

# A UNIFORM TREATMENT OF PARTICLE TRANSITIVITY IN VPCs

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## 0. *Introduction.*

In English and other Germanic languages various prepositions may combine with verbs to form verb-particle constructions (VPCs). This paper focuses on examples like those in (1) comprising a particular subset of VPCs in which more than one DP is associated with the preposition.

- (1) a. She cleaned the crumbs off the table.
- b. He allowed the dog on the boat.
- c. She broke the top off the bottle.
- d. He threw the ball up the center line.

Particles in several prevailing accounts (Kayne 1985; Hoekstra 1988; den Dikken 1995; among others) are analyzed as characteristically intransitive. Consequently, the examples in (1) are either judged not to be VPCs, or else the preposition and following DP are considered at least structurally independent of one other. Contra this view, I argue there are neither sufficient semantic nor syntactic reasons for defining particles in VPCs as exclusively intransitive given the fundamental argument structure of prepositions in general as well as their particular role in VPCs of denoting some result or end-state. In fact, treating particles in a parallel fashion to unergative and accusative verbs, that is as predicative complements of *v* (under a Minimalist Program split-V hypothesis), is able to account for all the distributional facts related to VPCs while relying on independently motivated assumptions.

This unified treatment of particle transitivity is pursued as follows. Key arguments offered primarily by Kayne and Hoekstra supporting a small clause (SC) analysis of VPCs are shown in §1 to be applicable to the examples in (1). The unified analysis of VPCs as SC complements of *v* is explicated at length in §2. Virtues of this approach in comparison to other recent proposals including those of Johnson (1991), den Dikken (1995), and Svenonius (1996) are identified in §3. Finally, some indications of how such a unified approach could also account

for VPCs with non-causative interpretation as well as some word-order variations in Scandinavian languages is discussed in §4.

1. *Extending a SC analysis of VPCs to include both intransitive and transitive particles.*

In his seminal article on the principles of particle constructions, Kayne (1985) adduces the VP constituent structure of (2) to be one of three possibilities: A) a flat structure ( V DP Prt ); B) the particle adjoined to a  $\bar{v}$  node ( [ $\bar{v}$  V DP] Prt ); or C) the DP and Prt forming a SC complement of the verb ( V [<sub>SC</sub> DP Prt] ).

(2) John looked the information up.

Citing his own formulation of a notion of ‘unambiguous paths’, Kayne rules out the flat structure of (A) as not being in conformity with a UG binary-branching requirement. Hoekstra (1988) supports this position describing theories which allow for multiple-branching as ‘conceptually less attractive’ in so far as they properly include those allowing for binary branching only. Similarly den Dikken (1995) advocates the more restrictive binary-branching tree geometry as yielding greater ‘insight into (the speed of) the process of language acquisition’. Following the lead of these and others, I contend that adopting a binary-branching requirement is equally well motivated in analyzing the constituent structure of the VPCs in (1) as to that in (2).

Kayne proceeds to eliminate the  $\bar{v}$ -node adjoined particle configuration of (B) by another principle he proposes requiring sisters of V' to be ‘thematically autonomous’ in a fashion akin to adverbial constituents. This is a generalization of the idea that a DP can be assigned a  $\theta$ -role by V but not  $\bar{v}$  and furthermore assumes particles are not thematically autonomous. As Hoekstra points out, the configuration of (B) can be excluded with resorting to any assumptions but instead based on evidence that particles are predicative, a claim for which I will further argue below. Anticipating those arguments and following Chomsky (1981), any predicate must have a subject which, depending on the expression, may be a non- $\theta$  position vis-à-vis the Projection Principle. This then predicts the possibility of a non-argument element occurring in the subject position – a prediction borne out by (1)b repeated here as (3)a.

- (3)a. He allowed the dog on the boat.  
b. He allowed there to be a dog on the boat.

