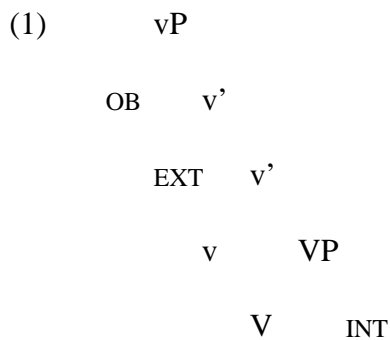


Object Shift with Raising Verbs

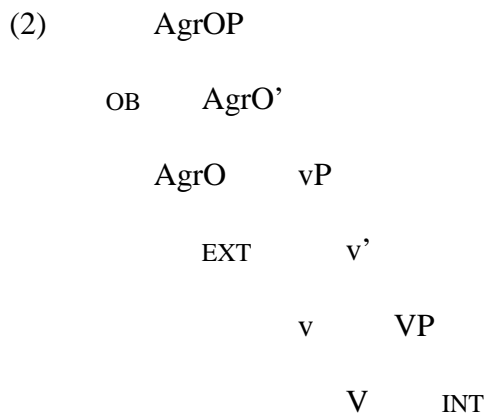
C. Jan-Wouter Zwart

In recent minimalist work hypothesizing multiple specifiers to a single head (Chomsky 1995, section 4.10; Chomsky 1998) it is proposed that objects are formally licensed in an outer specifier of vP, a projection headed by a light verb representing causative or agentive semantics:



In (1), the positions where the subject and direct object are generated are indicated (as *EXT* and *INT*, respectively), as well as the position where the object is formally licensed (*OB*).

In comparison to earlier analyses in the Principles and Parameters framework, the proposal continues to assume a separation between positions where elements are *generated* (the theta-positions) and positions where elements are *formally licensed* (the Case positions), but the formal licensing positions are no longer defined as specifiers to separate functional ‘agreement’ heads, as in (2):



The structure in (1) has the advantage that two seemingly independent relations, namely assignment of a theta role to the external argument and assignment of ('accusative') Case to the direct object, are concentrated in a single head, v. That these two functions are related is expressed in the so-called Burzio Generalization (Burzio 1986:178):

(3) *Burzio's Generalization*

- a. A verb which does not take an external argument does not assign accusative Case.
- b. A verb which does not assign accusative Case does not take an external argument.

In earlier frameworks, the correlations expressed in (3) could not be fully explained. Assuming the structure in (1), (3) is explained if a verb which does not assign an external argument simply lacks vP in its verb phrase structure (cf. Chomsky 1995:316).

In this squib, I present an argument showing that the reduction of a structure like (2) to a structure like (1) is nevertheless incorrect. The evidence involves 'restructuring' constructions in Dutch, where the internal argument of an embedded verb is formally licensed in the functional domain of a matrix verb which itself does not take an external

argument. If verbs without external argument lack vP, the formal licensing position for the internal argument of the embedded verb cannot be the outer specifier of a vP, but must be a specifier of an independent functional head. This is accommodated in (2), but not in (1).¹

Consider first a simple perception verb construction in Dutch:

- (4) ..dat ik Jan gisteren zag
 that I John yesterday see-PAST

Here the argument of the perception verb *zag* ‘saw’, *Jan*, is separated from the verb by the sentence adverb *gisteren* ‘yesterday’. Following Vanden Wyngaerd (1989), I take this to imply that the object noun phrase moves to a licensing position in the functional domain. Vanden Wyngaerd, who shows by application of standard tests (locality and binding), that the object shift is A-movement, describes the object’s licensing position as Spec,AgrOP (5a).² In the structure (1) proposed by Chomsky (1995), the licensing position would be the outer specifier position of v (5b):³

- (5) a. .. [CP dat [ik [AgrOP Jan [vP gisteren [vP <ik> [vP zag <Jan>]]]]]]
 b. .. [CP dat [ik [vP Jan [v' gisteren [v' <ik> [vP zag <Jan>]]]]]]

In an Exceptional Case-marking construction involving the same perception verb, the external argument of the embedded verb appears in the same position in the functional domain of the matrix verb as is occupied by the internal argument of the perception verb

in (4):

- (6) ..dat ik Jan gisteren zag winnen
that I John yesterday saw win

In a Principles and Parameters analysis (cf. (2)), this position would again be Spec,AgrOP (7a), whereas in Chomsky's (1995) proposal (cf. (1)), it would be the outer specifier of vP (7b):

- (7) a. .. [CP dat [AgrSP ik [AgrOP Jan [vP gisteren [vP <ik> [VP zag [vP <Jan> [VP winnen]]]]]]]]]

- b. .. [CP dat [TP ik [vP Jan [v' gisteren [v' <ik> [VP zag [vP <Jan> [VP winnen]]]]]]]]]

