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SOME REMARKS ON THE ERGATIVE HYPOTHESIS *

1. Introduction

This paper is a sequel to den Besten (1981a) and (1981b) - more specifically to den Besten (1981a), which was written after (1981b).

Den Besten (1981b) presented a hypothesis concerning the interaction between Move NP and Case which was at variance with more common ideas as found their way into Chomsky (1981). I will not go into that matter, since it is of no importance for the present paper. More important are the following two claims from the pertinent paper. First, it was claimed that the distinction between syntactic and lexical passives which obtains in English (cf. Wasow 1977) is also relevant for the syntax of Dutch and German, even though most of the diagnostics that are relevant for English do not (or: hardly) give the required results for Dutch and German. Second, an account was given for the difference between English on the one hand and Dutch and German on the other hand as regards Indirect. Object NPs - which do passivize in English whereas they do not in Dutch or German (with some welldefined exceptions). The general idea underlying this solution was that Vs assign structural Case (Accusative) to the nearest NP but Oblique Case to an NP that is further removed. Thus Case assignment will yield (1)a. for English and (1)b. for German and Dutch:[1]

(1)a. $[_{VP}$ V   NP   NP   ]
                +acc. +obl.

  b. $[_{VP}$ NP   NP   V]
                +obl. +acc.

Since Oblique NPs may not nominativize, the difference in passivization between English and German/Dutch can be easily accounted for.

Den Besten (1981a) took the latter proposal as a point of departure while at the same time bringing the account of the interaction of Move NP and Case more in line with Chomsky (1981). Thus passive participles were now assumed to absorb (or: not assign) structural Case. The specific problem addressed by den Besten (1981a) was the phenomenon of Nominative Dative Inversion in Dutch and German which takes place in passive constructions as well as in some active constructions. The solution chosen involved the assumption of there being the possibility of assigning Nominative Case to an NP in Direct Object position provided its governor does not or cannot assign Case. It will be clear that the pertinent solution is related to Burzio's Ergative Hypothesis (Burzio 1981).

The present paper purports to elaborate upon the solution for Nominative Dative Inversion as can be found in den Besten (1981a), clarify its relationship to the Ergative Hypothesis and finally show how the Ergative Hypothesis obviates the need for a nonconfigurational syntax - at least in so far as the said hypothesis can provide us with successful, theoretically sound descriptions of alternations in word order.

The structure of the paper will be as follows: Section 2. will give a brief exposition of the account of Nominative Dative Inversion as can be found in den Besten (1981a). Some extensions will be added that could not be taken up in the latter paper because of lack of space. Section 3. will discuss some important properties of the pertinent description, its relationship to the Ergative Hypothesis, as well as the con sequences of the Ergative Hypothesis for the discussion about (non)configurationality. Finally, Section 4. will deal with possible extensions of the analysis under consideration to other NP Inversion phenomena in Dutch and German.

2. Nominative Dative Inversion and Chain Government

2.1. The description of Nominative Dative Inversion (den Besten 1981a)

Consider the following data from Dutch and German (D indicating Dutch, G indicating German):

(2) a.D --, dat de urn$_{NOM}$ mijn oom$_{DAT}$ geschonken   is

   G --, daß die Urne$_{NOM}$ meinem Onkel$_{DAT}$ geschenkt worden ist

   --, that the urn   (to) my uncle   given   (been) has

  b.D --, dat mijn oom$_{DAT}$ de urn$_{NOM}$ geschonken   is

   G --, daß meinem Onkel$_{DAT}$ die Urne$_{NOM}$ geschenkt worden ist

(3) a.D --, dat jouw muziek$_{NOM}$ mijn broer$_{DAT}$ niet bevalt

  .G --, daß deine Musik$_{NOM}$ meinem Bruder$_{DAT}$ nicht gefällt

   --, that your music   (to) my brother not pleases

  b.D --, dat mijn broer$_{DAT}$ jouw muziek$_{NOM}$ niet bevalt

   G --, daß meinem Bruder$_{DAT}$ deine Musik$_{NOM}$ nicht gefällt.

