A MINIMALIST APPROACH TO SOME PROBLEMS OF IRISH WORD ORDER

0. Introduction
Recent work in the Principles and Parameters approach to Syntactic Theory has been concerned with the range of word order variation in the world’s languages. It is a tenet of this approach that such variation can be derived from a highly constrained set of simple parameters, interacting with universal principles of natural language. We would like to investigate here how the facts of Irish word order may best be represented within the framework argued for in Chomsky and Lasnik (forthcoming), Chomsky (1992, and lectures 1991) and other work following these. The first section will provide a brief overview of the relevant notions and mechanisms of this framework and the analysis we propose. After this, we will turn to the relevant Irish data, moving on to a discussion of the predictions of our analysis and potential problems it raises. In the final section, we will provide a more detailed refinement of our initial analysis, discussing its import for a feature-driven theory of syntactic variation as in Chomsky (op. cit.).

1.0 The Framework and an Initial Analysis
Over the last half-decade, much work in Syntax has been devoted to motivating and supporting the claim that all arguments of a verb, and in particular the Subject, are base-generated within the maximal projection (VP) of that verb (the VP-internal-subject hypothesis: cf. e.g. Fukui and Speas 1986, Kitagawa 1986, Koopman and Sportiche 1988 among many others). This approach entails that in a language such as English, the subject must ‘raise’ to somewhere within the maximal projection of an Inflectional category to receive (abstract) nominative Case.

Extending a proposal by Pollock (1989), Chomsky (1989, 1991 etc.) has suggested that both structural Cases (i.e. nominative and accusative) are realised in a parallel manner, that is, via movement (either overt: before ‘Spell Out’ [formerly Surface Structure], or covert: at Logical Form [LF], the semantic component) of the arguments to positions within the inflectional complex. Specifically, it is suggested that all structural case and agreement is the realisation of a specifier/head relationship with an appropriate functional (AGR) head. Thus the inflectional complex includes a Tense Phrase (TP), and two (non-distinct) agreement phrases (AGR-1; AGR-2) (1).

While some (or all) movement may be at LF (‘covert’), the verb must eventually raise to AGR-1, adjoining to each of the intervening head positions (via Head-to-Head movement (Travis 1984)). NPs must receive case, so all arguments must raise to the specifier position (SPEC) (i.e. the empty position which is sister to the single bar projection of the head) of one of the agreement phrases (AGRs) at some point in the derivation.

As the agreement heads are non-distinct, the case with which each is associated is determined by the nature of the element which adjoins to it. Thus the objective or accusative case, being in some sense a verbal attribute, must be

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realized in the specifier/head relationship with the complex head [V, AGR-2] derived via the first step of the Head-to-Head Movement when the verb is transitive.

(2)

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{AGR-2P} \\
\text{objj} \quad \text{AGR-2'} \\
[V + \text{AGR-2}] \quad \text{VP} \\
\hline
\text{t}_j \quad \text{i}
\end{array}
\]

By similar logic, Head-Movement of Tense (T) to AGR-1 will create the complex head [T, AGR-1], and nominative case will be realized in a specifier/head relationship to this head when T is finite.

(3) NOMINATIVE CASE

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{AGR1-P} \\
\text{Subj} \quad \text{AGR-1'} \\
[T + \text{AGR-1}] \quad \text{TP} \\
\hline
\text{t}_i \quad \text{t'} \quad \ldots
\end{array}
\]

Within the bounds of this approach, there are a number of possible derivations which will result in a surface VSO word order. The first possibility is that the verb (or verbal complex) has ‘fronted’ to an initial complementiser (COMP) position, in which case the surface positions of the subject and object are not a priori evident. This is the analysis presented in Sproat (1985) and taken up by more recent work. A second approach, suggested by Chomsky (1992, and lectures 1991) and picked up by others is that the VSO order is derived if the verb raises overtly to some inflectable Head, but the subject and object remain in situ, raising covertly at LF. In what follows, we will suggest that empirical evidence points against either of these approaches for Irish. Specifically, we claim that there is evidence (a) that the initial V in Irish is not in COMP and (b) that (at least some) nominal arguments in Irish raise in the overt syntax. The remaining possibility, then, is that Irish (tensed) V raises overtly to AGR-1, but that the subject raises only as far as specifier of the Tense Phrase. Our approach captures some of the insights of Demirdache’s (1991) work on Modern Arabic VSO/SVO alternations, and is similar to the analysis of VSO sketched in Bures (1992) though with crucial differences which will be discussed. Determination of the position of the object under this analysis raises issues which will be addressed towards the end of the paper.

