theme in the sentence.

**Instrument:** This is the entity used to carry out the action. For example:

2f.(v) *Jamie acheka tambo nechigero.*

*Jamie*      *a-*              *chek-*      *a*      *tambo*              *ne-*              ***chigero***

cl.1a      cl.1a AGR      VR ‘cut’      TV      cl.3 ‘rope’      ‘with’      cl.7 ‘scissors’

Jamie cut the rope with a pair of scissors.

*Chigero* “scissors” is the instrument because it is the entity being used in carrying out the action specified by the verb in this sentence.

**Force or Natural Cause:** This is the entity that mindlessly performs the action. For example, one can consider:

2f.(vi) *Mvura ine mutinhiro yaparadza tembere.*

*mvura*      *ine*              *mutinhiro*              *ya-*              *paradz-*              *a*              *tembere*

cl.9 ‘rain’ ‘with’      cl.3 ‘thunder’      cl.3 AGR      VR ‘destroy’      TV      cl.9 ‘tempel’

A thunderstorm destroyed the temple).

*Mvura ine mutinhiro* “thunderstorm” is the entity that mindlessly destroys the temple. It is, therefore, the force or natural cause.

**Location:** It is the place where the action occurs. For instance, one can consider:

2f.(vii) *Johnny naLinda vatamba mupaki.*

*Johnny na- Linda va- tamb- a mu- paki*

cl.1a ‘and’ cl.1a cl.2 AGR R ‘dance’ TV cl.18 cl.9 ‘park’

“Johnny and Linda danced in the park.”

*Mupaki* “in the park” is the location or the place where the playing specified by the verb took place.

**Direction or Goal:** It is the place where the action is directed towards. For example:

2f.(viii) Akaenda **kuchikoro**.

*a- ka- end- a ku- chikoro*

cl.1a AGR Past T VR ‘go’ TV cl.17 cl.7 ‘school’

“He went to school.”

In 2f.(viii) *kuchikoro* “to school” is the direction in which the overt performer of the action was going. It is the goal of the action.

**Recipient:** This is a special kind of goal associated with verbs expressing a change in ownership, possession such as:

2f.(ix) Tumira **Miro** tsamba.

tumir- a **Miro** tsamba

VR 'sent' TV cl.1a cl.9 'letter'

“Sent Miriro a letter.”

Miriro is the recipient of the letter being sent in the sentence.

**Source or Origin:** this is the place where the action originated, for instance:

2f.(x) *Bara rakabva kuIraq.*

*bara*                    *ra-*                    *ka-*                    *bv-*                    *a*                    *ku-*                    **Iraq**

cl.5 'bullet'    cl.5AGR    Past T.    VR 'come'    TV    cl.17 'Iraq'

“The bullet came from Iraq.”

*Iraq* is the place from which the bullet came and, thus, the source of the bullet.

**Time:** This is the time at which the action occurs, for example:

2f.(xi) *Bara rakauya zuro.*

*bara*                    *ra-*                    *ka-*                    *uya*                    *a*                    **zuro**

cl.5 'bullet'    cl.5 AGR                    Past T.    VR 'come'                    TV    'yesterday'

“The bullet was shot yesterday.”

*Zuro* “yesterday” is the time that the shooting occurred.

**Beneficiary or benefactor:** the entity for whose benefit the action occurs. It is the one gaining from the action stipulated by the verb, for example:

2f.(xii) *Ndakabhekera Reggie keke.*

*nda- ka- bheker- a Reggie keke*

‘I’ Past T. VR ‘bake’ TV cl.1a cl.5 ‘cake’

“I baked Reggie a cake.”

*Reggie* is the person who is benefiting from the baking involved in the sentence. The cake is the benefit that he receives so he is the beneficiary or benefactor.

**Manner:** This is the way in which an action is carried out, for instance:

2f.(xiii) *Nekukasira Tabitha afona.*

*ne- kukasira Tabitha a- fon- a*

‘with’ ‘urgency’ cl.1a cl.1a AGR VR ‘phoned’ T V

“With urgency, Tabitha phoned.”

*Nekukasira* “with urgency” is the manner in which the phoning specified by the verb occurred.

**Purpose:** It is the reason for which an action is performed, for instance, one can have:

2f.(xiv) *Tabitha afona kuti abatsirwe.*

*Tabitha a- fon- a kuti abatsirwe*

cl.1a      cl.1a AGR    VR ‘phoned’    TV    ‘to’    ‘get help’

“Tabitha phoned to get help.”

In 2f.(xiv) *kuti abatsirwe* “to get help” is the purpose or reason behind the phoning specified by the verb.

**Cause:** This refers to that which caused the action to occur in the first place. It explains the reason for which the action happened, for example:

2f.(xv) *Sezvo Davie anga onzwa nzara, adya sadza.*

sezvo    *Davie*    **anga onzwa    nzara**    a-                    dy-    a            sadza

‘since’    cl.1a            ‘was’            ‘hungry’    cl.1a AGR    VR ‘eat’    TV    cl.5 ‘sadza’

“Since Davie was hungry, he ate the cake.”

*Anga onzwa nzara* “was hungry” is the cause of the eating specified by the verb. It is the reason that facilitated the action in question.

The subject participant of a sentence can have different thematic roles. According to the selectional principles established in the other languages, the type of thematic role a subject has depends upon the thematic role of the other participant in the sentence. All these play a part in determining the type of subject it is.



Having realised that many scholars mistakenly interchange the terms thematic relations and theta roles, Carnie (2006) highlights the importance of defining their dividing line. He notes that thematic relations concern the nature of the relationship between the meaning of the verb and the meaning of the noun. On the other hand, theta roles are about the number of arguments that a verb requires which is represented on a verb's theta grid. For example, the one for:

2g.(i) ipa “give” is <agent, theme, goal>.

Theta roles are a syntactic relation that refers to the semantic or thematic relations. He further comments that one participant can bear two thematic relations but never more than one theta role. For example, if one takes the sentence:

2g.(ii) *Reggie akapa George keke neChishanu.*

*Reggie a- ka- p- a George keke ne- Chishanu*

cl.1a cl.1a AGR. Past T. VR ‘give’ TV cl.1a cl.5 ‘cake’ ‘on’ cl.7 ‘Friday’

“Reggie gave George the cake on Friday.”

One can summarize the situation as follows:

- **Thematic relations:** Reggie is doing the action so is the agent, but he is also the source of *keke* “the cake” (note Reggie bears two thematic relations!); the cake is the entity acted upon so it is the patient; ‘George’ is the direction or goal or recipient of the giving. *Chishanu* “Friday” represents the time of the action.

- **Theta roles:** The verb *ipa* “give” requires three arguments. In generative grammar, this is encoded in terms of the number and type of theta roles the verb takes. The theta role is named by the most prominent thematic relation associated with it. So the three required arguments bear the theta roles named the agent (Reggie), the patient or theme (the kibble), and goal or recipient (George). ‘On Friday’ does not receive a theta role from the verb, because it is an adjunct not a participant or grammatical relation in this sentence. Please note that ‘Reggie’ bears two thematic relations (Agent and Source), but only one theta role (the argument slot associated with these thematic relations).
- **Grammatical relations:** The subject of this sentence is ‘Reggie’, the object is *keke* “the cake”, the indirect object is *kuna George* “to George”, and *neChishanu* “on Friday” is the oblique.

## 2.4 Theoretical framework

This section reviews literature related to the theoretical framework being used in the current research. Robins (1991:234) describes the grammarian’s core concern as “...the presentation of the most exhaustive, truthful and economical account of the word and sentence structures of a language he can and to relate them to semantic classes and categories”. To judge or test the authenticity and exhaustiveness of the characterisation, there should be some scientific theory to act as a hypothesis.

Catell (1976:94) defines a theory as a “...hypothesis that delimits and explains the phenomena that are relevant to it as well as the concepts that it employs in systematic description and analysis.” As pointed in the fore-going chapter, the researcher employs the projection principle (PP), the NP movement transformational rule, as well as the different selectional rules established in the other languages for the subject relation, to act as the hypothesis upon which to base his characterisation of the Shona subject relation.

As Haegeman (1998) observes, PP and the NP movement rule are branches of government and binding (GB) theory. Householder (1976) describes the term ‘government’ in grammar as an extension of the traditional use of the word. Governing words concerns the assignment of cases to nouns, NPs and pronouns with which they stand in specific syntactic relations. By case assigning they determine the semantic roles that the case assigned words play and on which the interpretation of the sentence depends. These cases are abstract thematic functions such as agent, patient, goal and experiencer. Binding on the other hand entails the reference relationship between noun phrases (Harris, 1976). It places syntactic restrictions on different parts of sentences for varying reasons in different languages.

#### **2.4.1 The projection principle (PP)**

Haegeman (1998), quoting Chomsky’s Public Lecture on Government and Binding Theory, comments that the projection principle (PP) is a stipulation proposed by Noam Chomsky’s as part of the phrase structure component of general-transformational grammar. Under the PP, the

properties of lexical items must be preserved while generating the phrase structure of a sentence. For example, the verb ‘strangle’, apart from the subject, has an obligatory argument, its object.

Allen (1992) describes the PP as a principle in government and binding theory (GB) by which the range of elements with which a unit combines is projected from the lexicon as restrictions on syntactic structures that use it. For instance, the ditransitive verb *isa* “put”, in addition to the external argument (subject), takes an object NP and a locative phrase as an oblique, as demonstrated in (2h) below:

2h. [*Monica*] *aisa* [bhuku] [patafura].

[*Monica*] put [the book] [on the table].

Subject          Object          Oblique

These requirements are specified as part of the information that constitutes its entry in the lexicon. Therefore, by the PP, any syntactic structure in which *isa* “put” appears must, at whatever syntactic level, have these elements represented within them. Putting it in other words, Roberts (1997) claims that all thematic roles associated with all lexical heads present in the structure must be realised by all categories bearing the thematic roles.

Rappaport and Levin (1988) assert that the projection principle ensures that many aspects of a clause are determined by the syntactic complement taking properties of the predicate that heads

it. Palmatier (1972) notes that projection rules produce semantic interpretations of sentences on the basis of their phrase structure, dictionary entries and transformational history. They select the appropriate senses of the lexical items to provide correct readings for each grammatical structure in the final derived phrase marker. They proceed from the bottom of the constituent structure to the top, interpreting the proper reading for each lexical item, amalgamating readings into an amalgam with a grammatical marker until the sentence is associated with a set of readings, that is, its semantic interpretation.

Palmatier (1972) also talks of projection rules of which type 1 rules operate on the final derived phrase marker of kernel sentences, which are sentences produced without any optional transformations. Type 2 rules provide a separate semantic interpretation for sentences constructed using optional transformations, revealing how a derived sentence is related in meaning to its source sentences. There is a single distinct projection rule for each grammatical relation. He further notes that projection rules are not ordered in respect to each other but apply when their conditions are met.

This is the position also adopted by Chomsky (1981) who observes that representations at each syntactic level, that is, Logical Form (LF), deep and surface structures, are projected from the lexicon for they observe the syntactic properties of lexical items. The natural intuitive sense of the principle is that every syntactic representation should be a projection of the thematic structure and the properties of lexical entries. The position is shared by Cook (1988) who asserts that the principle demonstrates the interface between syntax and morphology, that is, the link between

words and the syntactic configurations in which they occur. Bresnan (1982) assumes a similar position by noting that the role of grammatical functions in the lexical-functional theory of syntax is to provide the mapping between surface categorical structure and semantic predicate argument structure. This is done by assigning the grammatical functions' semantic roles and syntactic realisations in the categorical component of the syntax.

Grimshaw (1991) notes as well that in the lexical-functional theory of syntax, lexical items sub-categorize for function, not constituent structure categories, and lexical items exert their selectional restrictions on a subset of their sub-categorised functions. Bresnan (1982) also asserts that though some verb types do not impose selection restrictions on their external arguments others do. For instance, whilst *isa* "put" selects an animate subject some such as *tyisa* "frighten" only select an animate object. They, therefore, do not have selectional restrictions associated with the external relation, 'subject'. Catell (1976) assumes a similar stance further commenting that generalisations based on theories such as PP must lead to the conclusion that the results of a test are correct or wrong.

Roberts (1997) observes that where there are agents they are always the subjects but subjects are not always agents. There is, therefore, a need for marking to determine when a participant plays a certain semantic role. In other words, there is need for a way of making sure that the roles have some kind of syntactic realisation. This can be achieved by the projection principle (PP) since it can be used to verify the roles being played by participants through checking the claims of their lexical items' lexical entries. The type of information this researcher is particularly concerned

with is the thematic structure of the predicates, that is, the number and type of arguments each predicate takes. This is the reason, as pointed out in chapter one, the information given by the heads of the different Shona examples' lexical entries are presented in each case presented in the data analysis section.

Haegeman (1998) also points out that the thematic structure associated with lexical items must be saturated in the syntax, as stated in the theta criterion, a part of the projection principle (PP). The theta criterion states that each argument is assigned one and only one theta role. Furthermore, each role is assigned only to one argument. Roberts (1997) assumes a similar position adding that the most vital thing about theta roles is that each role in the entry of a lexical category corresponds to one argument in the syntax. The researcher will ensure that these conditions are met by each sentence that is considered for analysis in order to avoid false conclusions.

#### **2.4.2 The noun phrase movement transformation**

Fowler (1971) asserts that the grammarian must describe sentences in such a way as to account for what native mature speakers know about those sentences. Fowler further observes that one kind of generative grammar that performs these tasks particularly well is called a transformational grammar. Transformational grammar is a grammar that recognizes deep structure and surface structure distinction in syntax and employs certain formally distinctive kinds of linguistic rules. Fowler (ibid) also describes transformational rules as rules that relate sentences to each other adding that this is done by relating partially overlapping derivations.

According to the Dictionary.Com/AbstractSyntax (1998-2004), kernel sentences contain two essential parts, that is, an NP and a VP. All other sentence types are transformations or derivations of transformational rules. The transformations are said to be of three basic types namely:

### **Deletion transformations**

These involve the subtraction of a part of the original sentence. For example, instead of example 2i. below, one would get 2j:

2i. *Iwe* vhura gonhi.