(Note that Dutch does not have morphological Case. Labels like NOM and DAT indicate abstract Case.) This free alternation between   Nominative Dative and Dative Nominative word order is possible only if no Direct Object is present. The phenomenon as such can be called Nominative Dative Inversion. However, note that this terminology implies that Nominative Dative word order is assumed to be basic and the inverse word order to be derivative. This was the position taken in Koster (1978: 3.2.2.3.) and den Besten (1981b: 81). The latter study briefly considered the possibility of the Nominative NP in examples like (2)b. and (3)b. being in Direct Object position but immediately rejected

that idea as being 'too radical a position to defend'. Nevertheless this is the position argued for in den Besten (1981a). In the following paragraphs I will give an exposition of the pertinent description and the theoretical apparatus required.   For observational arguments the reader is referred to den Besten (1981a).

Let us start with the rule for the assignment of Oblique Case. As can be deduced from what is said about (1) above the assignment of [+obl.] is supposed to be structural and not lexical in nature, unlike the assignment of Genitive Case in the following German example which is lexically governed:[2]

(4) Wir_{NOM} gedenken   der $Toten_{GEN}$
       We   commemmorate the dead

Now it is not unreasonable to assume that there is one governor per structural Case. Since V is the governor for Objective/Accusative, a structural Case, a second structural governor is called for and $\bar{V}$ (or 'small VP') is the evident choice to make. Thus the structures under (1) can be substituted for by those under (5):

(5) a. $[_{VP}[_{\bar{V}}$ V   NP   ] NP   ]   (English)
                     +acc.   +obl.

    b. $[_{VP}$ NP $[_{\bar{V}}$ NP   V]]   (German, Dutch)
               +obl.   +acc.

This implies that Case assignment is constrained by a condition of strict locality in the sense that the first branching node dominating the Case assigner α must also dominatetheCase receiving position β. This means that Case assignment requires a type of government which is similar to the original conception of government as can be found in Bennis and Groos, an overview of Chomsky's Pisa Lectures in 1979. In order to distinguish this type of government from the present definition in Chomsky (1981), we might call it 'strict government' but I will stick to the shorter name, assuming that the above remarks will suffice to keep things apart.

The following definitions then are needed:

(6) a. α governs β iff α minimally c-commands β and there is no $\bar{S}$- or
        NP-boundary between α and β .

    b. α minimally c-commands β $=_{Def}$ α c-commands β and there is no γ
        such that α c-commands γ ,γ c-commands β, and γ does not
        c-command α.

    c. α/γ = $[\pm N,\pm V]$, $\bar{V}$, Tense (or: INFL)

(7)   α c-commands β iff the first branching node dominating α also
        dominates β. (compare Reinhart 1976)

These definitions allow the following Case assignment rules:

(8)   If α governs NP_i, NP_i becomes

        Nominative, if α = Tense (or: INFL)

        Objective , if α = V

        Oblique , if α = P, $\overline{V}$, or a marked Verb[3]

Finally, there is the Case Filter, barring any N that does not bear Case.

Note that the Case assignment rules do not require strict adjacency (compare Stowell 1981 and Chomsky 1981). Stowell's proposal (1981) to attain strict adjacency for German and Dutch by making use of a dual verbal position inside the VP runs into problems with examples like the following one:

(9)D   --, dat ik $[_{VP}$ Karel$_{DAT}$ die uitgave$_{ACC}$ per luchtpost toegestuurd
      --, that I $_|$ Charles that publication by airmail sent
      heb]
      have

In this example the Direct Object NP die uitgave is seperated from the VP-initial verbal position by the Indirect Object NP Karel and from the VP-final verbal position by the adverbial phrase per luchtpost.[4] Strict adjacency may be required for Exceptional Case Marking, as is pointed out in Chomsky (1981) - although we need a refined definition to also cover cases like the following:

(10)G   --, daß er $[_S$ den Johann$_{ACC}$ $[_{VP}$ ein Lied singen]] hörte   -
      --, that he John a song sing heard

but I will not go into that matter here.