2.0 Irish

The basic word order in Irish tensed clauses is verb-initial. The nominative subject follows the verb, and the accusative object (if the verb is transitive) follows the subject. Oblique NPs and adverbs generally follow the arguments of the verb. Thus the label VSO. This is illustrated in (4):

(4) a) Rith siad.
run.PST they.NOM
‘They ran.’

b) Chonaic Seán an madra.
see.PST J.NOM the dog
‘John saw the dog’.

c) * Seán Chonaic an madra.
J.NOM see.PST the dog
(John saw the dog.)

 d) Chonaic sé i.
Saw.PST he.NOM her.ACC
‘He saw her.’

 e) Thóg sé an teach leis an ord.
build.PST he the house with.DEF the hammer
‘He built the house with the hammer.’
2.1 Against Verb to COMP Raising

An obvious analysis within the bounds of the present framework (cf. e.g. Sproat 1985) would be that the subject (and possibly object) raise overtly to the specifiers of respective agreement phrases for case checking, and the verb obligatorily raises through the inflectional complex and on to COMP (5). The empirical argument that this analysis cannot be maintained for Irish comes from the behaviour of embedded clauses.

(5)

The well known ‘Verb Second phenomena’ (6 b, c and d) of Germanic languages have frequently been analysed as movement of the verb to COMP with a concomitant restriction that specifier of the complementizer phrase be filled by some constituent (e.g. den Besten 1990). Part of the motivation for this analysis is the fact that in subordinate clauses COMP-VSO order is not permitted, and the order COMP-SOV is standard (Koster 1975). The hypothesis is that the verb may raise to an empty complementizer position in matrix clauses, but that in embedded clauses, the complementizer position is filled (possibly with a phonologically null complementizer), and the verb cannot raise to it (7) (data from Haegeman 1992).

(6)  

b) Dieses Buch kaufte Karl gestern
   ‘this book bought Karl yesterday’

c) Gestern kaufte Karl dieses Buch
   ‘Karl bought this book yesterday’

d) Was kaufte Karl?
   ‘What did Karl buy’

(7)  

...dass Karl gestern das Buch gekauft hat
...that Karl yesterday the book bought had
...that Karl had bought the book yesterday

If Irish were to have a comparable analysis, i.e. obligatory fronting of the verb to COMP in matrix clauses (although without the requirement that the specifier of the complementizer phrase be filled), then we would expect similarly the order COMP-SOV or COMP-SVO in embedded clauses. This prediction is immediately falsified by the facts of Irish. In fact we only get COMP-VSO order. The verb still must raise. It cannot move to COMP since that position is already filled:

(8)  

Ceapaim [go bhfaca sé an madra]
think.PRES.1s [that see.PST DEP he.nom the dog]

‘I think that he saw the dog.’

There is additionally a conceptual motivation for rejecting the obligatory Verb-to-COMP analysis. Challenging the ‘standard’ analysis of V2 in Germanic, Travis (1991) and Zwart (1991) suggest independently that Verb-to-COMP raising only occurs when some morphological property of COMP (e.g. such as ‘TOPIC’ or ‘WH’) must be satisfied (as in 7c and 7d above). Both authors adduce empirical evidence to support their claim that matrix SVO order in Germanic languages with a non-topicalized subject cannot be derived from Verb-to-COMP raising. The conceptual point that these papers (and earlier work along these lines) raise is the following: if movement is motivated solely by morphological properties (e.g. Chomsky 1989), then Verb-to-COMP raising can be motivated for topicalization or question formation (cf. English ‘Aux—>Comp

f) Beidh Nóra ag an ndroichead amárach.
   ‘Nora will be at the bridge tomorrow.’ (VSO Adv)
Inversion'), but cannot be motivated for non-topicalized declarative clauses (as in sentence 7b). A Sprout-type analysis involving obligatory Verb-to-COMP in simple declaratives is in principle untenable.