The DP *the dog* is analyzed as semantically being the subject of the proposed SC [the dog on the boat] headed by the particle *on*, in conformance with a semantic subject<sup>1</sup> c-commanding its predicate (*per* Williams, 1980). The structurally parallel version in (3)b contains a non-argument expletive in lieu of *the dog*, thus supporting the analysis of this post-verbal DP in (3)a being a subject of the SC as opposed to an object of the verb.

In summary, given possibilities (A) and (B) are both unsuitable, Kayne determines the VP constituency of (2) to be one involving the SC complement to V, [<sub>SC</sub> DP *Prt*], of (C). Using several tests for distinguishing properties attributed to small clauses (*cf* Stowell, 1983), Kayne provides further evidence in support of this conclusion. In particular two of these tests, namely an inability to form derived nominals and left-branch extraction violations, are equally applicable to the examples in (1), strongly suggesting by extension a [<sub>SC</sub> DP [*Prt* DP]] complement to the verb in which the SC is headed by a *transitive* particle.

*Per* Kayne (1985) SC constructions are systematically excluded from being able to form derived nominals. Consequently, the parallels which obtain in examples (4-6) are expected if both [DP *Prt* ] and [DP [*Prt* DP]] constitute SC structures like that in (4).

- (4)a. John considers [<sub>SC</sub> Bill honest].
- b. \*John's consideration of Bill honest
- (5)a. It took a long time to look [<sub>SC</sub> the information up].
- b. \*The looking of the information up took a long time.
- (6)a. It took a long time to break [<sub>SC</sub> the top off the bottle].
- b. \*The breaking of the top off the bottle took a long time.

Similarly, in languages such as English, attempting to extract a subpart of a left-branch constituent like the subject of a SC consistently yields violations. The fact that this same pattern of deviance is observed with the [DP *Prt* ] and [DP [*Prt* DP]] configurations in (8-9) is yet further corroboration for analyzing them as SC structures.

- (7)a. The cold weather has gotten [<sub>SC</sub> John's sister very depressed].
- b. \*Who has the cold weather gotten the sister of very depressed?
- (8)a. The cold weather has worn [<sub>SC</sub> John's sister out].
- b. \*Who has the cold weather worn the sister of out?
- (9)a. The cold weather has broken [<sub>SC</sub> the top of the cork off the bottle].
- b. \*What has the cold weather broken the top of off the bottle?

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<sup>1</sup> *semantic subject* is used here as a generalized term for the SC constituent to which a predicative head ascribes some property

The evidence presented thus far in favor of a SC analysis for the examples in (1) is contingent upon a [<sub>SC</sub> DP<sub>1</sub> [Prt DP<sub>2</sub>]] structure in which the Prt is a predicative head projecting DP<sub>1</sub> as its semantic subject and DP<sub>2</sub> as its complement. While all particles may be categorized as prepositions, not all prepositions simultaneously function as particles even when occurring in a linear V DP P DP fashion parallel to V [<sub>SC</sub> DP<sub>1</sub> [Prt DP<sub>2</sub>]] as in (10).

(10) Mary sewed the dress on the table.

While the DP *the table* in (10) is the object (*i.e.* complement) of the preposition, positing the DP *the dress* as the semantic subject of the preposition *on* would render a construal such that “Mary sewed the dress *onto* the table” (*i.e.* the dress came to be *on the table* as a result of the sewing). This is obviously not the most readily available interpretation for (10) in which the PP *on the table* is either an adverbial modifier of the entire sewing event, or a DP modifier identifying the dress as one located on the table. These important distinctions derive directly from general constraints associated with the argument structure of prepositions and by extension particles. Following Svenonius (1996), I adopt the terms *Figure* and *Ground* from Talmy (1978) to describe the spatial relations (whether physical or metaphorical) typically denoted by prepositions.

The Figure is the element which is in motion or located with respect to the Ground. For example in (11) the subject of the sentence is also the Figure of the prepositional phrase, and the complement of the preposition is the Ground.