The above definitions and rules do not suffice yet to get Nominative NPs in Direct Object position. Now note that the definition of government (6) permits a governing node to govern another one. This allows the following addition to the theory:
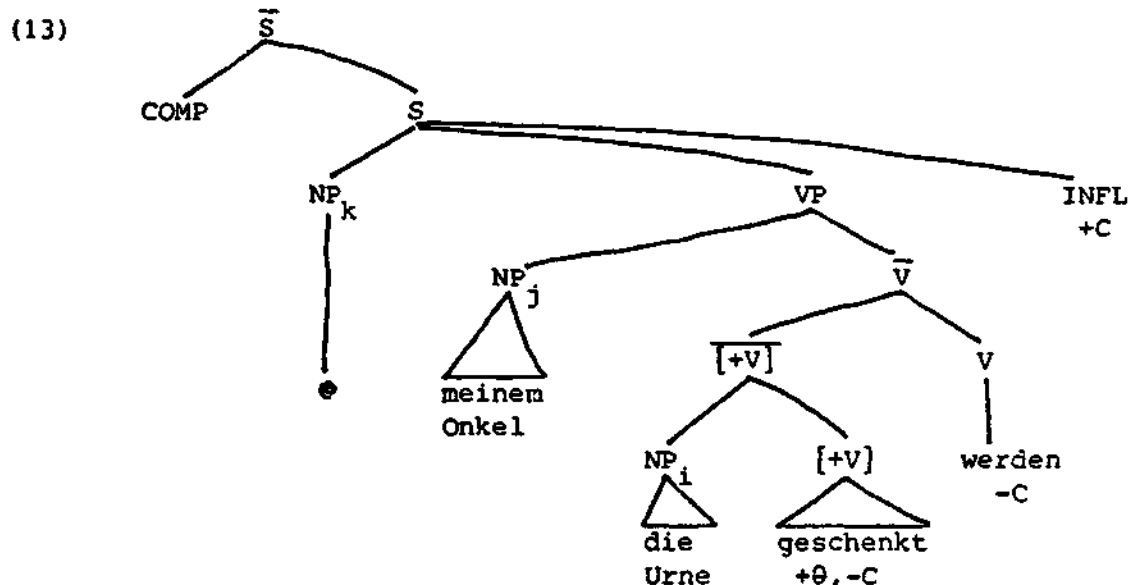
(11)a.   If NP_i is governed by a category α which cannot or may not assign Case, NP_i will acquire its Case from the first Case-assigner up which its is chain-governed by.

    b. α chain-governs β iff α governs γ_1, γ_1 governs γ_2, ..., γ_{n-1} governs γ_n, and γ_n governs β (n $\geq$ 1).

Since only lexical nodes (and INFL) may vary as to their Case-assigning properties, we may expect that $\overline{V}$ (or $\overline{[+V]}$ in passives) will never be part of a chain of government as implied by (11)a.[5]

Let us now review how the generation of a sentence like (12) will proceed:

(12) a. G --, daß die Urne$_{NOM}$ meinem Onkel$_{DAT}$ geschenkt wurde

      --, that the urn   (to) my uncle   given   was

   b. G --, daß meinem Onkel$_{DAT}$ die Urne$_{NOM}$ geschenkt wurde

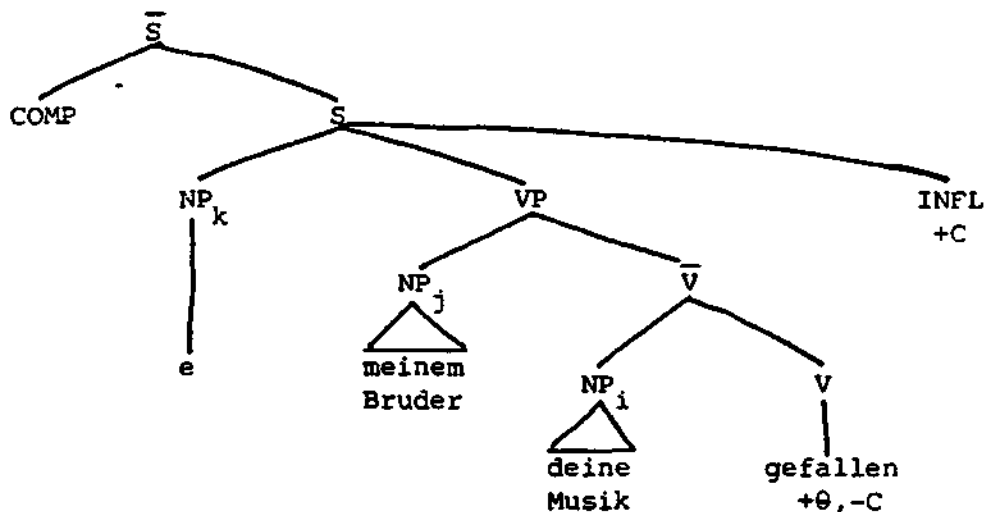The D-Structure corresponding to (12)a. and b. will be as follows:

(13)

```
                    S̄
              _____|_____
            COMP              S
              |          _____|_____
                       NP_k                VP                  INFL
                        |            _____|_____             +C
                        |          NP_j            V̄
                        |         /\        _____|_____
                        e      /meinem\   [+V]           V
                              /  Onkel  \  /\            |
                                        NP_i  [+V]      werden
                                       /\    /\          -C
                                      /die\ /geschenk\
                                      Urne  +Θ,-C
```