2.2 Against Subject and Object in situ.

The approach suggested by Chomsky (1991 draft, 1992) is that the verb raises to (some head within) the articulated inflectional complex before Spell-Out (i.e. 'S-structure' in earlier work). The subject and object remain in situ in the verb phase in the overt component, raising (covertly) at Logical Form.

\[(9)\]

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{AGR-P} \\
\text{AGR-t'} \\
\text{AGR-1} \\
\text{TP} \\
\text{T} \\
\text{AGR-2P} \\
\text{AGR-t'} \\
\text{AGR-2} \\
\text{VP} \\
\text{NP} \\
\text{V'} \\
\text{NP} \\
\text{NP} \\
\text{NP} \\
\text{NP} \\
\end{array}
\]

In this section, we will argue that there is empirical evidence that such an approach is also untenable for Irish. In this, we agree with Bures (1992), but we will differ in a number of important respects in terms of the fine details of our analysis (as will be seen below in section 3).

The analysis suggested by Chomsky is not obviously falsifiable in looking solely at tensed clauses, both matrix and embedded. In both cases, as was noted above, the order is (CCMP-VSO). As adverbial elements in Irish generally occur following the verb and its arguments, adverb placement cannot be used as a diagnostic for the structural positions occupied by the arguments and the verb. Turning to non-finite clauses, however, one immediately notes that VSO order is impossible. In all dialects non-finite clauses may show the surface order SOV (where there is a strong pragmatic preference for sentences without overt subjects):\(^4\)

\[(10)\] \text{Ba mhaith liom } [\text{té an teach a thógáil.}] \\
\text{COP good with.1s him.ACC the house.ACC trans build} \\
\text{'I would like him to build the house.'}

While this SOV order is obligatory in the northern dialects,\(^5\) in the Munster dialects (cf. McCloskey 1980, Chung and McCloskey 1987) there is an alternative to (10), namely SVO order:

\[(11)\] \text{Ba mhaith liom } [\text{té a thógáil an tfe}.] \\
\text{COP good with.1s him.ACC trans build the house.GEN} \\
\text{'I would like him to build the house.'}

Note that there is a difference in case-marking of the direct objects in (10) and (11). In the SOV order (10), the object bears accusative case, but in the SVO order (Munster dialects), the object bears genitive case. These case markings/word order correlations are immutable.

\[(12)\] a) \text{*Ba mhaith liom } [\text{té an tfe a thógáil.}] \\
\text{COP good with.1s him.ACC the house.GEN trans build} \\
\text{(I would like him to build the house.)}

b) \text{*Ba mhaith liom } [\text{té a thógáil an teach.}] \\
\text{COP good with.1s him.ACC trans build the house.ACC} \\
\text{(I would like him to build the house.)}

Genitive post-verbal objects are also evidenced, in fact required, in progressives:
(13) Tá si ag scuabadh an urlár.
Be.PRES she .NOM.PROG sweep the.floor GEN
'She is sweeping the floor.'

Of note here is that progressives are formed with the substantive 'be' tá. This correlates with a cross-linguistic generalization that auxiliary 'be' does not co-occur with accusative case in simple transitives.  