*iwe*   vhur-     a     gonhi

cl.1 ‘you’   VR ‘open’   TV   cl.5 ‘door’

“You open the door.”

In Shona and English, people normally use the transformed version:

2j. Vhura gonhi.

vhur-           a     gonhi

VR ‘open’   TV   cl.5 ‘door’

“Open the door.”

*Iwe* “you” has been deleted. There are also what are known as:



### **Addition transformations**

These involve the addition of a new component to the original sentence pattern. For instance, to derive a question from the sentence:

2k. *Gonhi rashanduka rudzi.*

*gonhi*        *ra-*        *shanduk*        *a*        *rudzi*

cl.5 door    cl.5AGR    VR ‘change’    TV    cl.11 ‘colour’

“The door has changed colour.”

One will have it as:

2l. *Gonhi rashanduka rudzi kuenda kuchii?*

*gonhi*        *ra-*        *shanduk-*        *a*        *rudzi*        *kuenda*        *kuchii?*

cl.5 ‘door’    cl.5 AGR.    VR. ‘change’    TV    cl.11 ‘colour’    cl.15 ‘to’    ‘what’

“What did the door change its colour to?”

It is evident in the transformation that some new elements have been introduced such as *kuenda kuchii* “to what”. In addition to these, there are also what are known as:

### **Rearrangement transformations**

These involve the movement of the parts of the original sentence to derive a new order. For an example based on the above sentence structure, one may have the sentence:

2m. *Rashanduka rudzi gonhi kuenda kuchii?*

*Ra-* shanduk- a rudzi *gonhi* kuenda kuchii

cl.5 AGR. VR 'change' TV cl.11 'colour' cl.5 'door' cl.15 'to' cl.15 'what'

‘It changed its colour the door to what?’

There is evidence of words being displaced from their original positions within the sentence. For instance, *gonhi* ‘the door’ has been moved from the sentence-initial position to a gap in the middle of the sentence.

Ouhalla (1994) asserts also that transformational rules are rules that displace noun phrases (NPs) to other positions in sentences. They may move words and at times altering their forms in sentences. He presents definitions for a number of such rules. Topicalisation, for instance, is defined as a transformational rule that brings a phrase from a place after the verb to the sentence’s initial position. Its peculiar property being that it moves a category and attaches it to the sentence’s initial position. This places the topicalisation rule for a sentence such as 2n. can be topicalised as demonstrated in fig. 1:

2n. *John apfura Mary.*

*John* a- pfur- a *Mary*

cl.1a cl.1a AGR VR 'kick' TV cl.1a

“John kicked Mary.”

It can be summarised as follows:

**Fig. 1: Topicalisation transformational rule**

<i>John</i>	<i>wapfura</i>	Mary
X _____	V _____	X (Structural description (SD))
1	2	3
3	2	1 (Structural change (SC))
<i>Mary</i>	<i>wapfurwa</i>	naJohn
Mary	was kicked	by John. (Passive)

Ouhalla (1994) describes wh-movement as a transformational rule that moves the wh-phrase from an object position of the verb to the initial position of the sentence. In this case the auxiliary (Aux) moves with the wh-phrase. Though wh-movements involve noun phrase movements, they do not involve subject auxiliary inversion (SAI). Consequently tense does not get stranded and do-support fails to be triggered instead. In do-support, one has to insert do to support a stranded tense. This derives in English terms such as ‘does’ and ‘did’. SAI is for questions such as wh- and Yes or No. It makes the auxiliary and the subject appears inverted compared to their order in actives and it is the major characteristic of Yes or No questions (Cook, 1988).

Whilst PP and NP movement transformation are both branches of GB theory, Householder (1976) demonstrates a greater relationship between Binding and the NP-movement transformational rule. He describes the relationship of movement between surface and deep structures as restricted in terms of what can be moved, where and how. This involves movement, structure dependency as well as binding theory that limits the distance an item may move. It, thus, concerns reference relationship in a sentence.

Harris (1976) assumes a similar position when he comments that the study of transformations arose with the attempt to construct a method for analysing language samples longer than a sentence. They have some particular effect in the overall structure of the language and make possible unbounded sentences due to the unbounded repeatability of various sequential transformations. He adds that they give an organised view of complex sentences and, thus, provide solutions for the structure of some constructions, which are hardly solvable in the usual linguistic terms, for example, the English structure of 'flying planes' in 'Flying planes is my hobby.' They can explain what the differences in the two structures of such a homonymous sentence are.

Robins (1991) assumes a related position further commenting that transformations overcome structural restrictions of the kernel grammar. For example, that the subject be dropped by transforming into the passive and then carrying out the pro-drop transformation. Freidin (1992) shares the view noting that in many cases transformations add flexibility in a direct way and may change the grammatical status of a sentence into that of a noun phrase (NP). This makes it

possible, for example, to relate the sentence to an outside noun verb (NV) or verb (VN) order. They may bring out one part of the sentence for primary attention and, thus, yielding stylistic variations.

The current researcher chose this rule as a tool with which to analyze and characterize the flexibility of the Shona variety on the relation in question. Since the NP movement transformations are so varied, the researcher chose passivisation, reflexivisation, as well as wh-question formation. Some of the transformational rules such as the subject auxiliary inversion and do-support are not considered because they are not applicable to Shona.

### **2.4.3 The selectional principles**

The literature on selectional rules has been considered in section 2.2. More of it is reviewed in the respective sections where the rules are analysed in chapter three. They are not reviewed here to avoid repetition.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has demonstrated some of the controversies surrounding the area of grammatical relations in general and the subject relation in particular across the natural languages of the world. It has been resolved that for the attempt to compile a universal characterisation of the notion subject, there is need to start by carrying out detailed researches on it in a considerable number of the natural languages. Without such researches there will always be the danger of

making conclusions anchored on implicational universals. The current research is building upon this general background. It is an attempt to characterise fully the notion in Shona hoping other researches will follow in other languages.

## **CHAPTER THREE: SELECTION AND SUB-CATEGORISATION**

### **3.0 Preamble**

Whilst the previous chapter has focused on reviewing the extent to which the literature published to date has touched on the subject relation as well as related notions in Shona and other languages, this chapter analyses gathered data in a way that establishes the nature of the Shona subject relation. It intends to find out the selectional principles of the Shona subject relation, its sub-categorisations as well as the types of lexical items to which the relation is typically assigned in the language. The chapter consists of three major sections, the first of which presents an examination of the various selectional rules or principles that are involved in the assignment of the subject status onto the respective Shona sentence participants. The second one considers the different sub-categorisations of the relation resulting from the above selectional principles and lastly section 3.3 assesses the types of words to which the Shona subject role is typically assigned.

It must be noted that, as indicated in chapter one, all the examples presented in the data analysis have their predicate argument structures and the features of the arguments involved presented therewith to make sure they conform to the requirements of the projection principle. This rule is meant to complement the researcher's judgment on the collected sentences since Chomsky (1981) argues that the intuition or judgment of a native speaker on its own is enough to define the grammaticalness of every sentence in the language. The current researcher is a Shona native speaker which aids him in the assessment of the structures to be considered.

### 3.1 Selectional principles

Mohanan (1988) defines selectional principles or rules as the considerations leading to the assignment of syntactic or functional roles onto certain lexical items in different sentences. In other words, they specify why certain participants qualify to be labeled as the subjects or objects in their respective sentences. In the analysis of the data gathered for this study, the researcher found out that the selection of the subject relation conforms to the following selectional principles:

#### 3.1.1 Entities' topicality in word order

Shona word order plays a vital selectional role for subjects. Like in other Bantu languages such as Lunda in which Kawasha (2002) notes that the subject occurs before the verb whereas the object is an unmarked post-verbal NP, kernel Shona active sentences, are basically of the Subject Verb Object (SVO) order. They make the subject topical, followed by the verbal complex and lastly the object. A topic is the most pronounced participant or focus of a sentence. In Shona it is the occupant of a simple active sentence's initial position. For example, one can consider the following sentences whose topical subject phrases are italicised:

3a.(i) *Muchaneta waminya piritisi.*

<i>Muchaneta</i>	<i>wa-</i>	<i>miny-</i>	<i>-a</i>	<i>piritsi</i>
cl.1a	cl.1a AGR.	VR 'swallow'	TV	cl.5 'tablet'
<i>minya</i>	<Agent Theme>			
<i>Muchaneta</i>	[+HUMAN, +SINGULAR]			



piritsi [-ANIMATE, -ABSTRACT, +SINGULAR]

“Muchaneta swallowed a tablet.”

3a.(ii) *Joana afuka gumbezi.*

<i>Joana</i>	<i>a-</i>	<i>fuk-</i>	<i>-a</i>	<i>gumbezi</i>
cl.1a	cl.1a AGR.	VR ‘cover oneself’	TV	cl.5 ‘blanket’
<i>fuka</i>		<Agent	Instrument>	
<i>Joana</i>		[+HUMAN,	+SINGULAR]	
<i>gumbezi</i>		[-ANIMATE,	-ABSTRACT, +SINGULAR]	

“Joana covered herself with a blanket.”

*Muchaneta* and *Joana* in 3a.(i) and 3a.(ii) are placed sentence-initially. It is noteworthy, as mentioned earlier, that all the examples used in this data analysis have the subject phrases italicised. From the general trend it is evident that most of the italicised subjects occur sentence-initially. In other words they occupy a preverbal position. This means that the most pronounced gap in a sentence has come to be associated with the relation in question in Shona. It, therefore, behaves in a way that supports Hudson’s (1984) argument that the subject relation is the referent in a sentence or its pragmatic focus. This is also the reason Lehman (1992) labels the position as the canonical subject position. Shona, therefore, qualifies to be regarded as a topic-prominent language. According to Hale and Keyser (2002), in the Topic Theory, which is similar but not equivalent to the Theme Theory of the School of Prague, the subject is also the topic of a

proposition in the default word order. According to this theory, some languages have no means of determining a topic other than by making a complement into a subject. So ascribing a passive voice to the verb group is a way to topicalise the said complement.

### 3.1.2 Morphological or grammatical reasons

It is also evident in the data that NPs' occupation of the topical position in active sentences makes them the automatic controllers of agreement in Shona sentences. This agreement is explained by Dembetembe (1976) who asserts that if a noun phrase has its class feature copied on to the auxiliary in the structural change of the gender copying rule, that noun phrase is in a subject position. Stockwell (1977) also describes agreement rule as a type of constraint on the form of words occurring together, adding that it requires the form of one entity to be altered in order to match that of the one controlling agreement. Włodarczyk and Włodarczyk (2006) also observe that in languages like English, subjects govern agreement on the verb or auxiliary verb that carries the main tense of the sentence, as exemplified by the difference in verb forms in 3b.(i) and 3b.(ii) below:

3b.(i) *Mukomana anodya sadza.*

<i>mukomana</i>	<i>a-</i>	<i>no-</i>	<i>dy-</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>sadza</i>
cl.1 'boy'	cl.1 AGR.	Pres. Cont. T.	VR 'eat'	TV	cl.5 'sadza'
eat	<Agent Theme>				

mukomana [+HUMAN; +SINGULAR]

sadza [-ANIMATE; -ABSTRACT; -SINGULAR]

“A boy eats sadza.”

3b.(ii) *Vakomana vanodya sadza.*

*vakomana*    *va-*            *no-*            *dy-*            *a*            *sadza*

cl.6 ‘boys’    cl.6 AGR    Pres. Cont. T    VR ‘eat’    TV    cl.5 ‘sadza’

*idya*            <Agent    Theme>

*Vakomana*    [+HUMAN; -SINGULAR]

*Sadza*            [-ANIMATE; +SINGULAR; -ABSTRACT]

“The boys eat sadza.”

In 3b.(i) *mukomana* “boy” is class 1. Grammaticality prevails in the sentence because it has imposed its class 1 marker *a-* “has” on to the verbal complex. In 3b.(ii) agreement prevails again because the class 2 *vakomana* “boys” has again prefixed its class two agreement marker *va-* “have” onto the verbal complex. It is noteworthy that, as indicated earlier, in the whole data analysis section the agreement markers are italicised together with the NPs controlling

agreement.

In the gathered Shona data, just like in most Bantu languages in which Kawasha (2002) observes that the subject prefix is obligatorily marked on the verb, it is evident that the forms of the verbal complexes are required to match the class, number and gender of the subject NP. For example, in 3b.(i) *mukomana* “boy” and the agreement marker *a-* “has” share the features number (singular), gender (male) and class (1). This is the reason Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) comment that the subject has the grammatical function in a sentence of relating its constituent (a noun phrase) by means of the verb to any other elements present in the sentence, that is, objects, complements and adverbials. They indicate that a subject in English typically matches two types of patterns: agreement and word order.

Consider the following examples too:

3c.(i) *Vadzimu vedu vodzosea tsika pakare.*

*vadzimu*      *ve- du*      *vo-*      *dzoser-*      *a*      *tsika*      *pakare*

cl.2‘ancestor’ cl.2POSS cl.2AGR VR ‘restore’ TV cl.10 ‘norms’ cl.16‘original position’

*dzosea*                      <Agent Patient or Theme Goal>

*vadzimu vedu*              [+HUMAN, +ABSTRACT, -SINGULAR]

*tsika dzedu*                [-ANIMATE, +ABSTRACT, -SINGULAR]

“Our ancestors are restoring our norms and values to their original position.”

3c.(ii) *Shuro yaba bagwe.*

*shuro*            *ya-*            *b-*            *a*            *bagwe*

cl.9 ‘hare’    cl.9 AGR    VR ‘steal’    TV    cl.5 ‘maize cob’

*iba*            < Agent Patient >

*shuro*            [+ANIMATE,-HUMAN, +SINGULAR]

*bagwe*            [-ANIMATE, -ABSTRACT,+SINGULAR]

“The hare stole a maize cob.”

In this case it is notable that unlike in 3b., in 3c. the agreement marker *ya-* “has” is class 9, singular and inhuman. It shares features with *shuro* “hare” a class 9 noun which is now the occupant of the topical position.