(NP$_j$ may be sister of [+V] under a node [+V]".) NP$_j$ will get Case from V̄ (or from [+V]). NP$_i$ cannot acquire Case from the passive participle geschenkt. Therefore, either it must move into Subject position where INFL can assign Nominative or it stays in situ and INFL will assign Nominative via chain-government, neither geschenkt nor werden being able to assign Case. In the latter case NP$_j$ can move into Subject position. Thus by Move NP we get either (12)a., which is a derived word order, or (12)b., which mimics the underlying order. The trace left behind by NP$_j$ may cause problems because only traces left behind by Move WH and similar rules are supposed to be Case-marked. However it is not clear to me whether variables have to bear Case, and therefore I consider this a matter of execution.

The derivation of examples like (14) below (= (3)G) will be straight-forward if we allow verbs like gefallen 'please' to subcategorize for two NPs, while not assigning Case to (NP,V̄) and withholding a Θ-Role from (NP,S) - similarly to what happens in passive constructions like (13):[6]

(14) a. G --, daß deine Musik$_{NOM}$ meinem Bruder$_{DAT}$ nicht gefällt

   b. G --, daß meinem Bruder$_{DAT}$ deine Musik$_{NOM}$ nicht gefällt

(15)

```
                          S̄
                 _____/‾_____
               /         ·           \
            COMP                      S
             |             _____/ |‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾_____
             |           /            |                     \
            NP_k        NP_j          VP                    INFL
             |          /\          __/‾‾‾\__               +C
             |         /  \        /         \
             e      meinem        NP_i         V̄
                    Bruder      __/‾\__        |
                               /       \       V
                             deine     Musik   |
                                             gefallen
                                             +θ,-C
```

Again, NP_j is marked Dative (Oblique) by $\bar{V}$. __Gefallen__ is not a Case-assigner. Therefore, NP_i will become Nominative, either in Subject position (after an application of Move NP) or in Object position. In the latter case Move NP will move NP_j into Subject position.[7]

This concludes the overview of den Besten (1981a). The following subsection will discuss a couple of extensions of the pertinent hypothesis.

2.2. Some extensions

2.2.1. Nominative Dative Inversion in copular constructions
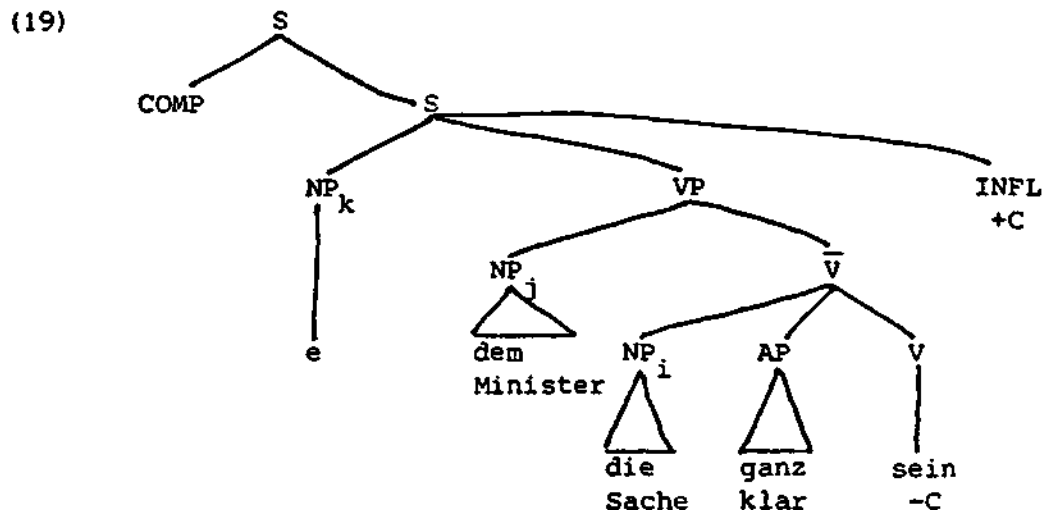
Consider the following examples:

(16) a. G --, daß die Sache$_{NOM}$ dem Minister$_{DAT}$ ganz klar war

D --, dat de zaak$_{NOM}$ de minister$_{DAT}$ geheel duidelijk was

--, that the matter (to) the minister fully clear was

b. G --, daß dem Minister$_{DAT}$ die Sache$_{NOM}$ ganz klar war

D --, dat de minister$_{DAT}$ de zaak $_{NOM}$ geheel duidelijk was

Copular constructions allow the same type of inversion we discussed in the previous section. And as is the case with passive structures and structures with verbs like __gefallen__, the DAT NOM order seems to be preferred. Indirect Objects cooccur with a couple of predicative adjectives like __klar/duidelijk__, and quite generally so if the predicative adjective is a superlative in __te__ (D)/__zu__ (G) 'too' or is combined with a copular verb of appearance. Compare the following Dutch examples:

(17) a. --, dat jullie taaltje$_{NOM}$ deze jongen$_{DAT}$ te moeilijk is/wordt

--, that your jargon this guy too difficult is/becomes

b. --, dat deze jongen$_{DAT}$ jullie taaltje$_{NOM}$ te moeilijk is/wordt

(18) a. --, dat dit voorstel$_{NOM}$ Willem$_{DAT}$ onredelijk leek

--, that this proposal William unreasonable seemed

b. --, dat Willem$_{DAT}$ dit voorstel$_{NOM}$ onredelijk leek

Given what we know about Nominative Dative Inversion, the following D-Structure for the examples under (16) seems to be reasonable:

(19)

```
                          S
                       /     \
                  COMP       ___S_____
                          /        |                     \
                      NP_k         VP                     INFL
                        |        /    \                    +C
                        |      NP_j     V̄
                        |     /\      /  |  \
                        e   dem  \   NP_i  AP    V
                          Minister /\   /\     |
                                  die  ganz   sein
                                  Sache klar  -C
```

The description will run along the same lines as set out in the preceding section. NP_j will receive its Case from $\bar{V}$, Move NP will move either NP_j or NP_i into Subject position, and INFL may assign Nominative to NP_i by means of chain-government. This exposition does not exhaust all that can be said about Case-assignment with copular verbs but for present purposes it will do.

Note that the above phrase structure comes close to recent ideas about small clauses (cf. Stowell 1981 and Chomsky 1981) in that the Subject of a copular construction is supposed to originate from a position near the Predicate Nominal. NP_i may be conceived of as the Subject of the AP ganz klar. I will not go into the question of whether NP_i must be part of a small clause die Sache ganz klar and I will leave it at the above obser- vation to the effect that the description for Nominative Dative Inversion proposed in den Besten (1981a) can be related to the recent claim that the Subject of a copular construction originates from a VP-internal position.

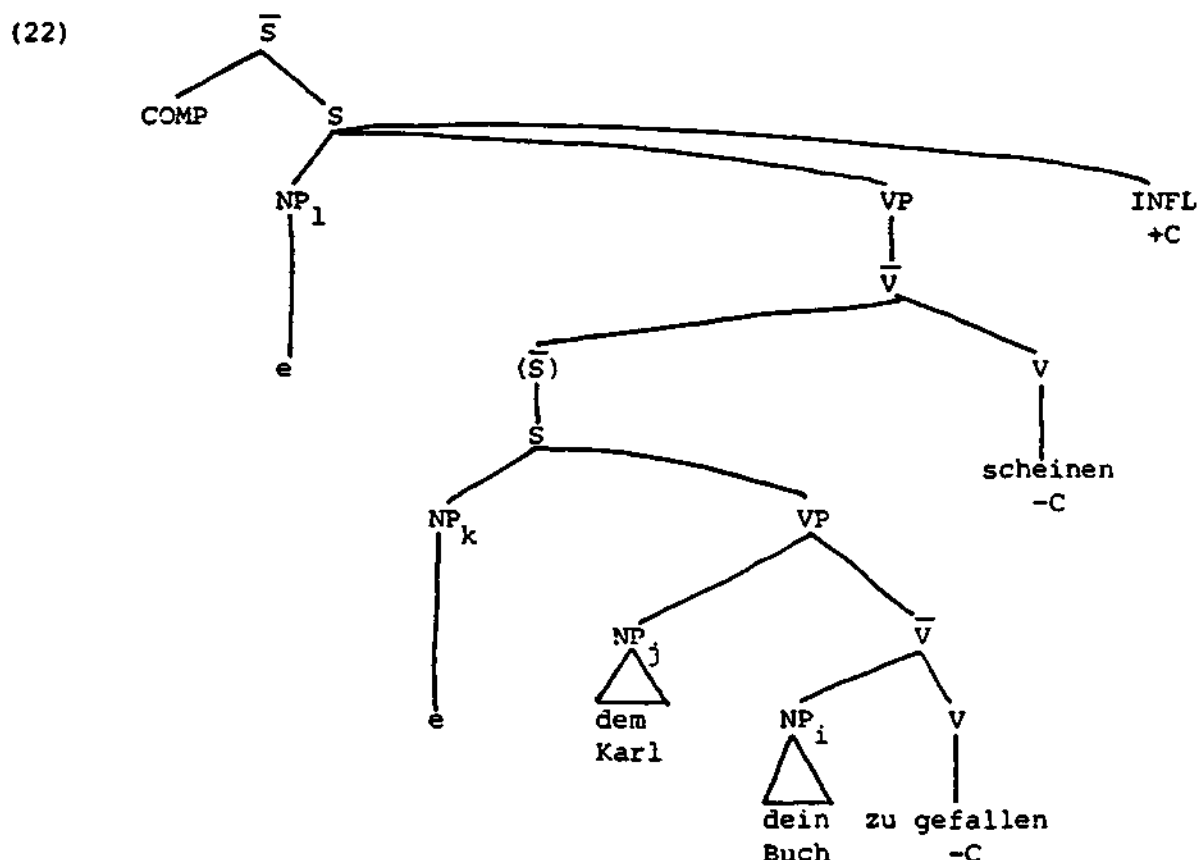## 2.2.2. Raising and Exceptional Case Marking