Kayne (1987) argues that while the Romance 'have' auxiliary may license a structural accusative case, the 'be' auxiliary may not do so. He claims that this distinction underlies much of the behaviour of the participial constructions in French. In particular, unaccusatives, passives, and reflexives (all intransitive -- assigning no accusative case) require the 'be' auxiliary être whereas transitive constructions may never take this auxiliary, always occurring with auxiliary avoir 'have'. The generalization is that the specifier of AGR-2 is not an available case-position with auxiliary 'be'. Noonan (1992) has suggested that the lack of a 'have' auxiliary in Irish therefore correlates with the inability of progressive constructions to assign accusative case. In the framework assumed here, the direct object in a progressive construction then, may not raise to AGR-2 to receive accusative case, and thus it must remain within the projection of the participle where it receives genitive case. Presumably, as the auxiliary tá 'be' is in the inflectional complex (in AGR-1 in the analysis to be defended below), the main verb is unraised. The conclusion from this is that the underlying order of constituents in the VP in Irish is SVO.

(14)

Returning to the infinitives, it would appear that accusative case is available for the object, hence it may raise to AGR-2. The Munster dialects allow a construction whereby the object may instead receive genitive case in situ from the participle. We thus see that here is a correlation between object-raising and case: If the object remains within the VP, then it has genitive, and if it raises, then it has accusative. Our claims so far are:

(15) i The object (along with the verb) is in situ in progressive and Munster non-finite SVO constructions, where it is marked genitive,
ii The preverbal object in all dialects is marked with accusative case is in the specifier of AGR-2.

We have taken this case/position alternation as evidence of overt object-raising in Irish. In fact, similar claims have been advanced and defended for other languages as well (cf. Mahajan 1989 for Hindi, Bobaljik 1992 for Inuit and others). Extending this somewhat, if the object is raised overtly to the specifier position of AGR-2P yet the subject still precedes the object, then the subject must have raised past the object.

Taken together, the data and arguments of this subsection entail that the Chomsky-style Subject-and-Object in situ analysis cannot be maintained for Irish. In the previous subsection, we ruled out the Verb-to-COMP analysis. Let us now present an alternative analysis, for the most part compatible with the framework developed by Chomsky (1989, 1991, 1992) and Chomsky and Lasnik (forthcoming), which does capture the basic facts of Irish word order, and also sheds some light on the similarities between Munster SVO infinitives and progressive constructions in all dialects.

3.0 Our Analysis

Consider again the structure of transitive clauses given in (1):

(1)

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In section 2.1, we showed that derivation of Irish VSO by obligatory V-to-
COMP movement was untenable on both empirical and conceptual grounds. In
section 2.2, we argued that there is evidence in Irish pointing to overt raising of
the object to specifier position of AGR-2P, which would rule out an analysis of
raising of arguments at Logical Form. In addition, this entails that the subject
must raise past the object in the specifier of AGR-2, as the subject linearly
precedes the object. Finally, as finite clauses have the verb preceding both the
subject and the object, the verb must raise to some position higher than the
subject, but lower than COMP. This analysis is detailed in the following sections.
In section 3.1 we will derive VSO order in tensed clauses. In section 3.2, we will
look at their derivation in non-finite clauses.

3.1 Irish VSO in Finite Clauses

The analysis we shall pursue here is that the overt movement in Irish consists
of Head movement V---AGR-2---T---AGR-1, and of NP movement of the
object to the specifier of AGR-2P and the subject to the specifier position of the
Tense Phrase (TP). A similar analysis is also suggested in Bures (1992, 60)
following observations in Carnie (in prep), although his analysis of infinitives
differs from what we will claim here in certain crucial aspects (as will be
discussed below in section 3.2).

Let us look at the derivation proposed above in more detail. For the sake of
simplicity, we will discuss this in terms of a step-by-step derivation, though this
is meant to be a convenient abstraction from a representational view of the
structure.

The first step in the derivation is head movement of the verb to AGR-2,
creating the complex Head [agr V + AGR-2]. The chain created by this step
allows the object to raise over the subject to the specifier of AGR-2 — the next
highest specifier position.

Intuitively, in order for the object to raise over the specifier of the VP which
contains the subject, the verb must raise and adjoin to AGR-2. This follows from
the Minimality effects discussed by Rizzi (1990) which ultimately can be derived
from considerations of Economy (Chomsky 1991, 1992). In particular, it is related
to Holmberg's (1986) generalization that verb-raising is required for overt object-
raising, and likewise provides a principled account of Baker's (1988)
'Government Transparency Corollary.'