(11) The doctor is in his office.

An important generalization here is that typical spatial prepositions, most of which also function as particles (*e.g.* in, out, up, down, on, off, *etc.*) cannot participate in the opposite configuration: the complement of the preposition is always interpreted as the Ground, and the entire PP is always interpreted as the location, source or goal of the Figure. As seen in (12) the Ground is not always explicitly expressed but may be contextually determined and/or more abstractly interpreted.

- (12)a. The umpire threw the ball up.  
b. The prisoners gave their freedom up.

The hallmark of a subject-predicate relationship is the ascription of some property by the predicate to its subject. Thus prepositions in general are predicative to the extent that they

ascribe some property to the Figure such as the property of being *in* ascribed to *the doctor* in (11) or the property of being *up* ascribed to *the ball* and (more abstractly) to *their freedom* in (12).

Crucially for identifying VPCs is a further relationship holding between the verb and the particle (including the Figure and Ground whether overtly expressed or not). As observed by Bolinger (1971), the meaning associated with the typical SUBJ V DP PP form of a VPC may be represented along the lines of SUBJ get DP (to be) PP by V-ing. For example in (1)d, *he got the ball (to be) up the center line by throw-ing*. The VP of verb-particle constructions in general (excepting some idiomatic ones) takes on a causative meaning and related to this the secondary predication effected by the particle has a result or end-state interpretation. To summarize, a *particle* is a preposition whose predicative relationship with a Figure yields a SC constituent functioning as a resultative complement of the verb.

In syntactic terms, then, there are potentially two argument structures for a verb like *throw*. In the first, *throw* lexically subcategorizes for a *thrower* and a *throwee*, and does not convey a causative meaning. In the second, ‘causative’ *throw* has a SC resultative complement which does not appear to be lexically selected in any obvious way. On the surface this seems to imply massive redundancy in the lexicon as virtually any non-stative verb could potentially have a ‘causative’ counterpart in combination with a resultative complement. However, following Hoekstra (1988), I contend that a principled account of the distribution of resultative complements is obtained by appeal to the aspectual properties inherent in verbs. Starting with the Stative / Activity / Accomplishment / Achievement classification scheme of Vendler (1967), Hoekstra notes that stative predicates like *know*, *like* or *be tall* have no clear beginning or end and so cannot combine with a resultative complement. Accomplishments and Achievements both entail a definite end state, the difference being Accomplishments like *melt something* are durative whereas Achievements like *notice something* are punctual. While Activities<sup>2</sup> like *walk* or *read on* are atelic, they become either an Accomplishment or Achievement (depending upon the durative/punctual distinction) when combined with a resultative complement (*e.g.* I walked my feet off).

Activities, Accomplishments and Achievements (plus semelfactives) together form a natural class of ‘non-statives’ each differentiated by its combination of the features atelic/telic

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<sup>2</sup> and by extension *semelfactives* like *kick* or *slap* which are punctual rather than durative, although Hoekstra doesn’t differentiate these.

and durative/punctual. Hoekstra further sub-classifies Accomplishments and Achievements together as Processes versus Activities based on the presence of an instigator. Activities are instigated by some participant (*i.e.* agent) while Processes denote events which are presented without necessarily any indication as to whether there is an instigator or not. The essential point is that all Processes and Activities (*i.e.* non-statives) entail some change in the general ‘state of affairs’ such that a different state of affairs exists subsequent to the process or activity taking place. As an inherent property of non-stativity, any verbs in this category may then syntactically encode a change in the state of affairs with which it associated by combining with a resultative SC complement. *Per* Hoekstra’s suggestion, this may be formally implemented by postulating a lexical rule licensing an optional result argument for non-stative verbs.

