Implicit Arguments in Verb-Particle Constructions∗

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1 Introduction

(1) Predicates need subjects. Assuming a small-clause structure for verb-particle constructions, this means that particles, as predicates, need subjects.

(2) Small clause analyses argue1 that the postverbal DPs in (a) differ thematically and structurally from those in (b,c):
   a. Peggy cleaned the office.
   b. Peggy cleaned [the office up]
   c. Peggy cleaned up_{i} [the office t_{j}]

(3) In b and c, the DP is assigned a theta role by the particle, and is in a closer structural relationship with that particle than with the verb (either complement or specifier depending on the specific analysis).

(4) Do the implicit arguments (shown as underscores) in the following constructions then differ as well?
   a. Peggy cleaned _.
   b. Peggy cleaned _ up.

(5) This talk will present arguments, based on both the particle literature and the implicit argument literature, that they do:
   a. In terms of Rizzi (1986), verb-particle constructions license pro
   b. In terms of Landau (2010), verb-particle constructions have a Strong Implicit Argument, whose nominal feature can check an EPP feature.

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2 A Problem with Small Clauses

(6) I will focus on particular analysis of verb-particle constructions in detail to show how the need for a particle to have a subject is problematic in certain specific constructions.

(7) Assumptions:
   a. The particle alternation is EPP driven. (Svenonius 1996; den Dikken 2003)
   b. Either the postverbal DP or the particle head itself can satisfy the EPP feature.

(8) Problem:
   a. When there is no postverbal DP (e.g. intransitive constructions with an external argument), this leaves only the particle head to check the feature.
   b. There is syntactic evidence that head movement does not occur in these constructions.
   c. What satisfies the EPP feature when there is (a) no obvious nominal and (b) evidence against head movement?

2.1 EPP-driven Alternation

(9) Pre-movement VP Structure proposed in Svenonius (1996):

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{VP} \\
\quad \text{V} \\
\quad \text{clean} \\
\quad \text{Spec} \\
\quad \text{Pred} \\
\quad \text{Pred'} \\
\quad \text{Pred} \\
\quad [-EPP] \\
\quad \text{PP} \\
\quad \text{DP} \\
\quad \text{the office} \\
\quad [-N] \\
\quad \text{up} \\
\end{array}
\]

(10) Something must check the EPP feature on PredP.
   a. DP moves to SpecPredP:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{VP} \\
\quad \text{V} \\
\quad \text{clean} \\
\quad \text{DP} \\
\quad \text{the office} \\
\quad \text{Pred} \\
\quad [-EPP] \\
\quad \text{Pred'} \\
\quad \text{PP} \\
\quad \text{(DP)} \\
\quad [-N] \\
\quad \text{up} \\
\end{array}
\]

Peggy cleaned the office up.
(11) Svenonius (1996) argues that either derivation above is equally economical in terms of structure, which is why the orders are optional in English.

(12) How does head movement satisfy EPP?
   a. Particles are P with an [+N] feature (Svenonius 1996)

(13) Prepositions become particles via an “incorporation” operation of its complement
   a. Frank put [his hat [on his head]]
   b. Frank put [his hat on [+N]]
   c. Frank put on [+N] [his hat t]

(14) Is this a productive syntactic process? For our purposes, I will simply assume:
   a. Particles differ from prepositions in that particles have an +N feature (by definition)

2.2 Other Constructions

(15) The previous example showed an “object” DP checking the EPP feature. Other DPs, such as the derived subjects of passives and unaccusatives, can check the feature on their way up as well.

(16) Passives:
   a. [TP The office1 was [vP cleaned [PredP t1 [PP t1 up]]]]

(17) Unaccusatives:
   a. [TP The blood1 [vP drained [PredP t1 [PP t1 out]]]]
      (Svenonius 1996:62)
2.3 What if there is no DP?

(18) a. Intransitive verb-particle constructions with an external argument have no obvious DP to check the EPP feature on PredP.
   b. This means the particle head must check the EPP feature.
   c. There is evidence that the particle head remains in situ in these constructions.

(19) The following subjects are external arguments:
   a. Jagr skated out (of the attacking zone).
   b. Peggy cleaned _ up.
   c. Don stood _ up / sat _ down.

(20) Under the assumption that implicit arguments in English are not syntactically represented (Rizzi 1986; Svenonius 1994):
   a. P⁰ moves to Pred⁰:

   \[
   \begin{array}{c}
   \text{VP} \\
   \text{V} \\
   \text{clean} \\
   \text{Spec} \\
   \text{PredP} \\
   \text{Pred'} \\
   \text{Pred} \\
   \text{PP} \\
   \text{[+EPP]} \\
   \text{up} \\
   \text{(P)}
   \end{array}
   \]

(21) Assuming the analysis presented so far, we must conclude that only head movement of P into Pred can satisfy the EPP feature (what Svenonius 1994 concludes).

2.4 Evidence against head movement

(22) Modifiers and adverbs appearing immediately before the particle is evidence that the particle remains in situ (e.g. den Dikken 1995; Svenonius 1996 among others)

(23) The classic paradigm:
   a. Peggy cleaned the office (right) up.
   b. Peggy cleaned (*right) up the office.

(24) These are “prehead modifiers that are characteristic of prepositions” (Jackendoff 1977:79)

(25) Either:
   a. The modifier heads a phrase which takes PP as its complement
   b. The modifier is a specifier of PP

(26) Generalization:
   a. If the particle can appear after right, head movement has not taken place.
Back to intransitive verb-particle constructions with external arguments:

a. The ref called delayed offsides, but Jagr was sure he had **skated completely [PP out]**.

b. After being scolded for the mess, Peggy **cleaned right [PP up]**.

c. Don **stood straight [PP up] / sat right [PP down]**.