The fact that it is the word occupying the topical gap that is italicised in most of the sentences used in the whole data analysis section demonstrates how central the topical word is in controlling Shona agreement. For example, in 3c.(i) and 3c.(ii) the italicized NPs are *vadzimu vedu* “our ancestors” and *shuro* “hare” both of which occur at the sentence initial gap and controlling agreement. It is for this reason that the topical subject relation is often the morphological or grammatical subject as well. Even in cases where transformational rules are applied to alter the focus of a sentence, the controller of agreement usually changes, as being demonstrated in the next chapter where in a passive transformation, for instance, the promoted

object, now occupying the topical subject position, takes over as the controller of agreement. Hence, Włodarczyk and Włodarczyk's (2006) observation that the subject both agrees with the verb group of its clause and is positioned in certain particular ways. However, the two need not be seen as always occurring together as being shown in chapter four where the object of the same passive transformation can control agreement even when it is not occurring sentence initially.

### 3.1.3 Semantic reasons

According to Hudson (1984), typical subject relations can be termed the semantic or logical subjects of their respective sentences. This is done because they have a direct effect on the state of their direct objects since they carry the actions minimally expressed by the verbs onto the direct objects. Moro (1997) notes that the concept of subject is either mixed with actors or with carriers of attributes. When this happens, it is defined as the argument that generally refers to the origin of the action or the initiator of the state shown by the predicate. Thus, it is a definition that takes the representation of the sentence into account. This is the type of relation obtaining between *vadzimu vedu* "our ancestors" and *tsika dzedu* "our norms and values" in example 3c.(i). The former is the only entity within the sentence actively involved in the restoration of those norms and values. The same applies to *shuro* "hare" in example 3c.(ii) which is the only entity actively involved in stealing the maize cob. It relates to the object in quite a unique way in its sentence. It is for this reason that this type is often termed the obligatory or logical subject.

To add evidence to the above, as being demonstrated in chapter four as well, even if a transformational rule is applied, the semantic subject is the only NP whose role cannot be played

by any other entity within that sentence. However, such a relation seems only obtaining in prototypically transitive sentences. Prototypically transitive sentences are those sentences involving an agent and a patient. In other words there is a clear cut relationship between the participants since it involves the entities at the two ends of the thematic hierarchy continuum. In intransitives and sentences where there are no such clear-cut relationships, for example where there is an experiencer and a patient, no entity has a direct effect on the object. For instance, in the following sentence:

3d. *Mukomana anoda sadza.*

*mukomana*    *a-*            *no-*            *d-*            *a*            *sadza*

cl.1 boy      cl.1AGR    Present T.    VR ‘like’    TV      cl.5 ‘sadza’

*ida*                    < Experiencer    Patient >

*mukomana*      [+HUMAN, +SINGULAR]

*sadza*              [-ANIMATE, -ABSTRACT]

“The boy likes sadza.”

In 3d. there is not that direct effect where one participant determines the state of the other between *mukomana* “boy” and *sadza* “sadza”. The relation is no longer as clear-cut as it was in 3b.. The former does not determine the state of the latter as is normally done by a typical semantic subject. To account for the assignment of the roles to the participants involved in such cases, the researcher considered the person animacy hierarchy (PAH) as it is presented by

Hyman and Duranti (1992).

### 3.1.4 Person animacy hierarchy (PAH)

The PAH is a ranking of the world’s entities to which sentences can refer in the following order:

1<sup>st</sup> person singular > 1st person plural > 2nd person singular > 2nd person plural > 3rd person singular > 3rd person plural > animates > inanimates

All of the entire world’s entities to which sentential phrases can refer are included in this ranking. Hyman and Duranti (1992) observe that Bantu languages, to which Shona belongs, observe this principle so much.

According to this selectional rule, the higher an entity ranks on the arrangement the greater the chances it has of being accorded the subject status in an active sentence. In other words, if A is a participant that is animate in a sentence, it, thus, has the first priority to subjecthood before B which is an inanimate participant. For instance, one can consider 3e. below:

3e. *Shumba dzinouya kumusha kwaNyasha.*

*shumba    dzi-        no-        uy-        a    ku-musha    kwa-    Nyasha.*

cl.10 lion   cl.10 AGR   future T.   VR. ‘come’   TV   cl.15 ‘home’   POSS   cl.1a

uya                      < Agent   Goal >

shumba                      [+ANIMATE; -SINGULAR]



kumusha kwaNyasha [-ANIMATE; -ABSTRACT; +SINGULAR]

“Lions come to Nyasha’s home.”

In 3e. the animate NP *shumba* “lions” is automatically assigned the subject status for it ranks higher than *kumusha kwaNyasha* “Nyasha’s home” which is inanimate. The latter is in turn accorded the object status. Therefore, though *shumba* “lions” is not determining the state of *kumusha kwaNyasha* “Nyasha’s home”, which is the order necessary when using the principle of semantic reasons, one can still assign the two to different syntactic roles using the PAH. However, there are also instances in Shona when one can find sentences with arguments belonging to the same class on the PAH. For example, in 3f. below:

3f. *Vatongi vaitya hama dzavo.*

*vatongi*      *va-*            *i-*            *ty-*            *a*            *hama*            *dzavo.*

cl.2 judges    cl.2 AGR.    Habitual T.    VR ‘fear’    TV    c.19 ‘relatives’    POSS

*itya*            <Experiencer    Patient>

*vatongi*            [+HUMAN; -SINGULAR]

*hama dzavo*      [+HUMAN; -SINGULAR]

“Judges feared their relatives.”

*Vatongi* “judges” and *hama dzavo* “their relatives” in 3f. both belong to the class of 3rd person plural but have been assigned different syntactic functions in that sentence. The explanations for

this assignment cannot certainly be found in the principles of semantic reasons and the PAH. Of course one may think of relying upon the topicality and morphological reasons discussed in 3.1.1 and 3.1.2, but it would not be wise to base a judgment on one principle since the two usually co-occur. Furthermore, as demonstrated in chapter four, topicality and morphological reasons are often subject to the sentence's voice, that is whether it is active or passive. To cater for cases such as 3f., the researcher considered another principle called the thematic hierarchy (TH) as it is presented by Kangira (2001).

### **3.1.5 Thematic hierarchy (TH)**

The TH is another hierarchy that ranks the thematic relations on a hierarchy that runs from agent to location or patient relation in the following order:

Agent > Beneficiary or Benefactor > Maleficiary or Malefactor > Source > Goal >  
Experiencer > Instrument > Theme or Patient > Location

The agent ranks highest and the location lowest, depending upon the school of thought in use. The ranking is a matter of degree and all the other roles are placed in relation to their likeness to the agent or location role. Therefore, the hierarchy takes the agent and the location roles as its prototypes. The more the prototypical agent entailments a participant has, the higher it is ranked on the list. The more prototypical patient entailments a participant also has, the lower it is ranked on the hierarchy. Therefore, the hierarchy predicts an increase in a function's preference to the subject position from right to left as well as an increase of the preference to the object position from left to right. In other words, the agent and the location are predicted as the most likely and frequent candidates for the subject and object positions respectively (Siewierska, 1991).

For instance, in Shona cases such as 3f. where *vatongi* “judges” and *hama dzavo* “their relatives” are both 3rd person plural, this ranking proves an effective selectional rule. *Vatongi* “judges” is an experiencer and has more prototypical agent entailments than *hama dzavo* “their relatives”, which is a mere patient. Therefore, though the two participants belong to the same class on the PAH, they can still be assigned to different syntactic slots basing on their rankings on the TH.

It has to be noted as well that, just like semantic reasons discussed in section 3.1.3, the TH considers the semantic relationships between the two arguments in relation to the predicate involved. It is for this reason that the selections made by these two principles always coincide. This is also the reason the semantic subject is often termed the thematic subject (Brown and Miller, 1985).

It is important to note that the principles presented so far, apart from the topicality and morphological reasons, can only handle situations in which two or more participants are involved. However, the researcher found out from the gathered data that there are cases in which the sentences comprise of solitary participants. To explain the assignment of the syntactic role involved in such situations, the researcher relied upon Comrie’s (1981) intransitivity assumption.

### **3.1.6 Intransitivity assumption**

According to this assumption, where only one argument is involved, it is automatically accorded the subject status in that sentence. The current researcher considered it a sound assumption for it

has been modeled alongside the demand of the extended projection principle (EPP) that all sentences should have subjects of some sort (Haegeman, 1998). Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) also support this by noting that the subject was first defined to be the main argument of a proposition adding that since then, linguistic theories have been developed to describe languages all over the world with some, such as Systemic Functional Theory, claiming that all clauses must have a subject no matter what language is being described. A good example of one such solitary participant playing the subject role is evident in example 3g. following:

3g. *Danda ravora.*

*danda*            *ra-*            *vor-*            *a*

cl.5 ‘log’    cl.5 AGR    VR. ‘Rot’    TV

*vora*            <Theme>

*danda*            [-ANIMATE; -ABSTRACT; +SINGULAR]

“A log has rotten.”

*Danda* “a log” is a theme in this sentence and, thus, at the bottom of the thematic hierarchy. It has, however, been accorded the subject status because of this fact that it is the solitary participant. For want of confirmation in such cases the researcher then considered the topicality and morphological reasons presented earlier. Confirmation was considered necessary because there are instances when rules’ selections contradict. For such an example one can consider 3g. below:

3g. *Bere radya John.*

<i>bere</i>	<i>ra-</i>	<i>dy-</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>John</i>
cl.5 hyena	cl. 5AGR	VR eat	TV	cl. 1a
<i>idy</i> a	<Agent Theme>			
<i>bere</i>	[+ANIMATE; +SINGULAR]			
<i>John</i>	[+HUMAN; +SINGULAR]			

“A hyena ate John.”

In such a situation *John* is ranked higher than *bere* “hyena” on the PAH since the former is third person whilst the latter is animate. Contrary to this selection, the TH ranks *bere* “hyena” highest for it is directly involved in initiating and carrying out the action specified by the verb to its logical end. It is, therefore, an agent. The researcher had to choose the selectional principle to reliably follow in such cases. To do so he had to consider what the other rules’ positions were in relation to the different judgments passed in such environments. As a result the study established the following hierarchy of reliability:

TH or Semantic > PAH > morphological > Topicality > Intransitive Subject > Dummy subject

To wind up this sub-section, therefore, in Shona it is important to note that though one can have difficulties in citing a single selectional rule to which the selections in all the sentences could be based, the six rules presented above succeed in handling all the possible cases of relationships

one can find except one. There are situations in the data where no type of subject makes sense as will be explained in the next sub-section. In such cases the researcher noticed the prevalence of some dummy subjects. These are just place holders that, though they may be topical in the sentence, in some cases they do not even control agreement. This, therefore, stands as the seventh selectional principle. For example:

3i. *Zvinotyisa.*

*zvi-*            *no-*            *tyis-*            *a*

cl.8 'it'    Future T.    VR 'frighten'    TV

*tyisa*            <Source    Experiencer>

"It is frightening."

3i. is a grammatical Shona sentence. *Zvi* "it" is the dummy subject. It does not even control agreement in the sentence as evidenced by the absence of any other highlighted entity that agrees with it in the sentence. It is just playing a solely grammatical position.

### 3.2 Sub-categories of the Shona subject

This section is meant to complement the foregoing one on selectional principles. It has been proved in the preceding section that different selectional principles consider different aspects in their selection of the subject relation. This makes available different sub-categories of the relation in question. These subtypes are reviewed in the following sub-section.

### 3.2.1 Topical subject

Lee (1974) as well as Lappin, Levine and Johnson (2000) observe that the basic sentence for a Subject Verb Object (SVO) language can be described as comprising of a subject (topic) and a predicate (comment). Here the topic will be acting as the pragmatic focus. It is the most pronounced argument or participant in a piece of discourse. In simple terms, it is what the conversation is all about. As aforementioned, languages have different ways of attaching prominence onto their participants. For instance, Kuno (1973) talks of Japanese as known for placing an article immediately after an argument to attain this effect. Shona, as demonstrated earlier, places a participant in the sentence-initial position in order to give it prominence. Once a word occurs there, it automatically becomes the topical subject of that sentence (Hale and Keyser, 2002). For instance, for one to attach prominence onto the Shona NP *mbudzi* "goat" in the following example there is need to employ the rule that derive 3j.(iii):

3j.(ii) *Farai wauraya mbudzi.*

<i>Farai</i>	<i>wa-</i>	<i>uray-</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>mbudzi</i>
cl.1a	cl.1a AGR	VR 'kill'	TV	cl.9 'goat'
<i>uraya</i>	< Agent Theme >			
<i>Farai</i>	[+HUMAN, +SINGULAR]			
<i>mbudzi</i>	[+ANIMATE, -HUMAN, +SINGULAR]			

"Farai killed a goat."

In 3j.(ii) the most prominent entity is *Farai* since it is the occupant of the topical or sentence-

initial gap. It is the topical subject in the sentence. To shift prominence to *mbudzi* “goat” one will then be obliged to derive the passive transformation:

3j.(iii) *Mbudzi yaurawa naFarai.*

*mbudzi*      *ya-*                      *uraw-*                      *a*                      *na-*                      *Farai*

cl.9 ‘goat’      cl.9 AGR                      VR ‘be killed’ TV                      ‘by’                      cl.1a

*urawa*                      <Theme>

*Farai*                      [+HUMAN; +SINGULAR]

"A goat has been killed by Farai."

This subjectivisation or subject raising process, which is considered in detail in chapter four, demotes the semantic subject *Farai* to the role of an oblique object thereby enabling *mbudzi* “goat” to be promoted to a topical subject position. This is made so by the projection principle’s condition that no two entities can be assigned the same role in a sentence. Therefore, in Shona a topical subject is the occupant of the canonical subject position and it is also notable that all non-subject participants of the Shona sentence may become topical subjects and prominent sentential entities by being subjectivised. It is, therefore, a type of status that is imposed onto an argument by changes in word order. That makes the status a characteristic of the surface structure.