These conclusions have non-trivial consequences for  $\theta$ -role assignment when a non-stative verb realizes a result argument. In a VPC with a canonical V [<sub>SC</sub> DP<sub>1</sub> [Prt (DP<sub>2</sub>))] configuration, both DP<sub>1</sub> and DP<sub>2</sub> would receive their respective  $\theta$ -roles from the Prt head; and the entire SC would receive some internal  $\theta$ -role from the verb (perhaps something akin to *goal*). Crucially, DP<sub>1</sub> as an argument of the particle rather than the verb receives a  $\theta$ -role *only* from the particle. In this section I have argued that the motivations of Kayne and Hoekstra for a SC analysis of VPCs are extendable to both transitive and intransitive particles. I have also appealed to Hoekstra’s arguments in justifying an optional result complement for non-stative verbs. These are the conceptual underpinnings for a uniform treatment of particle transitivity in VPCs.

## 2. A unified analysis of VPCs as SC complements of *v*.

The heart of the current proposal is treating particles in a fashion parallel to unergative and accusative verbs as predicative complements of *v*. Under this approach the entire syntactic structure for a VPC includes 2 projections of *v*: an upper one for having the VP as its complement; and a lower one having the particle phrase as its complement (but which itself is the complement of the verb). In this sense the verb is ‘sandwiched’ between the 2 projections of *v*. In each case *v* is responsible for accusative case assignment and external  $\theta$ -role assignment for its respective transitive predicate whether verb or particle.

Before describing the proposal in detail, a brief review of the key distributional facts related to VPCs, and which any analysis must account for, is in order. The examples in (13) illustrate both possible word order variations as well as constrained ones.

- (13)a. She broke (off) the top (off).  
 b. She broke (\*off) it \*(off).  
 c. She broke (\*off) the top \*(off) the bottle.  
 d. She broke (\*off) the top \*(off) it.  
 e. She broke (\*off) it \*(off) the bottle.  
 f. The bumper fell off.  
 g. The bumper fell off the car.

There are essentially two possible word orders: the first depicted in (13)a and the second in (13)b-e. If the Figure for the particle is instantiated by a full DP and there is no overt Ground, then the particle may either precede or follow the Figure. In all other cases, Figure – Particle – (Ground) is the only possible order<sup>3</sup>. In examples (13)f-g, the Figure is non-distinct from the subject of the sentence (implicating movement). VPCs of this sort are not specifically addressed in this proposal primarily because the verb-particle combination is not associated with a causative interpretation<sup>4</sup>. Consequently the argument structure and corresponding  $\theta$ -role assignment(s) are not parallel to the examples in (13)a-e.

Explicating the analysis proceeds in two parts. First the derivation of the syntactic structure for VPCs with transitive particles like (13)c-e is described. Then the same approach is used to account for VPCs with intransitive particles like (13)a-b, including the optional word ordering. Figure (1) illustrates a point in the derivation of (13)c *She broke the top off the bottle* at which the numeration has been exhausted but before the verb *broke* undergoes head movement to Infl to check  $\phi$ -features, and before the subject *she* raises to [Spec, Infl] to check nominative case.

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<sup>3</sup> The pronoun *it* in these examples is representative of weak, unstressed pronouns. For some speakers strong or emphatic pronouns are able to pattern like (13)a as in *But John threw out THEM!*

<sup>4</sup> However, §4 does discuss how the proposal might accommodate such examples.