Summary so far:

a. The predicate structure of verb-particle constructions predicts the particle head checks the EPP feature when no DP is available.

b. Modification evidence suggests head movement has not taken place.

c. What do?

### 3 Implicit Argument Approach

The previous section operated under the assumption that implicit arguments are not syntactically represented in English, as Svenonius (1994) follows Rizzi (1986).

Something other than the particle head must check the EPP feature in intransitive verb-particle constructions with external arguments.

Rizzi (1986) argues that for a given language, there is a set of heads which license pro (e.g. V for Italian, possibly P for French). For English he argues this set is empty.

Under many small clause approaches to verb-particle constructions, abstract incorporation of P directly onto V is posited at LF, forming the complex head V+P. (den Dikken 1995, 2003; Svenonius 1996)

a. This is said to be necessary for the combinations with especially idiomatic readings.

For English, then, set of licensing heads is not empty, but that it crucially only contains V+P.

Putting pro into the structure:

```
VP
  \--- V
     \--- PredP
          \--- Pred
               \--- Pred'
                    \--- Pred [+EPP]
                         \--- PP
                              \--- P [+N]
                                \--- up
          \--- DP
               \--- pro
                    \--- DP
                         \--- (DP)

Peggy cleaned up.
```
This allows us to:
   a. Keep P in situ so that it can still be modified
   b. Prevent the EPP feature from remaining unchecked

4 Discussions of Implicit Arguments

The implicit arguments posited are then similar to argument small clause constructions in Italian, in that they are both subjects of small clauses and not direct objects of the verb:
   a. Questa musica rende [ _ allegri].
      *‘This music renders _ happy.’ (Rizzi 1986:(16a))
   b. Peggy cleaned [ _ up].

There are additional differences, as well: there is a stronger connection (some sort of selection) between the verb and particle in English than there is between the verb and adjective in Italian.

Note that (37a) is ungrammatical in English but (37b), the particle construction, is not. This is again because the P in (37) will eventually incorporate onto V, forming the complex head V+P which is what licenses pro.

4.1 Do all intransitive constructions with external arguments allow implicit arguments?

Many constructions have a reflexive reading:
   a. John signed (himself) up
   b. Sonya towelled (herself) off. (Svenonius 1994:(107d))
   c. Don stood (himself) up / sat (himself) down.

Others can have an arbitrary meaning as well as a reflexive reading:
   a. Peggy cleaned (herself, the office) up.
   b. Pete gave (himself, the battle) up.

Others only have an arbitrary reading:
   a. Natasha threw (her dinner, *herself) up. (Svenonius 1994:(107b))
   b. Mikhail called (Raisa's name, *himself) out. (Svenonius 1994:(107c))
   c. Philip put (money) in (to the pot).

Not all transitive constructions can have an implicit argument:
   a. John wrote *(the paper) up.
   b. John tried *(shoes) on.

Selectional requirements of particular verb-particle combinations constrain the distribution and types of implicit arguments.
5 Further Issues

(44) Svenonius’s (1994) analysis of a particle being a preposition with a [+N] feature is basically a type of implicit argument: Frank put his hat on implies he put it on something—can this be unified with the approach taken here?

(45) Positing pro makes strong predictions:
   a. Can the implicit argument in verb-particle constructions control for PRO? (see appendix for one possible argument)
   b. Can it be a binder?
      *La buona musica reconcilia con se stessi.
      ‘Good music reconciles with oneself.’ (Rizzi 1986:(11a))

(46) Can this analysis be extended to other verb-particle constructions with no lower DP, such as particle plus PP/finite CP?
   a. John found out [CP that the manhunt is over]
   b. John met up [PP with the faculty]

6 Summary and Conclusion

(47) If particles are to be analyzed as a predicate, then they have the same need for a subject as other predicates do.

(48) An EPP-driven small-clause approach to the verb-particle construction leads us to conclude that the EPP feature, in certain constructions, is checked by an implicit argument, not the particle head.

(49) The empirical predictions of this need to be tested.

Appendix: Possible evidence for Strong Implicit Arguments?

(50) Strong Implicit Arguments, or pro, should be able to control PRO. (Rizzi 1986; Landau 2010).

(51) Is this the case with verb-particle constructions?

(52) One such example might be the combination put in, from (41c).

(53) First let’s look at a contrast with a simple (non-particle) verb, offer:
   a. John offered to pay for the repairs.
   b. John offered money to pay for the repairs.

(54) In (53a), John will pay the entire cost of the repairs. In (53b), John will pay at least a portion of the repairs.
I assume this difference to stem from what is controlling PRO:

a. Johni offered PROj to pay for the repairs.
b. Johni offered moneyj PROj to pay for the repairs.

If money is interpreted as the subject of the TP, then it is not necessarily for the full amount.

Now, the a similar pair with put in:

a. John put money in to pay for the repairs.
b. John put in to pay for the repairs.

Neither of these sentences has the sense where John will pay the amount in its entirety; (a) means the same as (b).

money or its implicit variant is the controller in both cases:

a. Johni put moneyj in PROj to pay for the repairs.
b. Johni put proj in PROj to pay for the repairs.

This is one potential case where the implicit argument of a verb-particle construction can control PRO, providing independent evidence that it is strong.

References