Nominative Dative Inversion also occurs in Raising constructions witness the following examples:

(20)a.D --, dat jouw boek$_{NOM}$ Karel$_{DAT}$ schijnt te bevallen

    --, that your book (to) Charles seems to please

   b.D --, dat Karel$_{DAT}$ jouw boek$_{NOM}$ schijnt te bevallen

(21)a.G --, daß dein Buch$_{NOM}$ dem Karl$_{DAT}$ zu gefallen scheint

    --, that your book (to) Charles to please seems

   b.G --, daß dem Karl$_{DAT}$ dein Buch$_{NOM}$ zu gefallen scheint

Let us restrict our attention to the German examples under (21), since the Dutch data involves an application of Verb Raising (cf. Evers 1975), which

in the case of Dutch implies an inversion of two adjacent Vs. In German
Verb Raising usually involves a left-adjunction of the lower V to the
higher V. I am not certain that Verb Raising has applied in the case of
(21) but that is not of our concern here. The surface order zu gefallen
scheint reflects D-Structure order. Thus there are no further complicating
factors in (21) besides the interaction of Raising and Nominative Dative
Inversion - which in fact boils down to a multiple application of Move NP.

The required D-structure looks as follows:

(22)

```
                    S̄
                   / \
              COMP    S
                     /|‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾‾
                    /  \                              \
                 NP₁    VP                           INFL
                  |      |                            +C
                  e      V̄
                        / \
                     (S̄)   V
                      |      |
                      S    scheinen
                     / \     -C
                  NPₖ   VP
                   |    / \
                   e  NPⱼ   V̄
                      /\   / \
                     /__\ NPᵢ  V
                     dem /\    |
                    Karl/__\  zu gefallen
                       dein    -C
                       Buch
```

Note that the transparancy or invisibility of $\bar{S}$ - which may be caused by
a rule of $\bar{S}$-Deletion (cf. Chomsky 1981) - has been indicated by putting the
$\bar{S}$ governed by scheinen between parantheses. I have left out an instance
of INFL in the complement of scheinen. If there is one, it will be [-C].

In the above structure scheinen and gefallen do not assign Case to the respective NPs
they govern nor do they θ-mark their respective subjects. Therefore, INFL
may assign Nominative to either NP_1 (by government) or to NP_k (by chain-
government via scheinen) or to NP_i (by chain-government via scheinen and
gefallen). As for Move NP, I will make the same assumption that was also
implicit in the previous section, namely the assumption that if NP_i is
Case-marked in situ it does not leave its base position. In fact there is no
reason why that should be so. A Nominative NP may move and then the same
caveat applies as in the case of the Dative NP moving into Subject position.