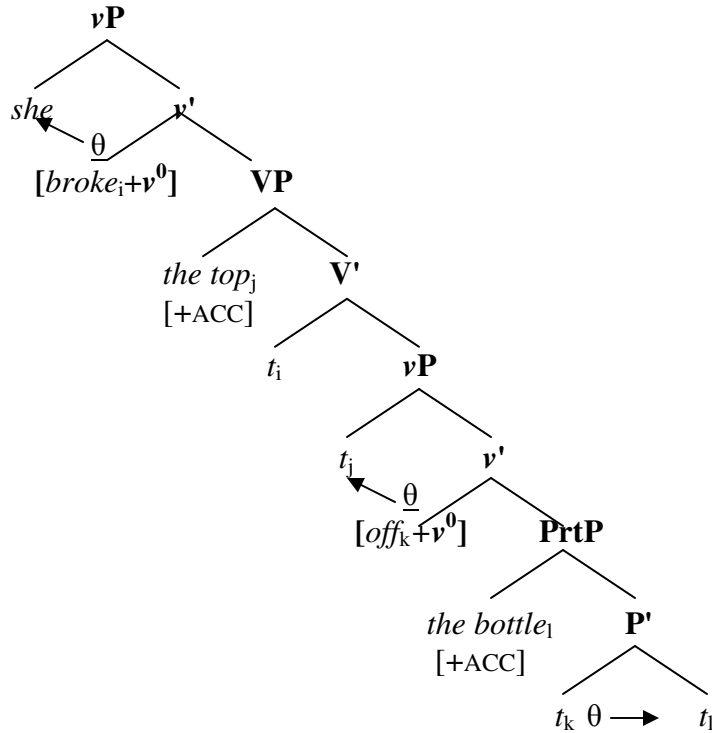


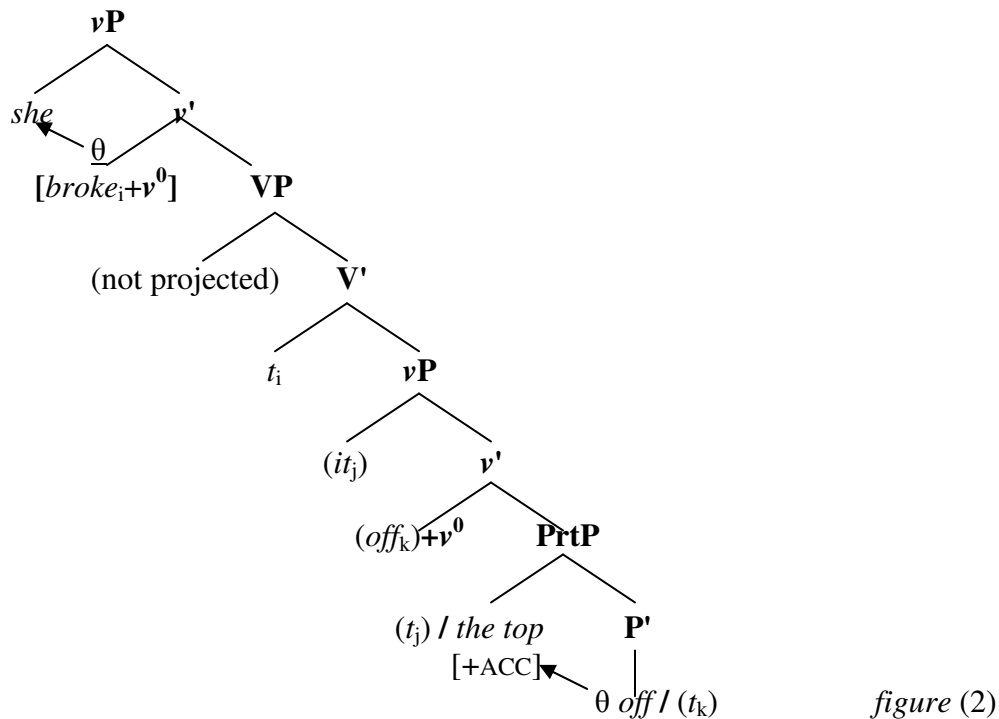
figure (1)