Next, the (complex) Head AGR-2 (containing the verb) raises to tense (T),
creating the complex Head [T AGR-2, T], and the subject raises to specifier of
the Tense Phrase:
Again, considerations of Economy require the Head movement in order to permit raising of the subject to 'skip' the intervening specifier of AGR-2 containing the object.

The last overt step is raising of the Head T (Tense, containing Tense, AGR-2 and the verb) to adjoin to AGR-1, creating $[\text{AGR-1 } T + \text{AGR-1}]$.

$$[\text{AGR-1 } T + \text{AGR-1}]$$

**Spell Out** occurs at this stage resulting in 'surface' VSO order.

Finally, covert movement occurs at Logical Form to check agreement features and assign nominative case to the subject. The subject raises from the specifier of the Tense Phrase to the specifier of the AGR-1. Note that this movement only occurs in the Semantic component and is never realized in the phonological output:

$$[\text{AGR-1 } T + \text{AGR-1}]$$

While this analysis derives the correct word order, it appears somewhat ad hoc. Now let us consider how such a derivation may be motivated, using the theory of syntactic features.

**Features**

Within the framework being explored here, Chomsky (op. cit.) proposes that each of the heads (tense and the two AGR-1) have N[ominal] and V[erbal] features which may be parameterized with either a 'strong' value or a 'weak' one. Strong features are required to be checked in the derivation by Spell-Out (i.e. in the overt syntax), while weak features need not be. The interaction of these features with independent principles (for example the 'Procrastinate' principle requires that if movement is not required to be overt, it will be covert, Chomsky 1992) will dictate whether certain steps of the derivation occur overtly (prior to Spell-Out) or covertly (at Logical Form). The N-features correlate with the Specifier positions, governing NP movement, and the V-features with the Heads, governing Head movement.
Consider, for example, how the differences between English and French, discussed in Pollock (1989) and Chomsky (1991), are to be represented within this approach. Their proposed feature specifications are given in the table in (21):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>English</th>
<th>French</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AGR</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>weak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>V</td>
<td>weak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tense</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>V</td>
<td>strong</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Strong features must be checked in the overt syntax. As N-features are correlated with the specifier/head relationship, the specification strong for the N feature of Tense in both languages requires that an NP argument raise to check its features in the specifier/head configuration with Tense. This, in essence, is what ultimately derives the requirement that all sentences have a subject (i.e. the ‘Extended Projection Principle’ of Chomsky 1981).

Common also to English and French is a strong valence for the V-features of Tense. By hypothesis, this requires overt raising (Head-movement) of T to AGR-1 to check these features.\(^5\) This raising will mean that the structural specifier of the Tense Phrase is not licensed for feature-checking. In order for the strong N-features of Tense to be checked, then, an NP-argument (the subject) will have to raise overtly to the Specifier of the complex head [AGR, TENSE AGR-1] resulting from the Head-movement of Tense to AGR-1. This is illustrated schematically in (22):

(22)

There are three distinct Head-movement processes in English and French: (1) T moves to AGR1, (2) V moves to AGR2, and (3) [V + AGR2] moves to AGR1. The first movement is overt in both languages as required by the strong V-features of Tense. The remaining movements are governed by the V-features of the AGR nodes. In English, the V-features of AGR are weak and thus only this raising of Tense to AGR-1 occurs overtly, whereas in French, the V-features of AGR are strong and the both remaining Head-movements occur overtly, with all (finite) verbs raising in the visible syntax. Following Pollock (1989) and Chomsky (1991, 1992), this accounts for observed differences between the two languages. The only relevant difference between the two languages then is in the specification for the V-features of AGR.

In this framework, our analysis of Irish is that this language, like French, has strong V-features of AGR (requiring the verb to raise overtly), and strong N-features of Tense (requiring that the subject check its Case features in the Specifier/Head configuration with Tense), but its remaining features, including the V-feature of Tense are weak. This last is the key. In French (and English) we showed that strong V-features for Tense entailed overt raising of Tense to AGR-1, rendering the specifier of TP unavailable, and requiring that the strong N-features of Tense be checked in the Specifier of the complex Head [Tense, AGR-1] (22).