### 3.2.2 Morphological or grammatical subject

The morphological or grammatical subject apparently appears to be the other name for a topical subject in Shona. This is so because a grammatical subject refers to the participant that controls



agreement in a sentence, a task normally done by topical subjects in Shona. In a sentence once that agreement is missing, ungrammaticality results leading to the term grammatical subject being used synonymously with morphological subject. Stockwell (1977) defines agreement as a type of constraint on the form of words occurring together. It requires that one form be altered to match the form of the other. In Shona this effect is attained by placing morphological markers belonging to the class, number and person of the controlling subject phrase onto the verbal complex. For instance, in 3k.:

3k. *Vanhu vaNdanga varima mabagwe.*

*va- nhu va- Ndanga va- rim- a mabagwe*

cl.2‘people’ cl.2AGR cl.1a ‘Ndanga’ cl.2AGR. VR ‘grow’ TV cl.6 ‘maize’

rima < Agent Theme >

vanhu vaNdanga [+HUMAN; -SINGULAR]

mabagwe [-ANIMATE, -SINGULAR; -ABSTRACT]

‘Ndanga’s people have grown maize’

Usually in Shona for a participant to control agreement it has to be occupying the sentence initial position just like *vanhu vaNdanga* ‘Ndanga’s people’ in 3k. which is controlling agreement by placing the class 2 marker *va-* ‘have’. That coincidentally makes it the topical subject. However, as mentioned earlier, the two do not always coincide as being demonstrated in section 4.1 where the promoted object of a passive transformation controls agreement even when it is not occurring

sentence initially. This demonstrates that they are different though they often occur together.

### 3.2.3 Dummy subjects

According to Stockwell (1977), there is one group of languages with well-marked person, number and class affixes in verbs. These languages may omit subjects that are transparent in the context or in the verbal complexes of sentences. There are also other languages whose verbal markings of the subject role are less conspicuous and in these, the inclusion of the subject relation becomes obligatory. When this obligatoriness extends into contexts where no real subject makes sense, there rises the need for what are known as dummy fillers or dummy subjects. These are just placeholders because they do not refer to any entity one can come across in the real world. Huddleston and Pullum (2005) identify two types of these:

- Firstly there are *expletives*. These are words like *ku-* “it” or ‘there’ in English when they do not refer to anything. For example:

31.(i) *Kunonaya*.

<i>ku-</i>	no-	nay-	a
cl. 15 ‘it’	Pres. Cont. T	VR ‘rain’	TV
naya	<Theme	Locative>	

“**It** rains.”

One may adopt as concluded in languages like English, as mentioned, that the expletive “it” does not refer to anything, but in Shona sentences like 31.(i) one may assert that it refers to something. In the above example it refers to the external world. As evident in the example, in Shona the expletive ‘it’ translate to *ku-*. However, unlike the English one, it is bound to some host word. The Shona one, thus, occurs as a proclitic.

- There is also a **cataphoric it**. This translates in Shona to *zvi-* “it” when it is co-referent with a subordinate clause that comes after it. It co-refers with the clause coming after it.

31.(ii) *Zvinozivikanwa*.

*zvi-*            *no-*                            *zivikanw-*            *a*  
 cl.8 ‘it’ Pres. Cont.T    VR ‘be known’    TV  
*zivikanwa*                            <Patient >

“**It** is known by everyone.”

*Zvi-* “it” co-refers with the statement that follows the whole expression presented as 31.(ii). In other words it co-refers with that which is known.

Shona seems to be sharing the characteristics of both language types. It may be said to belong to the first group of languages with well-marked person, number and class affixes in their verbal complexes because, one can, for instance, have a covert subject as in:

3m.(i) *Varima mabagwe*.

*va-*                            *rim-*                            *a*            *ma-* *bagwe*

cl.2AGR    VR ‘grow’    TV    cl.6 ‘maize’

rima            <Agent    Theme>

va-                    [+HUMAN; -SINGULAR]

mabagwe            [-ANIMATE; -ABSTRACT; -SINGULAR]

“They grew maize”

This is an acceptable Shona sentence with *va-* “they” acting as the agreement marker in agreement with a covert subject. The sentence is only acceptable if the covert subject is known to the listener. However, when the obligatoriness of subjects extends into contexts where no real subject makes sense, in Shona one will also find sentences such as:

3m.(ii) *Zvinofadza kugara murugare.*

*zvi-*    *no-*                    *fadz-*            *a*            *ku-gara*            *mu-*    *rugare*

cl.8 it Present T.    VR ‘make happy’    TV    cl.15 ‘stay’    cl.18    ‘peace’

*fadza*                    < Source Experiencer >

*kugara murugare*            [-ANIMATE, +ABSTRACT]

"It is interesting to stay in peace"

In this case *zvi-* "it" is acting as a dummy subject or filler. It is serving a purely grammatical function in the sentence. Therefore, in Shona, dummy fillers prevail but only do so in the form of proclitics or prefixes bound onto the verbal complexes. The predicate argument structure of this example has two participants because though omitted the experiencer is projectable still.

### 3.2.4 Semantic or thematic subject

This is the underlying or obligatory subject. It is that type of subject one finds encoded as subject at the lexical functional level of a particular sentence. Its status is thus projected from the thematic level of grammar. As being demonstrated in chapter four, all the transformational rules may be applied for the attainment of the various effects one may think of in sentences but the logical or semantic subject remains untouched. It is the obligatory or inaccessible subject. This is so because the participant encoded as the semantic subject cannot be demoted from this status by any rule at the surface structure level. It can only be either promoted to or demoted from the topical or grammatical subject status but never from its original status as the semantic or thematic subject. Furthermore, no other participant can also be promoted to the semantic subject status at the level of surface structure. It has no substitute. It is this characteristic that earns it the term ‘obligatory subject’. Readers must note that it is in cases when the semantic, grammatical and or the topical subject status are found encoded in one entity that the sentence is referred to as a prototypically transitive sentence, for instance, in the sentence:

3n. *Shorai warova mwana wake.*

<i>Shorai</i>	<i>wa-</i>	<i>rov-</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>mwana</i>	<i>wake</i>
cl.1a	cl.1AGR	VR ‘beat’	TV	cl.1 ‘child’	POSS ‘her’
rova		< Agent Patient >			
Shorai		[+HUMAN, +SINGULAR]			
mwana wake		[+HUMAN, +SINGULAR]			

"Shorai beat her child."

This is a typical transitive sentence in which there is *Shorai* an agent and *mwana wake* “her child” a patient. It, therefore, has thematic roles at the extreme ends of the continuum characterizing the thematic hierarchy. The discourse of transitivity is all about the ability of a predicate to take its external and internal arguments as stipulated in its lexical entry and emphasised by the projection principle. Williams (1988) describes internal arguments as realised internal to the maximal projection that the verb heads, and external arguments as realised outside the maximal projection. It is also worth pointing out again that the semantic subject is also the thematic subject in the sense that the two selectional principles, that is, the TH and the semantic reasons, coincide in their selections as being demonstrated in section 3.1. They both capture the flow of action as it is presented at the thematic structure level of syntax.

### 3.2.5 The intransitive subject

The intransitive subject is the solitary argument in an intransitive sentence such as *John* in 3o.

below:

3o. *John wafa.*

*John*      *wa-*              *f-*              *a*

cl.1a    cl.1a AGR    VR ‘die’ TV

*wafa*              <Theme >

*John*                      [+HUMAN, +SINGULAR]

“John died”

In this example, *John* is the solitary participant that is involved in this sentence. The intransitivity assumption asserts that such an argument is automatically accorded the automatic subject status. Here the confirmation of its automatic status as subject has also been attained from the fact that it is the grammatical or morphological subject of its sentence as evidenced by the italicised marker agreeing with it.

### 3.3 Typical phrases for Shona subjecthood

The core intention of this section is to find out the types of lexical items to which the Shona subject relation is typically assigned. Langacker (1991) points out that in most languages a prototypical subject is a noun phrase. This position is supported by Everaert, van Riemsdijk and Goedemans (2006) who present the following typical examples of the subject phrases:

- A determinerless noun phrase, also called a bare noun phrase. This is mostly limited to plural noun phrases and noun phrases headed by a mass noun such as *vavaki* “builders” in 3p.(i):

3p.(i) *Vavaki vari* kushanda.

*vavaki*                *va-*                *ri*                *kushanda*

cl.2 ‘builders’    cl.2 AGR    AUX ‘is’    cl. 15 ‘working’

*vari*                <Experiencer>

*vashandi*                [+HUMAN; +PLURAL]

**“Builders are at work.”**

- A noun phrase introduced by a determiner. This complex (determiner + noun phrase) is usually called a determiner phrase. In Shona there is no such a type though the English translation has it as follows. For example:

3p.(ii) *Mota yamira.*

*mota*            *ya-*            *mir-*            *a*

cl.9 ‘car’    cl.9 AGR    VR ‘stop’    TV

*mira*                    <Experiecer>

*mota*                    [-ANIMATE; -ABSTRACT, +SINGULAR]

**“The car stopped.”**

*Mota* “the car” is a determinerless Shona noun phrase though English translation has a determiner.

### 3.3.1 Noun phrases and the Shona subject role

As highlighted above, the typical trend in sentences is that noun phrases are assigned the subject role in most languages. A close consideration of the subjects for the examples already presented in this analysis, confirms the above position to a considerable extent. To further support the position consider more examples that are presented below:



3q.(i) *Ivo vanhu varwira sadza.*

<i>ivo</i>	<i>va- nhu</i>	<i>va-</i>	<i>rwir-</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>sadza</i>
cl.2 PRON	cl.2 ‘people’	cl.2AGR	VR ‘fight for’	TV	cl.5 ‘sadza’
<i>ivo vanhu</i>		NP Subject	-----	pronoun + noun – qualifier	
<i>rwira</i>		< Agent Patient >			
<i>ivo vanhu</i>		[+HUMAN, -SINGULAR]			
<i>sadza</i>		[-ANIMATE, -ABSTRACT; +SINGULAR]			

“They the people fought for sadza.”

*Ivo vanhu* “they the people” is a noun phrase with *vanhu* “people” and *ivo* “they” occurring as pronoun and noun in apposition.

3q.(ii) *Ivo vanhu venyu vaba doro.*

<i>ivo</i>	<i>va- nhu</i>	<i>venyu</i>	<i>va-</i>	<i>b-</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>doro</i>
cl.2pron	cl.2 ‘people’	cl.2POSS	cl.2AGR	VR ‘steal’	TV	cl.5 ‘beer’
<i>ivo vanhu venyu</i>		NP Subject	-----	Pronoun + Noun + Possessive		
<i>vaba</i>		< Agent Patient >				
<i>ivo vanhu venyu</i>		[+HUMAN, -SINGULAR]				
<i>doro</i>		[-ANIMATE, -ABSTRACT]				

“They your people stole beer.”

The NP subject *ivo vanhu venyu* “they your people” is a noun phrase that has the combination of a pronoun *ivo* “they”, possessive *venyu* “your” and noun *vanhu* “people”. This is an acceptable combination for an NP.

3q.(iii) *Mukadzi muroyi waba mwana.*

*mu- kadzi mu- royi wa- b- a mwana*

cl.1 ‘woman’ cl.1 ‘witch’ cl.1AGR VR ‘steal’ TV cl.1 ‘child’

*mukadzi muroyi* NP Subject ----- noun and adjective in apposition

*waba* <Agent Patient>

*mukadzi muroyi* [+HUMAN; +SINGULAR]

*mwana* [+HUMAN; +SINGULAR]

"A female witch stole a child."

The subject in 3p.(iii) is an NP made up of a noun *mukadzi* “female” and an adjective *muroyi* “witch” occurring in apposition. It is again an acceptable combination for a Shona NP.

3q.(iv) *Munya watora banga.*

*Munya wa- tor- a banga*

cl.1a cl.1AGR VR ‘take’ TV ‘knife’

*Munya* NP Subject ----- Noun - Qualifier

*tora* < Agent Patient >

Munya                    [+HUMAN, +SINGULAR]

banga                    [-ANIMATE, -ABSTRACT, +SINGULAR]

“Munya took a knife.”

*Munya* is an NP subject. NPs made up of nouns without qualifiers are also acceptable in Shona. This makes the sentence complete and acceptable.

This is the general trend in most of the sentences making up the gathered data. Such a trend demonstrates that the subject role is typically assigned to the various NP types in the language. However, this is not always the case since one can also have non-NPs as subjects both in isolation and in combination as demonstrated in the next section.

### 3.3.2 Non-NPs and the Shona subject role

Consider the following Shona sentences:

3r.(i) *Imwe yaenda kumusha.*

<i>imwe</i>	<i>ya-</i>	<i>end-</i>	<i>a-</i>	<i>ku-</i>	<i>musha</i>
cl.9 ‘another one’	cl.9AGR	VR ‘go’	TV	CL.15 ‘home’	
<i>imwe</i>	non-NP Subject	-----		enumerative	
<i>enda</i>	<Agent Goal>				

imwe [+ANIMATE; +SINGULAR]

kumusha [-ANIMATE; -ABSTRACT]

“Another one has gone home.”

This is an acceptable Shona sentence with *imwe* “another one” an enumerative playing the subject role. It is not an NP. It can rather be regarded as an enumerative phrase of some sort.

3r.(ii) *Tsvuku yaguta doro.*

*tsvuku ya- gut- a doro*

cl.9 ADJ ‘red one’ cl.9 AGR VR ‘be satisfied’ TV cl.5 ‘beer’

*tsvuku* : non-NP Subject ----- adjective

*guta* <Experiencer Source>

*tsvuku* [+ANIMATE; +SINGULAR]

*doro* [-ANIMATE; -ABSTRACT]

“The red one has had enough beer.”

3r.(iii) *Iyi neiya ndedzangu.*

*iyi ne- iya nde- dzangu*

cl.9DEM. conj. Cl.9SEL. COPPL. POSS.

*iyi neiya* non-NP Subject combination ----- demonstrative + selector

iyi neiya                    [+ANIMATE; -SINGULAR]

This one and that one are mine.”

3r.(ii) has an adjectival subject *tsvuku* “red one” whereas 3r.(iii) has a combination of a demonstrative and selector *iyi neiya* “this one and that one”. They are wholly grammatical and acceptable. However, all these examples in 3r. are only complete statements if looked at in their respective or known contexts. Such sentences are often found in day-to-day speeches. Such a case leaves one in a position to assert that not only NPs perform the subject role in Shona. By looking at the direct translations of the examples, one can realise that they are not strange to English. They often occur in day to day English conversations, which show that such sentential subject structures are common to English as well. This is a position that supports Fortune’s (1959) assertion that constructions belonging to the constituent class of Shona subjects are substantive phrases, compound substantive phrases, and conjunctives plus substantive phrases, a statement that does not restrict the role exclusively to NPs.