The derivation depicted in figure (1) begins by the DP *the bottle* merging into the complement of the particle *off* where it receives a  $\theta$ -role but cannot check accusative case. The particle phrase then merges into the complement of the lower-*v*. The projection of lower-*v* creates a [Spec, *v*] into which the DP *the top* merges and receives a  $\theta$ -role from lower-*v* but is unable to check accusative case. The projection of lower-*v* also permits *the bottle* to raise to [Spec, PP] where it can check the accusative case of lower-*v* in an ECM-like fashion. The lower-*v* also has a strong [PRED] feature. This triggers *off* to undergo head movement to adjoin the lower-*v*. Lower-*v*P then merges into the complement of the verb *broke* after which the VP merges into the complement of the upper-*v*. Subsequently *the top* is able to raise to [Spec, V] where it can check the accusative case of the upper-*v* in an ECM-like fashion. The strong verb feature on the upper-*v* triggers *broke* to undergo head movement and adjoin the upper-*v*. To complete what is shown in figure (1), the pronoun *she* merges into [Spec, *v*] projected by the upper-*v* where *she* receives an external  $\theta$ -role but is unable to check nominative case.

The key aspects of the derivation are the transitivity parallels holding between the verb *broke* and the particle *off*. Both can assign internal  $\theta$ -roles but neither can check case. Consequently, both require merging with a *v* in order to 1) check accusative case on a DP in the

specifier of its complement; and 2) assign a  $\theta$ -role to their respective ‘subjects’, *she* and *the top*. Strong features on both  $v$ 's also trigger their being adjoined by *broke* and *off* via head movement. Finally the derivation can only converge on a single word order consistent with the facts of English.

Essentially the same derivation in figure (1) is also able accommodate the syntactic structure of VPCs with intransitive particles. The alternative word orderings available for these VPCs is attributed to the existence in the lexicon of an additional variant of  $v$  which has a weak rather than strong [PRED] feature<sup>5</sup>. Consequently, if the numeration provides this weak- $v$  for the lower- $v$ , head movement of the particle will not be triggered yielding a V DP Prt word order. Figure (2) illustrates the same point in the derivation described previously but for the examples in (13)a-b *She broke {it / the top} off* with an intransitive particle.



The derivation depicted in figure (2) begins by the DP *the top* merging directly into the specifier of the particle *off*. Although *the top* is the ‘subject’ of the particle, being unergative *off* only assigns a single  $\theta$ -role via a local relation with the recipient. The particle phrase then merges into the complement of the lower- $v$  permitting *the top* to check the accusative case of

<sup>5</sup> This poses the issue as to why in English only intransitive particles may merge with either a variants of  $v$ . A possible factor might be that intransitive particles do not require  $v$  to be agentive. A more complete understanding of these circumstances however is left to future research.

lower- $v$  in an ECM-like fashion. Depending on whether the lower- $v$  is the weak or strong variant of  $v$ , the particle will either remain *in situ* or undergo head movement to adjoin the lower- $v$ . The latter possibility is depicted by *off* appearing in parentheses adjoined to  $v^0$ . The lower- $v$ P subsequently merges into the complement of the verb, followed by the VP merging into the complement of the upper- $v$ . Finally, the head movement of *broke* to adjoin the upper- $v$  and the merging of *she* into the [Spec,  $v$ ] projected by the upper- $v$  are the same as described for figure (1).

A final point concerning the syntactic derivation of VPCs with intransitive particles regards the inability of the particle to linearly precede a weak pronoun. Figure (2) shows a trace  $t_j$  in parentheses indicating that a weak pronoun, like a full DP, initially merges into [Spec, Prt] where it is assigned a  $\theta$ -role by the particle. However, unlike a full DP, a weak pronoun is unable to check the accusative case of the lower- $v$  in an ECM-like fashion. Instead, following den Dikken (1995), it is my contention that weak pronouns are required to stand in a direct relationship of Spec-Head agreement in order to check case. Consequently, a weak pronoun like *it* raises to the [Spec,  $v$ ] projected by the lower- $v$ . As this case-driven movement of the weak pronoun occurs regardless of whether the lower- $v$  itself has a weak or strong [PRED] feature, at the point at which the derivation converges the pronoun will always linearly precede the particle.