If the embedded verb *winnen* 'win' takes an internal argument such as *de race* 'the race', it, too, is moved to a licensing position in the functional domain of the matrix verb:

- (8) ..dat ik Jan de race gisteren zag winnen
that I John the race yesterday saw win

For the 'agreement phrase analysis' (2), this implies that a sequence of AgrOPs must be assumed (9a). For the multiple specifier analysis (1), it implies that the number of outer specifiers to v may be increased to accommodate the number of arguments to be licensed

(9b):

- (9) a. .. [CP dat [AgrSP ik [AgrOP Jan [AgrOP de race [vP gisteren [vP <ik> [vP zag [vP <Jan> [vP winnen]]]]]]]]]
b. .. [CP dat [TP ik [vP Jan [v' de race [v' gisteren [v' <ik> [vP zag [vP <Jan> [vP winnen]]]]]]]]]

Neither assumption seems particularly problematic.⁴

Notice that the perception verb *zien* itself is a transitive verb, which therefore implies the presence of vP in the matrix clause. The examples in (5) and (7) suggest a generalization along the lines in (10), which is often held to be true:

- (10) A verb α can appear as the matrix verb in an Exceptional Case-marking construction iff α is a transitive (accusative Case assigning) verb.

These cases, then, do not help us decide whether object noun phrases are licensed in the specifier position of vP, as in (1), or in the specifier position of a separate functional head, as in (2). The following set of facts, however, does.

Raising verbs in Dutch, like *schijnen* 'seem', show the same transparency effects as perception verbs. The only difference is that raising verbs, unlike perception verbs, take no external argument. If the embedded verb is transitive, its external argument raises to the subject position of the matrix clause, and the internal argument raises to the same object

licensing position that we saw in (4), (6), and (8):⁵

- (11) ..dat Jan de race gisteren scheen te zullen winnen
that John the race yesterday seemed to will win

Schijnen ‘seem’, being a raising verb, has no external argument and does not by itself have the ability to assign accusative Case to a grammatical object:

- (12) a. * Piet schijnt
Pete seems
b. # Piet schijnt een idioot
Pete seems an idiot

(12b) is interpretable only as a (quasi) copular construction, not as a transitive construction.

Since *schijnen* takes no external argument, we must conclude, by (3), that it has no vP in its verb phrase structure. This means that (11) can only be analyzed as in (13), with a structure involving a separate functional projection for licensing a grammatical object:

- (13) .. [CP dat [AgrSP Jan [AgrOP de race [VP gisteren [VP scheen [TP te zullen [vP <Jan>
[VP winnen <de race>]]]]]]]]]

Sentences like (11), then, demonstrate that object licensing may take place in the absence

of a vP. This is accommodated by the structure in (2), but not by the structure in (1).

(11) also shows the generalization in (10) to be incorrect. The correct generalization appears to be the following:

- (14) Formal licensing of an object in the functional domain of a verb α takes place
- (i) when α has an external argument, or
 - (ii) when α is a restructuring verb, and the verb β in the complement domain of α has an external argument

If (14) is correct, the requirement on Exceptional Case-marking in (10) is too strong. If the Exceptional Case-marking verb is a restructuring verb, the only requirement is that the verb in its complement domain is a transitive verb.

Many other examples may be construed which demonstrate the same point. (15) is an example of a transitive expletive construction (TEC), (16) of a passive construction:⁶

- (15) ..dat er iemand het huis gisteren scheen te zullen kopen
that there someone the house yesterday seemed to will buy
'.. that someone yesterday seemed to be going to buy the house'

- (16) ..dat Jan het boek niet werd geacht te hebben gelezen
that John the book not was considered-PART to have read-PART
'that John was not considered to have read the book'

(15) shows three phrases in the functional domain of the matrix clause (i.e. to the left of the matrix adverb *gisteren* ‘yesterday’), which in the Principles and Parameters theory of clause structure may be taken to occupy the specifier positions of AgrSP, TP, and AgrOP (cf. Chomsky 1995:342). The matrix verb is again *schijnen*, which lacks a vP. But *schijnen* is a restructuring verb, having a transitive verb, *kopen* ‘buy’, in its complement domain. Hence, the presence of a position for formal licensing of the object is due to the presence of a transitive verb in the complement domain of the matrix verb. (Chomsky’s 1995, section 4.10 discussion of TECs ignores the crucial cases, where the TEC involves a multi-verb construction with an unaccusative matrix verb.)

(16) involves a passive matrix verb, a standard case covered by the Burzio Generalization (3). Thus, passive verbs do not express an external argument, and fail to assign accusative Case. In the current framework, this is most elegantly described if we assume that passive verbs lack vP. Again, the object *het boek* ‘the book’ cannot be licensed in the specifier position of a vP. Crucially, however, there is a transitive verb *lezen* ‘read’ in the complement domain of the matrix verb, and the construction as a whole is a restructuring construction. Again, all that seems to be required is transitivity somewhere in the restructuring complex, not necessarily in the matrix clause.