It, however, needs to be reemphasised that such non-NPs whether in isolation or in combination make complete sense as subjects if and only if the referent subject is some piece of old information. In this case the subject is an enumerative occurring in isolation. In other words there are covert nouns qualifying the no-NP substantives. The sentences are only acceptable as a result of the flexibility characterising the language in question. For instance, *imwe* “another one” in 3r.(i) can be referring to a goat or cow. *Tsvuku* “the red one” in 3r.(ii) refers to the colour of a covert noun as well. It is this noun that qualifies the non-NP in the deep structure of the sentence. Such a position drives one into concluding that at surface structure level non-NPs can qualify to

act as subjects in Shona due to the flexibility of the language but at the deep structure level only NPs perform the function.

### **3.4 Conclusion**

The chapter has established that the seven selectional principles established in the other natural languages for the subject relation apply to Shona. These are, firstly an entity's topicality in word order, that is, its occupation of the sentence initial position makes it the topical subject in a sentence. Secondly, a word's ability to control agreement in a sentence makes it the morphological or grammatical subject of that sentence. That effect is achieved in Shona by the placement of morphological markers which agree with the entity in question onto the verbal complex involved. Thirdly, semantic reasons can also be considered in the selection. In this case, entities selected following this principle are termed semantic subjects and are those with a direct effect on the direct object. Such subjects are encoded at the lexical functional level and cannot be amended by any surface structure rule.

It has also been demonstrated that the person animacy hierarchy (PAH) and the thematic hierarchy (TH) may also be considered in the selection. The section has also established that there are instances whereby some principles fail to assign the status. For instance, in a sentence with two nouns that belong to the same class of animates, like *shumba* "lion" and *shuro* "hare", the PAH fails to apply. This obliges one to resort to the TH for example. There are also instances when rules contradict each other. A sentence like *Shumba yaruma munhu* "A lion has bitten a person," drives the PAH and the TH into contradiction. In such a sentence the PAH will accord

*munhu* “person” the subject status whilst the TH selects *shumba* “lion”. Such sentences bring one to the need for a hierarchy that ranks these selectional principles basing upon their reliability in such cases to deal with such situations. This study established the following hierarchy for this purpose:

Thematic or Semantic subject > PAH selection > Morphological subject > Topical subject > Intransitive subject > Dummy subject

The study also established the presence of cases where sentences have solitary arguments called intransitives. In such cases the researcher used the intransitive assumption that if there is a solitary argument in a sentence it becomes the automatic subject. To confirm the selection in such situations, the researcher used the principles of topicality and morphological reasons. The analysis also demonstrated that there are instances in Shona when no real subject makes sense. This makes available dummy subjects just like in English. However, in Shona, these take the form of bound affixes prefixed onto the verbal complexes.

It was also found out that the general view that typical subjects are NPs is true to Shona. However, in cases where the subject constitutes some piece of old information, even non-NP entities may play the role both by their selves or in combinations. For instance, one can have a demonstrative and a possessive subject as in:

3s. *Avo vake voenda kumba*

*Avo*                      *vake*                      *vo-*                      *end-*                      *a*                      *ku-mba*

cl.2 DEM “those” cl.2POSS “his” cl.2 AGR VR go TV cl.17 home

avo vake non-NP Subject combination ----- demonstrative + possessive

enda <Agent Goal>

avo vake [+HUMAN; -SINGULAR]

kumba [-HUMAN; -ABSTRACT; +SINGULAR]

“Those of his are going home”

3s. is only acceptable if and only if the person to which *vake* “his” refers is known. If the person to which the sentence is directed does not know him, the sentence would not be acceptable. This will be shown by responses in the form of questions such as: Whose?

It came out as well that in such sentences the non-NP subjects are only a characteristic of the surface structure. They have their deep structure NP subjects whose noun heads are omitted at the surface structure level due to the language’s flexibility and the desire to avoid repetition since such a process is only permissible when the noun is a piece of old information.

All in all, therefore, it is difficult in Shona to identify one single selectional principle that caters for all sentence types which gives rise to the seven subject sub-categorisations. Furthermore, there is no one type of word that serves as the subject for all the possible Shona sentences. NPs and non-NPs substantives can play the role both in isolation and in combinations. However, it is noteworthy that the non-NPs can only play the role if their referent is some piece of old



information that needs not be repeated.



# **CHAPTER FOUR: SHONA SUBJECT AND THE TRANSFORMATIONS**

## **4.0 Preamble**

Whereas the core concern of the previous chapter was to analyse the gathered data in the light of the selectional rules or principles involved, the sub-categorisations as well as the entities typically assigned the subject role in Shona, this chapter is a continuation of the data analysis exercise. Its prime goal is to examine the behavior of the subject relation in passive, reflexive and wh-question transformations. This section also evaluates the state or nature of the relation's freedom in the language in question. The chapter is basically partitioned according to the three transformations highlighted above with the fourth section concluding the whole chapter.

## **4.1 Shona subject and the passive rule**

Lee (1974) observes that the basic syntactic structure of the underlying sentences belonging to languages such as English is 'Subject Verb Object' (SVO). This is the syntactic structure characterising Bantu languages, the family to which the Shona language belongs. Chomskyan linguists have referred to this basic level as the 'kernel sentence', 'phrase structure', 'base' or 'logical form' (Chomsky, 1965, 1995, 2001). Generative transformational grammar is well known in linguistics as the Chomskyan tradition that gives rise to specific transformational grammars. Here further meaning is superimposed upon or incorporated into this basic structure by means of transformational rules. According to Shieber (1985), these transformational rules are

the various ways of changing the basic structure of kernel sentences to streamline them and make them fit the intent of the communication more efficiently and effectively futhernoting that there are many of them some of which can be so complex.

Passivisation is one of the transformational rules and has two basic effects on kernel sentences, which is, reordering as well as altering the make-up of some of the lexical items involved. Spencer and Zwicky (1988) define the rule as a morphosyntactic operation involving the suppression of the external argument, or the most prominent argument (subject). The suppressed participant in many languages will then be expressed as an oblique or an adjunct of some sort, as in the English 'by phrase'. Thus, they share Wilkins' (1988) observation that in passives an argument is lost and fails to be projected in the syntax.

Rappaport and Levin (1988) describe the passive as a completed syntactic structure in most languages requiring a considerable rearrangement of the elements in the basic sentence. An analysis of the gathered data indicates that in Shona, passivisation typically involves the following basic stages:

- (i) Reversal of the customary SVO order to topicalise the object.
- (ii) Here the verb, which in an active sentence refers to the action performed by the subject, in the passive is made to tell action received by the object from the semantic subject. In Shona, suffixing the affix -w- "was" onto the verbal complex attains this effect.

(iii) Demotion of the semantic subject to an oblique object that is governed by the agent formative *ne-* “by” and its allomorphs *na-* and *no-*, since no two arguments can be made to perform the same grammatical function. This explains why Dembetembe (1976:177) observes that “... roughly what the passive transformation does is first to interchange the subject noun phrase with the object noun phrase, secondly to introduce the passive element *-w-* into the verb, and thirdly to introduce the agent formative *ne-*.”

For Shona examples of passive statements, one can consider the following underlying structures whose passive forms are analysed immediately after. This means that the deep structure is the original sentence with surface structure acting as its version that comes out as a result of the application of the transformational rule. Focus is hereby placed on the behaviour of the subject relation in the surface structure version. As aforementioned, the reader has to note that in the predicate argument structures of the passives there are solitary arguments since the oblique objects are no longer projectable.

4a.(i) *Mai vanoda mabagwe.* (Deep Structure)

*mai*                      *va-*                      *no-*                      *d-*                      *a*                      *mabagwe*

cl.2a ‘mother’    cl.2a AGR    Pres. Cont. T    VR ‘like’    TV    cl.6 ‘maize’

*ida*                      <Experiencer Patient>

*mabagwe*            [-ANIMATE; -ABSTRACT; -SINGULAR]

“Mother likes maize.”

4a.(ii) *Mabagwe anodiwa namai.* (Passive Transformation)

*ma- bagwe a- no- di- w- a na- mai*

cl.6 cl.5 ‘maize’ cl.6AGR. PRES VR ‘like’ PASS TV ‘by’ cl.2a ‘mother’

*diwa* < Patient >

*mabagwe* [- ANIMATE; - ABSTRACT; -SINGULAR]

“Maize are liked by mother.”

*Mabagwe* “maize” is the object at the deep structure which at surface structure has been raised or promoted to the subject position. The promotion comes as a result of the fact that in the passive the focus is on the entity suffering the action stipulated by the verb. *Amai* “mother” is automatically demoted since no two entities can play the same syntactic role. Consider another pair of examples below:

4a.(iii) *Vatete vadzosera muroora kumusha.* (Deep Structure)

*vatete va- dzoser- a muroora kumusha*

cl.2b ‘aunt’ cl.2b AGR VR ‘return’ TV cl.1 ‘daughter-in-law’ cl.15 ‘home’

*dzosera* <Agent Patient Location>

*vatete* [+HUMAN; +Singular]

*muroora* [+HUMAN; +SINGULAR]

“Aunt returned the daughter-in-law home.”

4a.(iv) *Muroora wadzoserwa kumusha navatete.* (Passive Transformation)

*muroora*                      *wa-*        *dzoser-*        *w-*    *a*    *ku-musha*    *na-*    *vatete*

cl.1 'daughter-in-law' cl.1 AGR VR. 'return' PASS TV cl.15 'home' by cl.2a 'aunt'

*dzoserwa*                      < Patient or Theme    Goal >

*muroora*                      [+ HUMAN; +SINGULAR]

*kumusha*                      [-ANIMATE; -ABSTRACT; -SINGULAR]

“A daughter-in-law was returned home by aunt.”

4a.(v) *Mbudzi inohwa zhara.* (Deep Structure)

*mbudzi*                      *i-*                      *no-*                      *hw-*                      *a*                      *zhara*

cl.9 'goat' cl.9 AGR Pres.Cont.T. VR 'feel' TV cl.9 'hunger'

*ihwa*                      <Experiencer    Patient>

*mbudzi*                      [+ANIMATE; -HUMAN; +SINGULAR]

*zhara*                      [-ANIMATE; +ABSTRACT]

“A goat feels hungry.”

4a.(vi) *Zhara inohwikwa nembudzi*. (Passive Transformation)

*Zhara*                    *i-*            *no-*            *hwik-*            *-w-*    *a*            *ne-*            *mbudzi*

cl.9 ‘hunger’    cl.9 AGR    Habitual T.    VR ‘feel’    PASS    TV    ‘by’    cl.9 ‘goat’

*hwikwa*                    <Patient >

*nzara*                    [- ANIMATE, + ABSTRACT]

“Hunger is felt by a goat.”

Just like in the case of *mabagwe* “maize” in 4a.(ii), *mbudzi* “goat” and *zhara* “hunger” are the objects at deep structure level which have become the subjects at surface structure. Again the deep structure subjects have been demoted to oblique objects automatically since no two entities can play the same syntactic function at any given moment. The passive sentence, as evidenced above, requires a speaker to view things not as performing actions but as being acted upon. The object is the one being acted upon and, thus, becomes the main concern of the sentence. This is the reason it is made the focus or topic of the passive through topicalisation. This process also makes it the controller of agreement since, as mentioned in chapter three, in most Shona cases a participant’s occupation of the topical gap makes it the automatic controller of agreement. It is also evident in the above examples that all the typical or basic stages highlighted earlier have been performed.

It is worth noting that once the verb is put into its passive form, the semantic subject could no longer do away with the agent formative that it now complements. Erasing it would derive ungrammatical sentences such as:



4b. \**Zhara inohwikwa mbudzi.*

\**zhara*            *i*            no-            hwik-            w-            a            mbudzi

cl.9 ‘hunger’    cl.9 AGR    Habitual T.    VR ‘felt’    PASS    TV    cl. 10 ‘goats’

hwikwa                      < Patient >

zhara                      [-ANIMATE; +ABSTRACT]

“\*Hunger is felt goats.”

This Shona sentence is ungrammatical and unacceptable. This comes as a result of the occurrence of *mbudzi* ‘goats’ which in this case sounds unattached to any part of the sentence. It cannot be placed in any kind of the sentence interpretations one may want to come up with. Lee (1974) also observes that the semantic subject, once demoted, becomes optional. He refers to the consequent abbreviated form of the passive as a truncated passive. It is abbreviated in that it has no overt doer and this is usually done when the actor is unknown, ambiguous or unimportant to the message. As examples of truncated passives, from the Shona passives above, one would have the following statements:

4c.(i) *Mabagwe anodiwa.*

*ma-*    *bagwe*    *a-*            no-            di-            w-            a

cl.6    ‘maize’    cl.6 AGR    Habitual T.    VR ‘like’    PASS    TV

diwa                      < Patient >

mabagwe [-ABSTRACT; -ANIMATE]

“Maize are liked.”

4c.(ii) *Muroora wadzoserwa kumusha.*

*mu- roora wa- dzoser- w- a ku- musha*

cl.1 ‘daughter-in-law’ cl.1 AGR. VR ‘be returned’ PASS TV CL.17 ‘home’

*dzoserwa* <Patient or Theme Goal >

*muroora* [+HUMAN; +SINGULAR]

*kumusha* [-ANIMATE; -ABSTRACT]

“A daughter-in-law was returned home.”

In typical passives the researcher noted again that the original object surpasses the semantic subject as the topic. However, as demonstrated by Mhute (2001), Shona is so liberal in its handling of sentential constituents. Mhute demonstrates that in Shona fillers of the three gaps in a sentence can afford to be shifted amongst them depending upon the speaker’s focus. This is the reason the oblique object still retains its positional freedom. For instance, one can still have it topicalised without affecting the acceptability of the subsequent sentence as in:

4d. *Nembudzi zhara inonzwikwa.*

*Ne- mbudzi zhara i- no- nzwik- w- a*

‘by’ cl.9 ‘goats’ cl.9 ‘hunger’ cl.9 AGR. Habitual T. VR ‘felt’ PASS TV

nzwikwa < Patient >

zhara [-ANIMATE; +ABSTRACT]

“By goats hunger is felt.”