The key aspects of the second derivation are the possibility of an intransitive particle merging with either a strong or weak variant of  $v$ , and the necessity for a weak pronoun to be in a Spec-Head relation in order to check case. Depending on the numeration, the interaction of these aspects results in any derivation converging on only one of three possible word orders. A full DP argument of the particle and a strong lower- $v$  yields a V Prt DP order, while a full DP argument and a weak lower- $v$  yields a V DP Prt order, and a weak pronoun with either variant of  $v$  yields a V Pn Prt order. Before concluding this section a further remark concerning the weak and strong variants of  $v$  is in order. The motivation for the existence of a weak  $v$  in this analysis is exclusively tied to explaining the VPC word order variation found in English. Although further independent corroboration has yet come to light, the fact that cross-linguistically other languages could plausibly license just one variant and not the other dovetails nicely with more restrictive VPC word ordering found in other Germanic languages. Implications of some of these observations is further discussed in §4. Having demonstrated the availability of a uniform syntactic treatment of particle transitivity in VPCs, a comparison to some other recent proposals will be made in the following section.

### 3. Comparisons to other recent proposals for VPCs.

In comparison to some recent proposals for VPCs, the uniform treatment of particle transitivity presented here has equal or greater empirical scope without some of the deficiencies found in other accounts. Johnson (1991) advocates a complex predicate analysis of VPCs which explicitly analyzes the verb and particle as forming a complex morphological element via *right-hand* adjunction. Apart from standing in opposition to Williams' Right-hand Head Rule, in some languages such as Swedish verb-particle incorporation occurs overtly in particle+verb linear order as shown in (14).

- (14)a. Det blev hugget ned många träd  
it became chopped down many trees  
'Many trees got chopped down'
- b. Det blev många träd nedhuggna  
it became many trees down.chopped  
'Many trees got chopped down'

Thus these facts run counter to the predictions made by Johnson's account. Assuming some strong feature on verbs like *chop* in Swedish, the analysis in §2 could accommodate these facts via additional head movement of the particle to adjoin the verb after first adjoining the lower-*v*.

In the small clause account of den Dikken (1995), particles are analyzed as ergative. Consequently, a DP argument initially merges into the complement of the particle and then must move to the specifier of the particle to check case via the higher verb. This approach predicts that the DP argument of the particle will always match the case feature of the verb. However, as shown in (15), Icelandic has verb-particle constructions which assign a case different from that of the verb alone.

- (15)a. Ég lokaði dyrunum  
I shut the.door.DAT  
'I shut the door'
- b. Ég lokaði hundinn inni  
I shut the.dog.ACC inside  
'I shut the dog inside'

In lieu of the verb incorporating the particle<sup>6</sup>, these facts run counter to the predictions made by den Dikken's account. Under the analysis in §2 these facts are accommodated in a straightforward fashion without any additional assumptions. Since the analysis herein already

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<sup>6</sup> In den Dikken's analysis verb-particle incorporation is 'abstract' occurring only at LF.

posits separate projections of *v* for both the verb and particle, the particular case feature checked by the DP argument of the particle is unaffected by a verb whose case feature is different when not part of a VPC.

In the proposal made by of Svenonius (1996), the particle in a VPC is analyzed as heading a small clause complement of the verb. However, parallel to fully tensed clauses, the SC headed by the particle also projects as many as three functional heads: T (akin to Asp), Agr and C. In so far as the analysis in §2 crucially relies as well on the SC headed by the particle projecting an additional head (that of the lower-*v*), it may seem that the two accounts take a similar approach. However, the analysis herein has the significant advantage of requiring only a *single* additional head as opposed to three. In summary, not only do these other accounts fail to achieve a more comprehensive analysis, some make predictions that can be cross-linguistically falsified as well.