By hypothesis, Irish has weak V-features and thus Tense need not (and so cannot) raise independently to AGR-1. As the N-features of Tense are strong, the NP-argument which will check these features, the subject, thus only need raise as far as the specifier of TP in the overt syntax for checking of the features to be satisfied.

To summarize, the crucial difference between French, which displays SVO order, and Irish, which displays VSO, is that in Irish there is a difference in the valence of the V-features of Tense which correlates with whether or not Tense must raise overtly to AGR-1 (i.e. independently of the raising of V→AGR-2→TENSE→AGR-1).

Note that in Irish Tense does, in effect, raise overtly to AGR-1, but only as a step in the sequence of Head-movements V→AGR-2→TENSE→AGR-1. This difference correlates with the possibility of checking the N-features of Tense in the specifier of TP (Irish) as opposed to in the specifier of AGR1P (with the complex head [T + AGR1]) (French). The features of English, French and Irish are thus:

(23)

<table>
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<td>strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>V</td>
<td>strong</td>
<td>strong</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^5\) This is an oversimplification, as for example in the case of [S, TENSE]:
3.2 Non-finite clauses

As discussed above in drawing the parallel with progressives, we assume that
the genitive object in the Munster SVO non-finite clauses is in its base position.
AGR-2 in both progressives and these non-finite clauses is unavailable as a Case
position. Consider SOV infinitives, with an accusative object. In section 2.2 we
claimed that these involved overt raising of the object. It was pointed out in the
preceding section that overt raising of the object to specifier of AGR-2 is only
possible if the verb has raised overtly to AGR-2. Thus we must claim that the
verb is at least as high as AGR-2 in this construction.

Now, does it raise any higher overtly? If so we have a dilemma. If the verb
does raise higher, then we would expect that it should precede the object and we
might lose the generalizations on case and word order which underlie this entire
approach. However, if it remains in AGR-2, then we must ask how the subject
may raise across the object to a higher position, given that Head-to-Head
Movement is required to permit NP-raising across a filled specifier position.
Bures (1992, 61) simply assumes without argument that the verb raises to tense
in Irish infinitives, and that tense is right-headed and not left-headed as in the
trees above.

While this does straightforwardly allow the subject to raise to specifier of Tense
in exactly the same way as it does in finite clauses and further gets the correct
SOV ordering, the approach suffers from two serious drawbacks.

The first is an empirical problem. If Tense is right-headed, then the verb in
Tense would appear to the right of everything it dominates, viz. AGR-2P, VP,
and everything contained in or adjoined to these phrases. While the V does occur
to the right of the subject and the object, all other material, indirect objects,
prepositional phrases, adverbs, etc. all surface to the right of the non-finite verb:

(25) a) Ba mhaith liom [é an cúpan a chur ar an mbórd.] 
COP good with.1s him.ACC the cup put on the table.DAT
'I would like him to put the cup on the table.'

b) * Ba mhaith liom [é an cúpan ar an mbórd a chur.]
COP good with.1s him.ACC the cup on the table DAT TRANput
(I would like him to put the cup on the table.)

(26) a) Ba mhaith liom [é an leabhar a thabhairt dom.]
COP good with.1s him.ACC the book TRAN give to.1s
'I would like him to give the book to me.'

b) * Ba mhaith liom [é an leabhar dom a thabhairt.]
COP good with.1s him.ACC the book to.1s TRAN give
(I would like him to give the book to me.)

Clearly, it is not possible to maintain that Tense is right-headed in Irish if one
wishes to claim that the verb in non-finite clauses is in Tense.