The facts discussed provide a strikingly compelling argument in support of the structure in (2). In view of this, we need to consider potential weaknesses of the argumentation. The weakest spot appears to be the assumption that raising verbs lack vP. This assumption, though based on Burzio’s Generalization (3), may be wrong, and if it is, the argument simply collapses.⁷

However, it can be shown quite easily that assuming raising verbs to have a vP would be missing a number of significant generalizations.

First, since v represents causative or agentive semantics (Chomsky 1995:315), and raising verbs lack a causer or agent to appear as an external argument to v, the claim that raising verbs involve vP is not semantically motivated. In other words, the decision to merge VP with v can only be made on the basis of ‘look ahead’, namely to provide a licensing position for an object in the relevant constructions.

Second, even if raising verbs standardly involve a vP, the nominal feature of v that attracts an object noun phrase to its specifier position can only be active (or present) under very specific circumstances. These circumstances can be described entirely on the basis of the transitivity of the embedded verb. Thus, the v of the raising verb would be inactive when the embedded verb is unaccusative, passive, or unergative. In those cases, the single argument of the embedded verb is licensed as the subject of the matrix clause:

- (17) ..dat Jan niet scheen te sterven / worden gearresteerd / dansen
that John not seemed to die / be arrested / dance

In those cases, the raising verb’s v must not be active, or else the raised noun phrase would no longer be available for raising to the matrix subject position. The only situation, then, where the raising verb’s v would be needed is when the embedded verb is transitive, as in (11), (15), and (16).

Third, it can be shown that restructuring complexes as a whole are subject to Burzio’s

Generalization. Thus, in raising constructions with a transitive embedded verb, like (11), where the internal argument of the embedded verb is licensed in the object position of the matrix clause, passivizing the embedded verb has the effect that the object position of the matrix clause is eliminated. Compare the sentences in (18):

- (18) a. ..dat Jan de race niet scheen te winnen
 that John the race not seemed to win
- b. ..dat de race (door Jan) niet scheen te worden gewonnen
 that the race by John not seemed to be won-PART

In (18a), a position for licensing the object of *winnen* ‘win’ is needed in the matrix clause. But in (18b), where *winnen* is passivized, such a position is no longer needed. This is a standard effect of Burzio’s Generalization (3), but now the absence of an external argument in the *embedded* clause precludes accusative Case assignment in the *matrix* clause. This indicates that the object licensing position in the *matrix* clause is a function of the presence of vP in the *embedded* clause. Assuming that the structure of raising verbs involves a vP misses this generalization entirely.

I would like to propose that restructuring has the effect that the potential for licensing an object is passed on from the embedded verb (in fact, the v of the embedded verb) to the matrix verb. Burzio’s Generalization then holds of the entire set of verbs in a restructuring complex. We might say that v ‘launches’ an AgrOP, and that in restructuring contexts, the AgrOP is licensed in the functional domain of the matrix verb.

The facts discussed in this squib show that the relation between transitivity (the presence of vP in a verb phrase) and formal licensing of an object noun phrase (accusative Case assignment) is indirect. Consequently, the object cannot be licensed in the outer specifier of vP, but must be licensed in the specifier position of a functional projection that is dependent on, but structurally separated from vP.

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Notes

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¹ In Dutch, restructuring verbs include perception verbs, causative verbs, raising verbs, and a limited number of control verbs. Restructuring has the effect that the lower verb’s arguments are formally licensed in the functional domain of the higher verb (yielding raising to object or exceptional Case-marking). The exact conditions and operations giving rise to restructuring cannot be discussed in the context of this squib.

² The argumentation in this squib is independent of the exact analysis of Dutch phrase structure (a head initial structure is assumed here, cf. Zwart 1994) and of the question whether the direct object is moved to or base generated in its formal licensing position.

³ I ignore the question of the exact adjunction position of the adverb in sentences like (4), which in itself yields a potentially significant difference between the two types of analysis in (5).

⁴ For the multiple specifier hypothesis, the structure in (9b) implies that the [-interpretable] nominal feature of *v* checked by *de race* must ‘escape erasure’ (cf. Chomsky 1995:354).

⁵ The modal auxiliary *zullen*, indicating future tense, is included in the embedded clause in order to make sure that the sentence adverb *gisteren* is construed with the matrix verb,

demonstrating raising into the matrix clause.

⁶ The negative adverb *niet* ‘not’ in (16) is used (just like the adverb *gisteren* ‘yesterday’ in (15) and elsewhere) as a matrix clause element indicating that arguments of the embedded clause have been moved to the matrix clause.

⁷ Obviously, since the assumption that raising verbs lack vP is based on Burzio’s Generalization, the burden of proof would be on those wanting to claim the opposite, and the argument as made in the text suffices as a contribution to the discussion regarding the status of agreement projections.