#### 4. VPCs with non-causative interpretation and word-order variations in Scandinavian languages.

This section briefly revisits two sub-topics peripheral to the main discussion. The first concerns a variety of VPCs with non-causative interpretation, and the second is related to some VPC word-order variations found in Scandinavian languages. Two examples of non-causative VPCs given in (13)f-g are repeated in (16) below.

- (16)a. The bumper fell off.
- b. The bumper fell off the car.

Arguably *off* in (16) is not simply an adverbial locative in the same sense as *on the table* in (10) repeated below as (17).

- (17) Mary sewed the dress on the table.

In (17) *on the table* denotes either where the sewing event took place or where the dress is located. Conversely, *off* and *off the car* denote neither where the falling event took place nor where the bumper is located (other than implying it is no longer on the car). Rather, the use of *off* in (16) conveys an end or result state as much as any of the other VPCs discussed so far. The crucial difference is that the semantics associated with (16) do not conform to the same

SUBJ get DP (to be) PP by V-ing

paraphrase as has been the case so far. Thus, (16) cannot be taken to mean “*The bumper got the bumper to be off by fall-ing*” and hence the lack of a causative interpretation. Being non-causative, examples like (16) cannot be argued to have a result complement in the same sense as causative VPCs. Consequently, the issue becomes one of  $\theta$ -role assignment. Since the Figure of the particle in (16) is non-distinct from the subject of the sentence, the DP *the bumper* would be the logical recipient of a  $\theta$ -role from both the verb *fell* and the SC predicative head *off*.

In pre-MP approaches this would be standardly handled by positing PRO to be the ‘subject’ of the particle. However, under the analysis presented in §2, this would mean PRO occupying either the specifier of the particle phrase or that of the lower-*v*. In either position PRO would be governed, assuming *v* to be a proper governor. An alternative approach is that of control derived by movement (Hornstein 1999, 2003 among others). Under this alternative  $\theta$ -roles are considered features and a DP receives a  $\theta$ -role by checking a  $\theta$ -feature of the verb (or other predicative element) with which it merges. Movement of the DP forms a chain and chains may receive multiple  $\theta$ -roles. This approach could be accommodated by the analysis in §2 without any additional modifications.

Also previously noted was the lack of independent corroboration for positing both weak and strong variants of *v*. An interesting consequence of such a proposal is that it predicts the possibility of a given language licensing only the use of one of the two variants as opposed to both. The availability of only the weak or strong variant of *v* in a language is easily detectable as it would further restrict the possible word-ordering for VPCs. The data shown in (18)<sup>7</sup> from the Scandinavian languages of Danish, Swedish and Norwegian conform exactly to such a prediction.

- |   |             |
|---|-------------|
| (18)a. Tjeneren tørket {*af} støvet {af}. | [Danish]    |
| b. Kyparen torkade {av} dammet {*av}.     | [Swedish]   |
| c. Kellneren tørket {av} støvet {av}.     | [Norwegian] |
| <i>the.waiter wiped off the.dust off</i>  |             |
| ‘The waiter wiped off the dust.’          |             |

Danish licensing only the use of a weak-*v* would account for the systematic lack of a particle preceding its ‘subject’. Similarly, Swedish licensing only the use of a strong-*v* would account for the inability of the particle following its ‘subject’. Finally, Norwegian licensing both variants would account for the possibility of either word order as found in English.

<sup>7</sup> The data in (18) is from Svenonius (1996).

### *5. Conclusion.*

Contra the view that particles are characteristically intransitive, I have argued that there are sufficient semantic and syntactic reasons for differentiating both transitive and intransitive particles in VPCs. A principled basis for the distinction is found in the fundamental Figure/Ground argument structure of prepositions in general, which also supports their particular role in VPCs of instantiating a result-state argument of the verb. The core of the analysis lies in uniformly treating particles in a fashion parallel to unergative and accusative verbs as predicative complements of *v*. The approach is shown to account for all the distributional facts related to VPCs in English and to be applicable to some Scandinavian languages as well.

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