Given the above assumptions (21)a. and b. can be derived in the follow-
ing way: If NP_i is not Case-marked in situ, it will move into the position

of NP_k and from there into the position of the main clause Subject NP_1 where it can get Nominative Case from INFL. This yields the NOM DAT order in (21)a.. If however INFL assigns Nominative to NP_i in its base-generated position, the Dative NP_j will move into the position of NP_k and from there into the position of NP_1 - which will yield the DAT NOM order of (21)b.. So much for Raising constructions.[8]

One may expect to find Accusative Dative Inversion in the complement of a verb of Exceptional Case Marking. There are a couple of such verbs in Dutch and German, such as the verba sentiendi, laten (D)/lassen (G) 'let, make', and a couple of others. It is well-known that in the complement of laten/lassen some sort of passivization takes place in absence of the usual passive morphology. Compare the following German examples:

(23)a. Er hat [$_S$ Johann$_{ACC}$ dem Karl$_{DAT}$ das Buch$_{ACC}$ bringen] lassen
        He has   John   (to) Charles the book   bring   let

   b.   Er hat [$_S$ dem Karl$_{DAT}$ (von Johann) das Buch$_{ACC}$ bringen] lassen
        He has   (to) Charles (by John)   the book   bring   let

The above data has been simplified because in fact Verb Raising has been applied to bringen (compare den Besten 1981b) but that is not of our concern here because bringen and lassen have kept their D-structure order. (The corresponding Dutch examples would involve an inversion of brengen and laten.)

Now note that (23)b. involves a case of Accusative Dative Inversion. The opposite order is also possible but I think that the DAT ACC order is strongly preferred:

(23)c. Er hat [$_S$ das Buch$_{ACC}$ dem Karl$_{DAT}$ bringen] lassen

The derivation of (23)b. and c. will take the following D-Structure as a starting point:

(24)
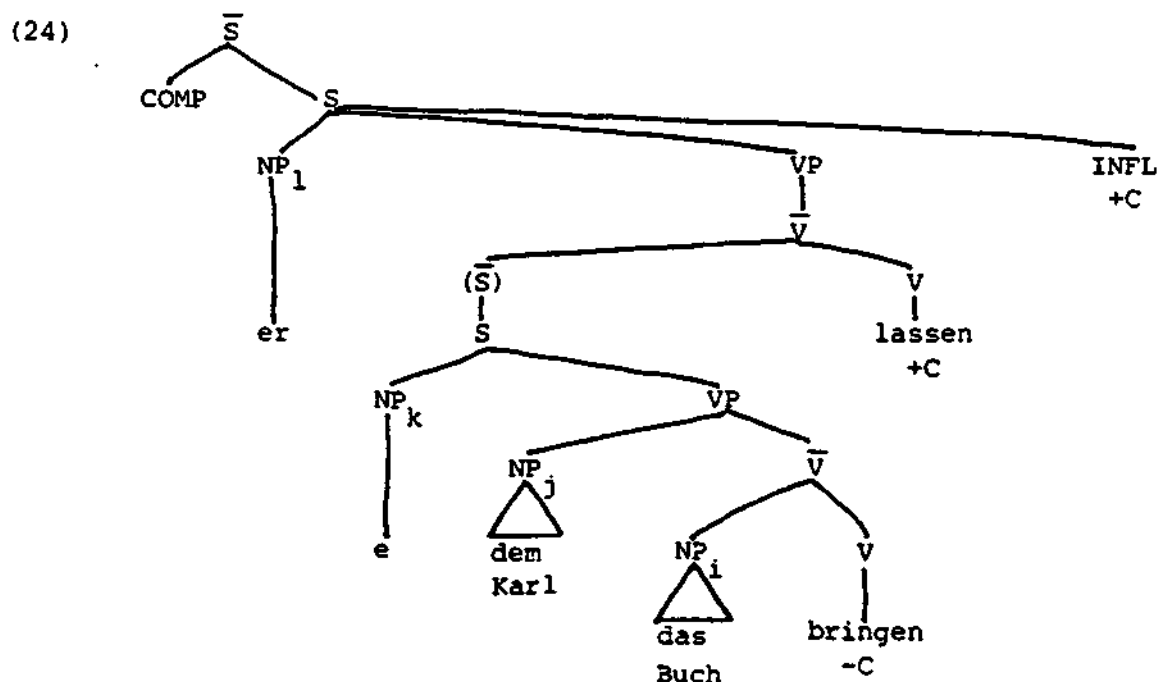
(The temporal auxiliary <u>haben</u> has been left out to simplify the tree a little.) We will assume without further discussion that <u>bringen</u> has absorbed Objective Case and does not θ-mark its Subject as if it were a passive participle. This implies that <u>lassen</u>, being the first Case-assigner up may now either assign Case to NP_k (via government) or assign Case to NP_i (via chain-government). In the latter case NP_i may stay in situ and NP_j can move into Subject position - which will yield the DAT ACC order of (23)b.. In the former case NP_i will move into Subject position and get its Case there - which will yield the ACC DAT order of (23)c..[9]

2.2.3. Overriding factors

In the preceding sections I have shown how a certain amount of variation in word order can be derived if a language allows for chain-government. However, there may be cases where chain-government is overruled by other forces. For instance suppose   the NP which is governed by a potential Case-marker that cannot assign Case appears in a structure of control. In that case the pertinent NP will not get Case and will have to move into Subject position. Since the Subject position will not be governed, the NP will have to be PRO.