*Zhara* “hunger” which is the new subject has been demoted from its position as the topical subject. Instead the verbal complex *nembudzi* “by goats” has been promoted to that position.

However, even though the original subject with its new governor, the preposition, can still be the topic of the passive, it can no longer control agreement in that passive as demonstrated by the underlining. Therefore, the semantic or thematic object in a passive becomes the permanent morphological or grammatical subject. In other words the passive verb can no longer do away with the new subject marker. For instance, even if the words in 4c. are reordered in any way, the verb will not do away with the prefix *wa-* “was” which is owed from the original object *muroora* “daughter-in-law” as in:

4e.(i) *Wadzoserwa kumusha muroora navatete.*

*wa-* dzoserw- a ku- musha *mu- roora* na- va- tete

cl.1AGR. VR ‘be returned’ TV CL.17 ‘home’ cl.1 ‘daughter-in-law’ ‘by’ cl.2 ‘aunt’

dzoserwa <Patient or Theme Goal >

muroora [+HUMAN; +SINGULAR]

kumusha [-ANIMATE; -ABSTRACT]

“Was returned home daughter-in-law by aunt.”

4e.(ii) Kumusha *muroora wadzoserwa* navatete.

ku-musha *mu-roora* wa- dzoser- w- a na- va- tete

cl.15 ‘home’ cl.1 ‘daughter-in-law’ cl.1AGR VR ‘return’ PASS TV ‘by’ cl.2b ‘aunt’

dzoserwa <Patient or Theme Goal>

kumusha [-ANIMATE; -ABSTRACT]

muroora [+HUMAN; +SINGIULAR]

“Home daughter-in-law was returned by aunt.”

4e.(ii) adds weight to the observation mentioned earlier that Shona is quite liberal in its handling of sentential participants. This time the verbal complex is allowed to act as the topical subject without disturbing the acceptability of the subsequent sentence.

Bresnan and Moshi (1993), using the theory of the symmetric-asymmetric object typology in Bantu, focus on applicative constructions and divide Bantu languages into symmetrical and asymmetrical object languages basing on the objects’ behavior. With asymmetrical languages only one of the objects can be adjacent to the verb, be expressed as an object prefix, and be the subject in passive constructions. In contrast, in symmetrical languages several NP objects may

occur as object prefixes and display syntactic properties such as passivisation. From the gathered data, Shona qualifies to be treated as a symmetrical language. Consider 4f. below:

4f.(i) *Mukomana wapa mwana sadza.* (Active)

<i>mu-</i>	<i>komana</i>	<i>wa-</i>	<i>p-</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>mu-ana</i>	<i>sadza</i>
cl.1 'boy'	cl.1 AGR	VR 'give'	TV	cl.1 'child'	cl.5 'sadza'	

*wapa* <Agent Beneficiary Patient>

*mukomana* [+HUMAN; +SINGULAR]

*mwana* [+HUMAN; +SINGULAR]

*sadza* [-ANIMATE; -ABSTRACT; +SINGULAR]

“A boy gave a child sadza.”

4f.(ii) *Mukomana wapa sadza mwana.* (Active 2)

<i>mukomana</i>	<i>wa-</i>	<i>p-</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>sadza</i>	<i>mwana</i>
cl.1 'boy'	cl.1 AGR	VR 'give'	TV	cl.5 'sadza'	cl.1 'child'

*wapa* <Source Patient Beneficiary>

*mukomana* [+HUMAN; +SINGULAR]

*sadza* [-ANIMATE; -ABSTRACT; +SINGULAR]

*mwana* [+HUMAN; +SINGULAR]

“A boy gave sadza a child.”

The second active’s English translation sounds marked but the Shona version is acceptable. The two actives can generate the following passives which are also acceptable in Shona:

4f.(iii) *Sadza rapiwa mwana nemukomana.* (Passive 1)

*sadza*            *ra-*            *piw-*            *a*            *mwana*            *ne-*            *mukomana*

cl.5 ‘sadza’    cl.5 AGR    VR ‘be given’    TV    cl.1 ‘child’    ‘by’    cl.1 ‘boy’

*piwa*            <Patient Beneficiary>

*sadza*            [-ANIMATE; -ABSTRACT; +SINGULAR]

*mwana*            [+HUMAN; +SINGULAR]

“Sadza has been given a child by a boy.”

4f.(iv) *Mwana wapiwa sadza nemukomana.* (Passive 2)

*mwana*            *wa-*            *piw-*            *a*            *sadza*            *ne-*            *mukomana*

cl.1 ‘boy’    cl.1 AGR    VR ‘be given’    TV    cl.5 ‘sadza’    ‘by’    cl.1 ‘boy’

*piwa*            <Patient Beneficiary>

*mwana*            [+HUMAN; +SINGULAR]

*sadza*            [-ANIMATE; -ABSTRACT; +SINGULAR]

“A child has been given sadza by a boy.”

In 4f.(iii) *sadza* the direct object has been subjectivised whilst in 4f.(iv) it is the indirect object, *mwana* “child”. This demonstrates that both objects can become subjects in Shona passives. Hence, one can consider Shona to be a symmetrical language.

Kawasha (1999) also observes that passives in languages such as Lunda can be termed pseudo-passives or non-promotional passives since, even if the object can in the passive assume the topical role, it cannot assume the grammatical function role. All in all, therefore, in a true passive the original object overrides the original subject in as far as the occupation of the topical gap and the controlling of agreement is concerned. Thus, just as one typical feature of theta marking is the permanent assignment of the semantic subject role onto some NP in the deep structure, one typical feature of the passivisation transformational rule is the permanent assignment of the morphological or grammatical subject status onto the original object. From the discussion above, unlike Lunda in which the raised object has limited powers, Shona has true or promotional passives. It awards the subjectivised object its true powers in a passive construction. In 4f.(iii) the class 5 *sadza* controls agreement through prefixing the class *ra-* “has” onto the verbal complex. The same is done by the class 1 *mwana* “child” in 4f.(iv) that prefixes the class 1 *wa-* “has” onto the verbal complex to attain the same effect. This supports the point raised in chapter three that the two properties of the original Shona subject, that is, topicality and controlling of agreement, can be ceded to other sentence participants in certain situations.

## **4.2 Shona subject and the reflexive rule**

Wilkins (1988) observes that reflexivisation necessarily involves semantic interpretation often

discussed as co-reference. It is a special case of thematic role assignment, allowing two roles from the same class to be associated with a single referential integer. Similarly, Dembetembe (1976:190) asserts that “in Shona, just like in any other languages, whenever the object noun phrase is identical with the subject noun phrase and the two are in the same sentence, the former constituent is obligatorily reflexivised”. Palmatier (1972) also refers to it as the reflexive rule and describes it as a transformation that attaches the suffix morpheme ‘self’ onto a pronominalized noun phrase. Spencer and Zwicky (1988) also observe a reflexive as an operation that is valency-reducing and it results in a predicate that does not permit a direct function to be assigned to an NP corresponding to the reflexive. However, according to Ouhalla (1994) the predicate argument structures of reflexivised predicates have two arguments. This is so because they remain bivalent in their underlying structures even if they are not apparently transitive in surface syntax. This is the reason the two participants still surface in the predicate argument structures of the examples that will be presented in this subsection.

Fowler (1971) observes that the two basic statements that could be deduced from the operation of the reflexive rule are as follows:

(1.) Where an NP is repeated in the same underlying phrase marker, the second occurrence of the NP is replaced by a reflexive pronoun. Reflexive pronouns are glossems which arise when the subject and the object co-refer (Kocasavas 2004).

(2.) Where the repeated NPs are not within the same underlying phrase marker, neither the second nor the first NP may be replaced by a reflexive pronoun.



The above demonstrates that a reflexive is in simple terms the placement of a transformation that involves a reflexive pronoun in the place of an object noun phrase that is identical to the subject noun phrase of the same verb. Wilkins (1988) further notes that the reflexive anaphor serves the special function of passing its role onto the referential phrase and, thus, preventing violation of the completeness condition. Hence, the reason the reflexive is often regarded as some kind of referring expression.

In Shona it is noteworthy that the English reflexive suffixal morpheme ‘-self’ translates to the prefixal morpheme *-zvi-*. For instance, one can consider the following underlying examples whose acceptable reflexive forms are analyzed immediately after:

4g.(i) *Gonzo ratemera gonzo mwezha.* (Deep Structure)

*gonzo ra- temer- a gonzo mwezha*

cl.5 ‘rat’ cl.5 AGR VR ‘cut for’ TV cl.5 ‘rat’ cl.3 ‘path’

temera <Agent Beneficiary Theme>

gonzo [+ANIMATE; +SINGULAR]

mwezha [-ANIMATE, - ABSTRACT]

gonzo [+ANIMATE; +SINGULAR]

“A rat cut a rat a path.”

4g.(ii) *Gonzo razvitemera mwezha.* (Reflexive Transformation)

*gonzo ra- zvi- temer- a mwezha*

cl.5 'rat' cl.5 AGR REFL VR 'cut for' TV CL.3 'path'

*temera* < Agent Beneficiary Theme >

*gonzo* [+ANIMATE; +SINGULAR]

*gonzo* [+ANIMATE; +SINGULAR]

*mwezha* [-ANIMATE, - ABSTRACT]

"A rat cut itself a path."

4g.(iii) *Mai vatengera mai shinda.* (Deep Structure)

*mai va- tenger- a mai shinda*

cl.2a 'mother' cl.2a AGR VR 'buy for' TV cl.2a 'mother' cl.9 'wool'

*tengera* < Agent Beneficiary Patient >

*mai* [+HUMAN; +SINGULAR]

*mai* [+HUMAN; +SINGULAR]

*shinda* [-ANIMATE, -ABSTRACT]

"Mother bought mother wool."

4g.(iv) *Mai vazvitengera shinda.* (Reflexive Transformation)

*mai*                    *va-*            *zvi-*            *tenger-*            *a*            *shinda*

cl.2a ‘mother’    cl.2AGR    REFL    VR ‘buy for’    TV    cl.3 ‘wool’

*tengera*                    < Agent    Beneficiary    Patient >

*mai*                            [+HUMAN; +SINGULAR]

*mai*                            [+HUMAN; +SINGULAR]

*shinda*                    [-ANIMATE, -ABSTRACT]

“Mother bought herself wool.”

4g.(v) *Mwana waswedza mwana nezhara.* (Deep Structure)

*mwana*                    *wa-*            *swedz-*                    *a*            *mwana*            *ne-*            *zhara*

cl.1 ‘child’    cl.1 AGR    VR ‘kept for day’    TV    cl.1 ‘child’    ‘by’    cl.9 ‘hunger’

*swedza*                    < Agent    Maleficiary    Patient >

*mwana*                            [+HUMAN; +SINGULAR]

*mwana*                            [+HUMAN; +SINGULAR]

*zhara*                            [+ABSTRACT]

“A child kept a child with hunger the whole day.”

4g.(vi) *Mwana wazviswedza nezhara.* (Reflexive Transformation)

*mwana wa- zvi- swedz- a ne- zhara*

cl.1 'child' cl.1AGR REFL VR 'stay with' TV 'by' cl.9 'hunger'

*swedza* < Agent Maleficiary Patient >

*mwana* [+HUMAN; +SINGULAR]

*mwana* [+HUMAN; +SINGULAR]

*zhara* [+ABSTRACT]

“A child kept itself with hunger the whole day.”

All the reflexive transformations have the reflexive formative *zvi-* “self” replacing the objects of the sentences.

As evidenced in the preceding set of examples, the NPs should co-refer. They should also be the external and internal arguments of the same verb. This is an obligatory condition as demonstrated by the following examples in which the NPs do not co-refer:

4h.(i) *Mukomana watiza kuti murairidzi asarova mukomana.*

*mu- komana wa- tiz- a kuti mu- rairidzi*

cl.1 'boy' cl.1AGR VR 'run' TV COMP 'that' cl.1 VR 'teach'

*a- sa- rov- a mu- komana*

cl.1AGR NEG VR 'beat' TV cl.1 'boy'

tiza <Theme Source >

rova <Agent Patient>

murairiridzi [+HUMAN; +SINGULAR]

mukomana [+HUMAN; +SINGULAR]

“A boy ran away that the teacher does not beat the boy.”

This sentence if reflexivised would generate the following ungrammatical sentence:

4h.(ii)\**Mukomana wazvitiza kuti murairidzi asarova.*

\**mu-komana wa- zvi- tiz- a kuti mu-rairidzi a- sa- rov- a*

cl.1 'boy' cl.1AGR REFL VR 'run' TV COMPL cl.1 'teacher' cl.1 AGR NEG VR 'beat' TV

tiza <Theme Source>

mukomana [+HUMAN; +SINGULAR]

mukomana [+HUMAN; +SINGULAR]

“\*A boy ran away from himself that the teacher does not beat.”

The two NPs *mukomana* “a boy” do co-refer but they are external and internal arguments of two different verbs. The first one is the external argument for *watiza* “ran away” whilst the second one is the internal argument of *asarova* “does not beat”. As a result the sentence sounds

contradicting itself and, therefore, meaningless showing that if the two arguments co-refer but belonging to different clauses, reflexivisation becomes impossible. For sense to prevail in such a situation, all one can only do is to delete the second noun and put an object marker in the subordinate clause's verbal complex as in:

4h.(iii) *Mukomana watiza kuti murairidzi asamurova.*

*mu komana wa- tiz- a kuti mu-rairidzi*

cl.1 'boy' cl.1 AGR VR 'run' TV COMPL CL.3 'teacher'

*a- sa- mu- rov- a*

cl.3AGR NEG Obj.M VR 'beat' TV

*tiza* <Theme Source >

*mukomana* [+HUMAN; +SINGULAR]

“A boy ran away that the teacher does not beat him.”

It should also be noted that unlike in the typical passive transformation, in the typical reflexive transformation the original subject remains the topical, morphological and semantic subject. It, thus, retains its status as the occupant of the topical position, the controller of agreement as well as the actor of the action referred to by the verb. Therefore, instead of affecting the original subject's three roles or functions in the kernel sentence, the reflexive rule typically deletes the co-referring object and prefixes the suffix morpheme *zvi-* “self” on to the verbal complex.