Potential problems for Bures's analysis could also arise depending upon his
analysis of Exceptional Case Marking (see below) and the interaction of V-
features of Tense and AGR, neither of which he makes overly explicit. For
example, in a note on the interplay of features with non-finite environments (15,
n.23) Bures suggests that AGR-1 is ‘defective’ (see Bobaljik 1992a for a similar
claim and evidence bearing on it) in non-finite clauses, “allowing verbs to stop
at Tense” even if the V-features of AGR are strong. In fact, if the V-features of
AGR are strong, but the V-features of Tense weak, then in finite clauses the verb
would raise to AGR-2→TENSE→AGR-1, but in non-finite clauses it could
only raise as far as AGR-2.9

Our claim is that this is exactly the situation in Irish. As we have shown, it is
impossible to maintain the claim that Tense is right-headed in Irish. Further, if
the verb raised overtly to tense in non-finite clauses, it should precede the
Object, which it does not. We have claimed that the V-features of AGR are strong, entailing verb-raising to AGR-1 in finite clauses, driving our analysis of VSO order. But we assume that the V-features of Tense are weak, and thus, as we sketched in the preceding paragraph, the Verb in non-finite clauses raises (overtly) only to AGR-2, allowing the object to raise past the specifier of the verb phrase to receive accusative case marking.

But what then of the other side of the dilemma? How is the subject allowed to raise past the object in specifier of AGR-2P if the verb has raised no higher than AGR-2?

The answer, we claim, lies in the pervasiveness of the availability of accusative case for subjects of non-finite clauses in Irish. Exceptional Case-Marking (henceforth 'ECM') in English or French is assumed to be a property of certain predicates (e.g. believe) that they allow some form of transparency of the clause which they select as a complement. In particular, the subject of the complement non-finite clause behaves as a direct object of the ECM predicate. In the framework adopted here, this is treated as raising (covert) of the embedded subject to the specifier of the matrix AGR-2 (see e.g. Lasnik and Saito 1991).

Chung and McCloskey (1987) show a wealth of evidence from Irish that such an analysis cannot be maintained for the Irish infinitives. In no way does the embedded subject behave as a matrix object. In particular, the availability of accusative Case for subjects of non-finite clauses is not at all dependent on the matrix predicate. Surprisingly, it appears to be a property of the non-finite constructions themselves that such a case is available for the subject. This is immediately reminiscent of Complementizer for in English:

(27) For anyone to arrive now would please me...

As with Irish, accusative Case in these constructions is not at all tied to the matrix predicate. Let us assume that Irish does have an equivalent to English for which is fully productive, though phonologically null. Indirect evidence for this comes from Irish negated non-finite clauses, where such a complementizer is in fact overt, and homophonous with the preposition gan ‘without’.

(28) Ba mhaith liom [gan é an cupán a dhfhol] COP good with.1s COMP.NEG him.ACC the cup TRAN sell ‘I would like him not to sell the cup’ (I don’t want him to sell the cup)

Neither in English nor in Irish can it be the case that the accusative Case in these constructions is a function of raising to the matrix specifier of AGR2P; thus it must be a property of the complementizers themselves. It is our contention that the realization of the case-relationship of this complementizer to the non-finite subject is what permits the raising of the subject past the object in specifier of AGR-2P. Though not entirely consistent with the analysis here, see Watanabe (1992) for some interesting comments on ECM from for in English. It should also be noted that infinitival clauses with overt subjects are marked in the speech of most Irish speakers; there is a definite preference to use a tensed clause in these constructions. However, when ‘forced’ speakers judge these sentences as grammatical. These provisos aside, we assume that our explanation of case assignment on infinitival subject NPs is the most consistent with the approach outlined above.

4.0 Summary and Conclusion

In this short paper we have attempted to account for the facts of Irish word order in the framework of Chomsky (1992). We have shown that both an in situ analysis and a V to COMP analysis are inadequate. We claim that Irish, like French, is a verb raising language (has strong featured AGRs) but that, unlike French, it does not require the overt movement of the Subject NP to the specifier of AGR1P. Licensed by a weak V feature, tense does not raise to adjoin with AGR1, thus allows the subject to remain in tense’s specifier position at Spell Out. It is our hope that this work will stimulate further research into word order phenomena and of their link to parametric variation in the features of functional categories.

