

## Variation in EPP Checking: Finnish clausal truncation

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Holmberg (2005) reports that verbs in Finnish cannot appear in initial position (1a) due to the Extended Projection Principle (EPP, Chomsky 1981, 1982). Instead, either an expletive (1c) or some referential category must precede it (1b). However, if there are no referential items in the clause (2), the expletive becomes optional, and the EPP appears to remain unchecked.

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| (1) a. *Meni nyt hullusti.<br>Went now wrong           | (2) (Sitä) meni hullusti.<br>EXPwent wrong |
| b. <b>Nyt</b> meni hullusti.<br>Now went wrong         | ‘Things went wrong.’                       |
| c. <b>Sitä</b> meni nyt hullusti.<br>EXPwent now wrong |  |
| ‘Now things went wrong.’                               | [Holmberg 2005]                            |

This is unexpected; in languages where the EPP exists, it is generally thought to be universal.

I propose that the ‘optional’ EPP in Finnish occurs because the clause is truncated, lacking the head bearing the EPP feature and everything above it. Evidence of this truncation comes from the fact that the ‘optional’ EPP is impossible when the left periphery is syntactically active, such as in embedded clauses (3a), with sentential adverbs (3b), and in questions (3c).

- (3) a. Kuulin että \*(nyt) meni huonosti.  
hear.PST.1SG that now go.PST.SG wrong  
‘I heard that things went wrong (now).’
- b. Selvästi \*(asiat) meni huonosti.  
clearly thing.PL go.PST.3SG wrong  
‘Clearly, things went wrong.’
- c. Meni-kö \*(se) huonosti?  
go.PST.3SG-Q 3SG.NOM wrong  
‘Did things go wrong?’

The EPP head is also where agreement surfaces, and so agreement should also be absent in truncated clauses. The optional EPP is only attested with a generic subject and 3SG agreement, which I assume occurs by default. Furthermore, verbs which mark their subjects with quirky genitive case must have an overt EPP-checker (4), as expected if case is a reflex of agreement. In these cases the EPP head, and thus a subject, must be present for its role in case checking.

- (4) \*(Asioiden/sen/ nyt) täyty-y mennä huonosti.  
thing.PL.GEN/3SG.GEN/now must.3SG go.NFIN wrong  
‘Things must go wrong (now).’

Clausal truncation is also impossible when there are referential elements in the clause, as their reference must be tracked in the discourse through the left periphery (cf. Sigurðsson 2011).

In her analysis of diary drop and other registers of English which allow null subjects, Haegeman (2013) identifies similar properties, such as the inability of clauses with null subjects to occur in embedded clauses and in questions, and also concludes that such clauses are truncated.

These facts suggest that the EPP is not strictly obligatory; a clause may lack the EPP and still be well-formed. However, the circumstances under which the EPP can be lacking are highly restricted, and are computed at the clause-level, not at the language level, bringing this variation in line with the Borer-Chomsky Conjecture (Baker 2008). It may be that the EPP in Finnish is less obligatory because the EPP feature is found on a head higher than T in the inflectional domain, and is therefore bundled with fewer crucial architectural features, and is more easily omitted.

## References

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