4j.(i) *Wazviswedza nenzara*

*wa-*            *zvi-*            *swedz-*            *a*    *ne-*            *nzara*

cl.1 AGR    REFL.    VR ‘kept all day’    TV    ‘with’            cl.9 ‘hunger’

*swedza*                            <Agent Maleficiary Patient >

“She kept herself with hunger the whole day”

4j.(ii) *Vazvitengera shinda*

*va-*            *zvi-*            *tenger-*            *a*            *shinda*

cl.2AGR    REFL    VR ‘buy for’    TV    cl.9 ‘wool’

*tengera*                            <Agent Beneficiary Patient>

*shinda*                            [-ANIMATE; -ABSTRACT]

“They bought themselves wool”

This use of the above agreement markers, that is, *wa-* “she” and *va-* “they” in isolation is only possible if and only if (iff) the original or semantic subject happens to be some piece of old information or not important to the message being conveyed. This is concretized by the specification of the gender in the English translation. However, the important observation to be noted from 4j. is that, unlike in English where the gender needs to be specified all the time, in such Shona situations one can just ignore it though the number needs to be specified as well.



It is also worth noting that even if the original subject is omitted, it retains its status as the semantic and morphological subject, which explains its appearance in the predicate argument structures as well. The Shona verbal complex that would have remained is marked for grammaticality and the very subject that would have been omitted dictates the form of the marker. Therefore, unlike in the passive where the grammatical subject status is shifted to the object, in a reflexive both the semantic and morphological or grammatical status are permanently consolidated. Only the topical status may be shifted onto the verbal complex.

### **4.3 Shona subject and the wh-question rule**

Question formation rule is a transformational rule that generates interrogative sentences from originally active statements. The interrogatives are normally of varying types and these include simple or yes or no questions, echo questions and wh- or information questions. This section examines only one of the types, that is, the wh- question as it relates to the Shona subject relation.

According to Palmatier (1972), a wh-question is an interrogative transformation with a wh-morpheme in the underlying phrase marker, later to be affixed to the preposition of the element in the string that is being questioned for. The string being questioned for may be there in full, in part or may not be contained in the base at all. If not contained, it is attached to a preposition that shares with the targeted element some or all of the following features:

± GENDER

± NUMBER

± PERSON

± ABSTRACT

One would, therefore, find wh-phrases of forms such as:

4k.(i) *Chii* ?

“What?”

4k.(ii) *Zvii* ?

“What?”

4k.(iii) *Ndiani*?

“Who?”

4k.(iv) *Pai* ?

“Where?”

It is worth pointing out that in typical Shona wh-question transformational rule applications there are the following basic stages involved:

- (i) Choice of the appropriate wh-phrase. Once chosen it is placed in the gap typically for the element asked for, that is, the first one, if asking for the subject relation, second for the verbal complex and third for the object relation (Mhute, 2001).
  
- (ii) Topicalisation of the wh-phrase if asking for the action (verb) or the acted upon (object). This is done because the question's focus is the entity being asked for so it must be the most prominent entity in the resultant question.

In Shona, one can, therefore, expect questions of the types below where in each case the original active sentence is given first. It should also be highlighted that as evident in the examples, elements being asked for, remain projectable in the syntax. For instance, one can consider example 4k(i). below:

4k.(i) *Ziso renguruve rabwaira.* (Deep Structure)

*ziso re- nguruve ra- bwair- a*

cl.5 'eye' cl.5 Poss cl.9 'pig' cl.5 AGR VR 'blink' TV

*bwaira* <Agent >

*ziso renguruve* [-ANIMATE; +SINGULAR; -ABSTRACT]

“The pig’s eye blinked.”

4k.(ii) *Ziso renguruve raita sei?* (wh-transformation)

*Ziso re- nguruve ra- it- a seyi*

cl.5 ‘eye’ cl.5 POSS cl.9 ‘pig’ cl.5AGR VR ‘do’ TV ‘what’

ita < Agent Patient >

*ziso renguruve* [-ANIMATE, -ABSTRACT]

“The pig’s eye did what?”

It is evident in the example that the entity being focused on is *ziso renguruve* “the pig’s eye” and it is projectable in the verb’s predicate argument structure. Even if one opts for the truncated or shortened version the predicate argument structure remains the same. Furthermore, after topicalisation of the wh-phrase one would find:

4k.(iii) *Radii ziso renguruve?*

*ra- dii ziso re- nguruve*

cl.5AGR VR ‘happened to’ cl.5 ‘eye’ POSS cl.9 ‘pig’

dii <Agent Patient>

*ziso renguruve* [-ANIMATE; -ABSTRACT; +SINGULAR]

“What happened to the pig’s eye?”

This shows that the original subject’s status as the topic can be nullified in Shona if the element being questioned for happens to be the action. One can also have a question such as:

4k.(i) *Muchaneta wadya zai.* (Deep Structure)

*Muchaneta*      *wa-*      *dy-*      *a*      *zai*

cl.1a              cl.1a AGR    VR ‘eat’    TV    cl.5 ‘egg’

*idya*              <Agent    Patient>

*Muchaneta*      [+HUMAN; +SINGULAR]

*zai*              [-ANIMATE; -ABSTRACT; -SINGULAR]

“*Muchaneta* ate an egg.”

4k.(ii) *Chii chadyiwa naMuchaneta?* (wh-transformation)

*chii*              *cha-*      *dy-*      *iw-*      *a*      *na-*              *Muchaneta*

cl.7‘what’    cl.7AGR    VR ‘eat’    PASS    TV    PREP ‘by’    cl.1a ‘*Muchaneta*’

*dyiwa*              < Theme >

*chii*              [-HUMAN; +SINGULAR]

*Muchaneta*      [+HUMAN; +SINGULAR]

“What did Muchaneta eat?”

As evidenced in the above examples, if the element being asked for happens to be the object, the object’s wh-phrase becomes the topic and also the controller of agreement. It, therefore, surpasses the original subject’s status as the topic and morphological subject. However, if it is the semantic or thematic subject that is being asked for, the original subject retains its three original statuses intact, that is, the topic, controlling of agreement and semantic subjecthood. For another example, one can have the following question whose deep structure is presented herewith:

41.(i) *Sharai wadya mwongo.* (Deep structure)

*Sharai*         *wa-*         *dy-*         *a*         *mwongo*

cl.1a         cl.1a AGR    VR ‘eat’    TV    cl.3 ‘bone marrow’

idya                            <Agent    Theme >

Sharai                         [+HUMAN; +SINGULAR]

mwongo                        [-ANIMATE, -ABSTRACT]

“Sharai ate bone marrow.”

41.(ii) *Ndiani wadya mwongo?* (wh-transformation)

*ndi-*         *ani*         *wa-*         *dy-*         *a*         *mwongo*

COPP 'who' cl.1 AGR VR 'eat' TV cl.3 'bone marrow'

idya <Agent Theme >

ani [+HUMAN; +SINGULAR]

mwongo [-ANIMATE, -ABSTRACT]

“Who ate the bone marrow?”

Therefore, contrary to the order in passives, the wh-question rule does not typically attach permanently any of the original subject statuses to either the verbal complex or the original object.

Once the right wh-phrase has been chosen, it should also be mentioned that other constituents of the sentence may be omitted if they are not important, for example if they are pieces of old information. This raises possibilities for truncated or abbreviated questions in Shona, adopting again from Lee (1974). One can, for instance, have questions such as those presented in 4m. as the truncated versions for examples presented in 4k. and 4l.:

4m.(i) *Ndiani?*

“Who?”

4m.(ii) *Chi?*

“What”

4m.(iii) *Kupi?*

Where?

It is noteworthy that examples 4m.(i) to 4m.(iii) demonstrate that, just like in any other Shona transformation, the original subject can be omitted. This shows that in *wh*-questions as well, there are instances when the original subject becomes less important. However, the semantic subject status, as also demonstrated in the preceding sections of this chapter, remains totally untouched or not shifted. This proves right the assertion that the semantic or thematic subject role is an assignment that is made at the logical form or the lexical functional level whereas transformational rules are a property of the surface structure level or phonetic form (Chomsky, 1995). This shows that, though they differ in certain ways of treating the subject relation, the transformations treat the notion of semantic subject similarly.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

The Chapter has demonstrated that transformational rules treat the Shona subject relation in ways that are somehow both similar and different. In other words, its restrictions, freedom and importance in the transformations that result are partially similar but also partially different for different reasons.



Passivisation transformational rule typically involves the topicalisation of the logical or original object because a passive looks at things as they are acted upon. The transformation, thus, makes the entity being acted upon, that is, the original object relation the most important participant. It is made the occupant of the topical gap as well as the controller of agreement. Due to the freedom that participants have in Shona, its role as the topic may still be shifted to the passivised verb or the semantic subject, now demoted to an oblique object position and governed by the formative *ne-* “by” and its allomorphs, *na-* and *no-*. Once the active is transformed to its passive form, the semantic subject becomes less important and can be omitted, to generate what are known as abbreviated or truncated passives. The passivised verb can also be topicalised. The same may apply to the oblique object but in all these movements it moves with its new governor, the preposition. Despite all these, in passives it is only the promoted object relation that can control agreement. This role becomes its permanent characteristic. Only the semantic subject role can not be tempered with by this transformational rule.

Reflexivisation has been proved to be an erasure transformation. It deletes the direct object if it co-refers with the subject of the same verb replacing it with a referring formative that is prefixed to the verbal complex. The original subject typically retains all the three roles untouched. The verbal complex, now inflected with the reflexive morpheme, can also be made the topic. However, the agreement marker remains that of the subject. Therefore, in Shona reflexives only the topical function of the original subject may be shifted. The subject may also be omitted if it is a piece of old information or unimportant to create a truncated reflexive.

Wh-question formation rule creates interrogative sentences asking for pieces of information. Under typical conditions the element being asked for has its wh-phrase in the topical position. It is also this topic that controls agreement. Only the semantic subject role remains an inaccessible feature in this transformation. This proves the semantic function of the Shona subject to be wholly inaccessible at surface structure level.

All in all, therefore, the way the different transformational rules treat the sub-categories of the subject relation shows that the level of inaccessibility of the different Shona sub-categories can be summed up as follows:

Semantic or Thematic subject > Morphological subject > Topical subject

# CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

## 5.0 Preamble

The core concern of this chapter is to make an overview of the findings made in the whole study. It focuses on linking the findings made in the whole study. It also outlines the contribution of the current research to Shona syntax in particular and it presents some recommendations for further research.

## 5.1 Basic findings

This study has proven that the seven selectional principles or rules for the subject relation that have been established in other natural languages apply to Shona. Firstly, an entity is regarded as a Shona subject if it is topical in its sentence's word order. This means that it is a subject if it occupies the sentence-initial position of a simple active Shona sentence. This type of a subject is called a topical subject. For example, one can consider 5a. in which the underlined phrase plays the topical subject role:

5a. *Ivhu redu rakadzoka.*

<i>ivhu</i>	<i>redu</i>	<i>ra-</i>	<i>ka-</i>	<i>dzok-</i>	<i>a</i>
cl.5 'land'	cl.5 POSS	cl.5 AGR	Past T.	VR 'return'	TV
<i>dzoka</i>	< Experiencer Locative >				
<i>ivhu redu</i>	[-ANIMATE; -ABSTRACT; +SINGULAR]				

“Our land is back.”

In example 5a. *ivhu redu* “our land” is the subject in the sentence by virtue of its occupation of the topical gap of the sentence. It is, therefore, a topical subject. It has been proven as well that an entity is also considered to be a subject in Shona if it dictates the morphological form of the verbal complex in a sentence. The subject relation achieves this effect in Shona by prefixing its morphological marker onto the verbal complex, hence, the term ‘morphological subject’. That morphological marker makes the whole predicate agree with the subject or external argument in the sentence in number, gender and person. If the match is not effected, ungrammaticality automatically emerges, hence, the synonymous use of the term ‘grammatical subject’ for that same type. This position is supported by Brown and Miller (1985) who assert that in most of the languages of the world, sentences have to undergo the subject verb agreement rule for grammaticality to prevail. For instance, in Shona the presence of agreement between *mbavha* “thieves” and *dzaba* “stole” in 5b.(i) and its absence in 5b.(ii) explains the prevalence of grammaticality in the former and its absence in the latter:

5b.(i) *Mbavha dzaba mbudzi.*

*mbavha dzaba b- a mbudzi*

cl.10 ‘thieves’ cl.10AGR VR steal TV cl.9 goat

*dzaba* <Agent Patient>

*mbavha* [+HUMAN; -SINGULAR]

*mbudzi* [+ANIMATE; -SINGULAR]

“The thieves stole goats.”

In the above example, agreement is facilitated by the fact that both the noun phrase *mbavha* “thieves” and the agreement marker *dza-* “are” are class 10. This is what lacks in the following example:

5b.(ii) \**Mbavha waba mbudzi*.

*mbavha*              *wa-*              *b-*              *a*              *mbudzi*

cl.10 ‘thieves’    cl.1 AGR    VR ‘steal’    TV    cl.9 ‘goat’

*dzaba*    <Agent Patient>

*mbavha*    [+HUMAN; +SINGULAR]

*mbudzi*    [-HUMAN; +ANIMATE; +SINGULAR]

“The thief stole goats”

Unlike in 5b.(i), in 5b.(ii) as indicated by the asterisk \*, there is ungrammaticality. This is due to the fact that the noun phrase *mbavha* “thieves” is class 10 whereas the agreement marker *wa-* “has” is class 1. The sentence could only be grammatical if *mbavha* “thieves” was a name of a person and, therefore, a class one noun.

The research has also established in Shona that selections could be based upon the person animacy hierarchy (PAH). This is the hierarchy that ranks all entities to which sentential constructions can refer in the order:

1<sup>st</sup> person singular > 1st person plural > 2nd person singular > 2nd person plural > 3rd

person singular > 3rd person plural > animates > inanimates

According to this selectional rule, if a sentence has two participants, for example, one of which is 1<sup>st</sup> person singular and the other which is animate, the 1<sup>st</sup> person singular one automatically gets the subject status whilst the animate one gets the object status. For instance, in the following sentence:

5c. *Ishe aenda kumunda.*

*ishe*                  *a-*                  *end-*                  *a*                  *kumunda*

cl.1 ‘chief’    cl.1 AGR    VR ‘go’            TV    cl.17 ‘to fields’

*aenda*                                  <Experiencer Locative>

*ishe*    [+HUMAN; +SINGULAR]

*kumunda*                                 [-ANIMATE; -ABSTRACT; +SINGULAR]

“The chief has gone to the field.”