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NOTES

1 The following abbreviations are used in this paper. NP: Noun Phrase. VP: verb phrase. 
VSO: Verb then Subject then Object word order. SVO: Subject then verb then Object 
DEF: definite. FUT: Future tense. DEP: Dependent verb form. PRES: Present tense. CP 
Complementizer Phrase. COMP: complementizer. 1: first person. 2: second person. 3 
third person. S: singular. COP: Copula. TRANS: Transitive infinitive particle. GEN: 
Genitive Case. *: an unacceptable/ungrammatical sentence. ?: a questionable or marginal 
sentence. PROG: Progressive particle. DAT: Dative Case.

2 In this framework, they are only a collection of relevant f-features such as person, 
number, and gender.

3 More exactly, raising is: V to AGR-2; AGR-2 to T, T to AGR-1.

4 Irish apparently always allows subjects of non-finite clauses, which surface with 
accusative case marking (cf. Guilfoyle, personal communication). Chung and McCloskey 
(1987) show convincingly that this subject is not receiving (e.g. exceptional) Case from 
the higher clause; in no respect does the embedded subject behave as a matrix object, and 
with respect to, for example, binding phenomena, it clearly behaves as if it is in the 
embedded clause at all levels of the derivation. In addition, this accusative case is always 
available for the subject, regardless of the matrix predicate.

5 It should be noted that we are abstracting away here from the pragmatic preference of 
Irish speakers to use tensed clauses when an overt subject is present. The sentences here 
may seem 'odd' to native speakers but they are nonetheless acceptable.

6 This is not a universal, obviously, cf. the Slavic languages. Note however, that 
participles in the Slavic languages may assign Case regardless of their environment, 
unlike, e.g. French. This difference in the nature of participles is probably crucial to an 
understanding of the ability of accusative to co-occur with the 'be' auxiliary in Slavic.

7 Unfortunately, a thorough discussion of the nature of these mechanisms is beyond 
the scope of this short paper. For more, see Chomsky (1989, 1991, 1992), Chomsky and 
Lasnik (forthcoming), Bobaljik (1992b) and Bures (1992), among others.
8 Note that 'V feature' is being used slightly differently here than above. In Chomsky's system, V features only govern the movement to the head bearing the feature. Here we are claiming that they also govern the movement of the heads themselves, independently of verb movement. For more on this approach to parameters, specifically with respect to the features of the verb, see Bobaljik (1992b).

9 Again, 'Procrastinate' is the most relevant principle at work here.

INCOMPLETE SUBJECT RAISING AND GOVERNMENT: DERIVING WELSH SURFACE WORD ORDER

0. INTRODUCTION

The canonical VSO word order of the Celtic languages, including Modern Welsh, has always presented a problem in defining universal sentence structure. For instance in the Welsh simple sentence (1a), the subject Mererid 'Margaret' comes between the verb darlleniff 'will read' and the direct object y llyfr 'the book'.

(1a) Darlleniff Mererid y llyfr. (SIMPLE)
    read-FUT-3s Margaret the book
    Margaret will read the book.

This is a serious problem for X-bar theory to solve because it claims that the verb and its direct object universally form the constituent V; therefore the verb and direct object should be adjacent. Welsh has another sentence type called `the periphrastic' consisting of an inflected form of the auxiliary bod 'be', the subject, a predicative particle yn, the verb-noun — the non-finite verbal form — and its complements. I will be assuming that in fact verb of the periphrastic, not the simple sentence is in its D-structure position and that the verb of the simple sentences undergoes verb raising (§3).

(1b) Bydd Mererid yn darllen y llyfr.
    be-FUT-3s Margaret Pr read the book
    Margaret will read the book.

At S-structure, the periphrastic verb-noun and direct object form the V constituent, but now the auxiliary P bydd is separated from its complement VP by the subject Mererid. Again, this is a problem for X-bar theory because the claim is that P and VP form the constituent P. For example, the equivalent

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