In this example, *ishe* “chief” is 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular whilst *kumunda* “to the field” is inanimate. This has accorded the former the subject status and the latter the object status since it occurs down on the PAH.

It also emerged that an item is also assigned the Shona subject role if it is ranked higher on the thematic hierarchy (TH) than the other participant involved in a transitive sentence. The TH ranks the roles that sentential participants can play in the following order:

Agent > Beneficiary or Benefactor > Maleficiary or Malefactor > Goal or Source >  
Experiencer > Instrument > Theme or Patient > Location

According to this principle, if, for example, in an active sentence there is an agent and a patient, the agent participant automatically wins the preference for the subject role. The patient becomes the object of the action referred to by the verb involved. For example, one can consider 5d. below:

5d.(i) *Murume arima munda.*

*murume*        *a-*            *rim-*        *a*        *munda*

cl.1 ‘a man’    cl.1AGR    VR ‘plough’    TV    cl.3 ‘field’

*rima*                            <Agent    Patient>

a man                            [+HUMAN; +SINGULAR]

*munda*                            [-ANIMATE; -ABSTRACT; +SINGULAR]

“A man ploughed a field.”

*Murume* “a man” is an agent and, thus, ranks higher than *munda* “field” which is a patient. This is the reason it has been accorded the subject status.

The research also established that the above type of subject is also known as the semantic or thematic subject. This is so because it considers the flow of action in a sentence. This is also the

basic characteristic of a semantic subject. It takes note of the semantics or overall meaning in a sentence when it makes its selection. There is answering of the question: “Who does what?” in the sentence when selection takes place. There are instances, however, when working with the semantic rule alone becomes difficult. These are cases where there is no clear cut relationship that can fit in the frame of someone doing something. In such cases the thematic hierarchy provides a clearer guideline though the selection will always be acceptable to the semantic rule. For example, one can consider 5d.(ii) below:

5d.(ii) *Doro rapera mugate.*

*doro*            *ra-*            *per-*            *a*    *mu-*            *gate*

cl.5 ‘beer’   cl.5 AGR   VR ‘finish’   TV   cl.18   ‘huge clay pot’

*pera*                            <Theme   Locative>

*doro*                            [-ANIMATE; -ABSTRACT; +SINGULAR]

“There is no more beer in the huge clay pot.”

It has been demonstrated as well that the semantic or thematic subject is often referred to as the obligatory subject because no other entity in the sentence similarly relates to the direct object role. It is the only one that has a direct effect on the direct object. In addition to this special behaviour, it also emerged that it is regarded as the semantic subject because it is the only one whose role is assigned at the lexical functional level. This is the reason that made it the only relation the research proved to be not accessible at the surface structure level. For instance, it remains untouched in as far as the status stranding (removal) and exchanging activities



associated with transformational rules are concerned. It is the reason this research resolved it to be the highest of the four sub-categorisations of the subject established in Shona.

The sixth rule found in Shona as well is that of selecting a dummy subject. This is just a placeholder and the role is usually performed by *zvi-* “it” or *ku-* “it” in Shona. This shows that, like other natural languages of the world, Shona observes the demands of the extended projection principle (EPP). EPP asserts that every sentence must have a subject of some sort. For an example, one can have the following statement whose predicate’s PAS demonstrates that a dummy subject is a projectable entity in the syntax:

5c. *Zvinofadza kugarika.*

*zvi-*      *no-*              *fadz-*              *a*              *kugarika*

cl.8 ‘it’ Habitual T. VR ‘interesting’ TV      cl.15 ‘stay in prosperity’

*fadza*                      < Source Exp >

*kugarika*                      [+ABTRACT]

“It is interesting to stay in prosperity.”

The seventh type is found in sentences where there are solitary participants. For instance, in the following example, the italicised participant is the only one in the sentence:

5d. *Gwai rafa.*

*gwai*            *ra-*            *f*            *a*

cl.5 'sheep'    cl.5 AGR    VR 'die'    TV

*rafa*                            <Theme>

*gwai*                            [+ANIMATE; +SINGULAR]

“A sheep has died.”

In such a situation it has been observed that the solitary argument automatically wins the subject status. This is so because no sentence can be grammatical and acceptable without a subject of some sort.

The research has proven as well that these sub-categories of the relation differ in terms of their reliability. For instance, there are cases where some selectional rules may contradict in their selections. For instance:

5e. *Nyoka yaruma munhu.*

*nyoka*    *ya-*    *rum-*    *a*    *munhu*

cl.9 'snake'    cl.9 AGR    VR 'bite'    TV    cl.1 'person'

*bite*                            < Agent Patient >

*nyoka*                            [+ANIMATE; -HUMAN; +SINGULAR]

*munhu* [ +ANIMATE; +HUMAN; +SINGULAR]

“A snake bit a person.”

The TH rules in favour of *nyoka* “snake” as the subject since it is the agent in a sentence in which the other participant *munhu* “person” is a patient. Contrarily, the PAH rules in favor of *munhu* “person” which is 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular in a person where the other participant *nyoka* “snake” is animate. In such cases the research established a hierarchy of reliability that one needs to consider. This goes as follows:

Semantic or Thematic subject > Person animacy hierarchy selection > Morphological subject > Topical subject > Intransitive subject > Dummy subject

It was also established in this study that the trend is that the Shona subject role is basically assigned to noun phrases of all types. However, in cases where the subject NP is some piece of old or unnecessary information, non-NP substantives may also be found playing the role in isolation or in combinations. For instance:

5e. *Wangu waenda kumba.*

<i>wangu</i>	<i>wa-</i>	<i>end-</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>kumba</i>
cl.1 ‘mine’	cl.1 AGR	VR ‘go’	TV	cl.17 ‘home’
<i>wangu</i>	-----	non-NP subject		

enda < Agent Location >

wangu [ +HUMAN; +SINGULAR]

kumba [-ANIMATE; -ABSTRACT; ]

“Mine went home”

*Wangu* “mine” is the subject of the sentence. It is a possessive phrase and, thus, a non-NP construction. This shows that a non-NP element can act as a subject. However, as indicated earlier, this is only acceptable in the language if the NP represented by the non-NP phrase is a piece of old information to the parties involved in the conversation. It is, however, worth noting as well that even if it is a piece of new information endangering the sentence’s acceptability, grammaticality remains intact.

The research also established that the application of different transformational rules in Shona sentences sees the emergence of strandings and new attachments to the sub-categorisations in question. Passivisation deletes or suppresses the highest role (subject) in a sentence thereby stranding both the morphological and topical subject statuses and their placement onto the object relation. The morphological one is permanently attached. The reflexive rule basically deletes the object of a sentence if it co-refers with the subject and put in its stead a reflexive anaphor *zvi-* “self” within the verbal complex. The morphological role is permanently fixed to the original subject. Wh-question rule strands the topical and morphological statuses and place them on the entity being asked for. As mentioned earlier on, the semantic status remains unaltered. It was proven to be the most rigid of all the sub-categorisations of the relation in question.

## **5.2 Recommendations**

This research has basically put to light the situation prevalent in the Shona language in as far as the subject relation is concerned. It has characterised the relation in detail also demonstrating its behaviour, freedom and restrictions. The researcher recommends that future scholars generate theories and rules that can be used to determine the relation in a better way. For instance, this research has demonstrated the unavailability of a single rule that one can use in determining this relation in Shona. Currently one has to rely upon the seven selectional principles established in this research. This is not economic. There is need for a simple method that is more economic and easy to use.

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# APPENDIX 1

## Interview Sheet

These are some of the questions used by the researcher in the field:

1. Munu mudunhu raishe ani?

“Who is your chief?”

2. Makatanga riini kugara munzvimbo ino uye muchibva nekupi?

“When did you first settle in this area and from where?”

3. Mutauro wamunotaura unonzi chii?

“Which language do you speak?”

4. Tine mapazi akati kuti eChishona. Renyu rinonzi chii?

“We have a number of dialects in Shona. Which one do you speak?”

5. Muchienzanisa nakare, mungati mutauro wenyu washanduka zvakadii?

“When comparing with the past to what extent has your language changed?”

6. Ndechipi chikonzero chamungati ndochanyanyoita ushanduke?

“What can you say is the main cause for the change?”

7. Zvakamirawo sei zvemiko nezviera munu?

“What is the state of the taboos in this area?”

8. Vukama bwenyu nevari kumhepo bwamiravo sei?

“What is your relation like with the living dead?”

9. Ndezvipi zviitiko zvamusingakanganwi paupenyu bwenyu?

“Which events can you not forget in your life?”

10. Ndezvipiwo zvinokufadzai nokukunetsai kana mugere munzvimbo muno?

“What makes you happy and troubled in this area?”

## APPENDIX 2

### Informants' Responses

This is a sample of raw data from the field.

1. Mhayi Mandinetsa wadya chingwa asi Vongai wati uchadya mangwana, apa ini ndichida kuvata ndasuka ndiro dzose.

“Mother Mandinetsa ate bread but Vongai said she will eat tomorrow, yet I want to go to bed after washing the plates.”

2. Padoro apa ndarova vashe zvavo vanga vasingambodzoseri.

“At the beer place I have beaten a chief-like person who does not fight back.”

3. Mary watora kaseti yangu yaDembo akandosiyi kwaanambira kisimusi.

“Mary took my cassette produced by Dembo and left it where she was on Christmas day.”

4. Ndakakwira mushongwe rimwe zuva ndikawana shumba yadya mhembwe yose kusiya musoro nemakumbo nembabvu.

“I climbed up the Shongwe Mountain one day and found a lion's bushbuck left overs.”

5. Iwe vhura mukova vanhu vatore doro ravo.

“You open the door that the people may collect their beer.”

6. Ini ndangomuka ndikawana mukova washanduka rudzi nemvura.



“I just woke up and found the door’s color changed by the rain.”

6. Pandati ndikiyinure rabva raramba.

“When I tried to unlock, it refused.”

7. Kiyi yavhura gonhi kare changosara kurisunda nekuti rakafuta.

“The key has opened the door already, what is left is pushing it because it has warped.”

8. Kamwana kenyu Mary kane vutsinye kapfura John wepaAaron mudumbu.

“Your little child Mary is cruel, he kicked John the son of Aaron in the stomach.”

9. Nesi vati Muchaneta waminya here pirisi iye akati ehe.

“The nurse said Muchaneta have you swallowed the pill and she said yes.”

10. Ikezvino vadzimu vedu vodzosea tsika dzedu pekare chaipo pachinyakare.

“Nowadays our ancestors are restoring our norms and values to their original position.”

11. Ndakatombonzwa kuti shumba dzinouya kumba kwaNyasha manheru nekuti akarima nechisi.

“I once heard that lions come to his home at night because he ploughed on the Sabbath day.”

12. Umwe muGondora umu anonzi akakaruka gudo ratotendeka ruvoko ari mubishi kusakura musu wechisi.

“Someone in the Gondora area was shocked to find a baboon stretching its hand to greet

him whilst busy weeding on Sabbath day.”

13. Vuya uzoteya shuro yabaiwa nekuba zvibagwe zvangu mudoro umu.

“Come and set traps for the hare that steals my maize.”

14. Mukomana wepa Aaron uya anoda sadza zvakaoma ndakamuona zuro kumagadziro.

“That boy residing at Aaron’s place likes sadza so much, I saw him yesterday at the memorial ceremony.”

15. Takandopinza mukoti kwaChivi panyaya yembudzi asi vatongi vaitya hama dzavo saka vaingoti mozouya vachida kuti tikone kuvuya vozotiti mazvidza dare.

“We were tried in a court at Chibi on the goat issue but the judges feared their relatives so they kept on postponing for us to fail to appear and be accused for failing to respect the court.”

16. Danda rangu ravora ndichingoti uchazoveza mutswi wawakaporomisa.

“My log is rotten whilst I am waiting for you to come and make the pounding stick you promised.”

17. Vanhu vamushaiwa mangwanani muchiimba chake chekumunda vakatofambisa guhwa rekuti bere rarira nhasi radya John.

“People failed to find him in his small house at the field and spread the rumor that the hyena that sounded overnight had eaten John.”

18. Mukadzi ari mubhuku iri muroyi, akaba mwana zvino omubata nenzara refu.

“The woman in this novel is a witch, she stole a child that she is now illtreating.”

19. Hauna kuona chando chaivako zuro manheru patakagarira bhazi tichiti uchatumira kisimusi. “You did not see the cold that was there yesterday evening when we waited for the bus hoping you were going to send something for our Christmas.”

20. Ko ivo vanhu venyuzve sekuru, vagwira sadza vakaba doro remagadziro.

“Your people grandfather, they fought for sadza and stole beer at the cleansing ceremony.”

## APPENDIX 3

This is a sample of processed data.

1. Zvinofadza kugarika muupenyu.

“It is interesting to stay in prosperity.”

2. Nyoka yaruma munhu mugomo umo.

“A snake bit a person in that mountain.”

3. Mhayi, Sharayi wadya mwongo wegodo rangu.

“Mother Sharayi at my bone’s marrow.”

4. Muchaneta wadya zayi riya.

“Muchaneta ate that egg.”

5. Gozho razvitemera mwezha wakakurisa paseri pechirugu.

“A rat cut itself a wide path behind there.”

6. Vanhu vashe Ndanga varima mabagwe kwamakore.

“Chief Ndanga’s people have grown maize for years.”

7. Muroora wadzosegwa kumusha kundorima.

“The daughter in law has been returned home to farm.”

8. Ziso renguruve yenyu raita seiko?

“What happened to your pig’s eye?”

9. Handikangamwi gore remvura yeerini.

“I ca not forget the year of the cyclone elin.”

10. Ivo vakomana venyu ava ndovovuraya chikaranga changa chakazvinakira.

“They your boys are the once destroying our originally beautiful language.