It goes without saying that the above case is rather uninteresting since no inversion can be seen anyway. More interesting is the interaction (or noninteraction) of chain-government with Cliticization. Nominative personal pronouns in Dutch and German must cliticize onto COMP (cf. den Besten 1977) Therefore it is predicted that potential structures for Nominative Dative Inversion will not allow the Dative Nominative order if the Nominative NP is a personal pronoun. This is indeed the case, witness the following Dutch examples:

(25)a.   --, dat dat_{NOM} mijn $vader_{DAT}$ niet bevalt

   --, that that   my   father   not   pleases

   b.   --, dat   mijn $vader_{DAT}$ dat_{NOM} niet bevalt

(26)a.   --, dat $'t_{NOM}$ mijn $vader_{DAT}$ niet bevalt

   --, that it   my   father   not   pleases

   b.?*--, dat   mijn $vader_{DAT}$ $'t_{NOM}$ niet bevalt

This concludes my discussion of den Besten (1981a).

3. Chain-government, the Ergative Hypothesis and (non)configurationality

It will have been clear throughout this paper that the treatment of Nominative Dative Inversion as discussed above is related to the Ergative Hypothesis proposed by Burzio (1981). The inversion as such is peculiar to Dutch and German syntax. However, the solution proposed involves verbs

that (a) subcategorize for NPs, (b) do not assign Case, and (c) do not θ-mark the (NP,S) position, i.e. ergative verbs. As expected these verbs do not have agentive Subjects and they do not passivize. Thus they form a proper subset of the class of ergative (nonaccusative) verbs.

Yet two differences with Burzio (1981) should be noted. First, the way Nominative is assigned to (NP,$\bar{V}$) differs from   what Burzio has in mind. Second, the difference between verbs taking hebben (D)/haben (G) 'have' and zijn (D)/sein (G) 'be' is not as clearcut as the difference between avere and essere verbs in Italian. There is a clear tendency for ergative verbs like arriveren 'arrive', komen 'come', gaan 'go' and smelten 'melt' in Dutch to take zijn as the perfective auxiliary and for intransitives like telefoneren 'telephone' and rennen 'run' (again Dutch) to take hebben. Furthermore verbs of locomotion switch from hebben/haben to zijn/sein if they are combined with a directional adverbial phrase (examples: rennen (D) 'run', lopen (D) 'walk'). Nevertheless there are exceptions. Thus the German verb gefallen 'please' takes haben while its Dutch counterpart bevallen wavers between taking hebben and taking zijn. I will not go into an analysis of the distribution of hebben/haben and zijn/sein here and I will leave it at the above observation.

Now back to the ergative verbs as such. The grammar for ergative verbs in German and Dutch which we dealt with in the preceding sections comprises the following three modules:

(27)a.   Case assignment (parametrized)

  b.   Move NP

  c.   A (partially implicit) theory about θ-marking

As for (27)a., languages may differ as to whether they allow   Case assignment via chain-government. Move NP will be discussed later but (27)c. deserves some further discussion.

It has been noted by Burzio (1981: 40) that the semantic role of Patient or Theme can be assigned to Direct Objects as well as to ergative Subjects which are in fact underlying DOs. Now present theories about semantic roles do not seem to me to be of any help here because they present us with an enormous diversification of semantic roles, and what is needed is a rather rough division. Nevertheless we may hope that a structural theory of θ-assignment can be developed which would assign Agent and related roles (Instrument, for instance) to (NP,S), or at least not to (NP,$\bar{V}$), and Patient/Theme and related roles to (NP,$\bar{V}$). It is doubtful whether such a theory is easy to develop but we may take such ideas as a lead for further research. At least in the case of the NOM DAT ergative verbs discussed above Burzio's idea seems to be correct.

As has been pointed out in the preceding sections, the interaction of

Case assignment (by chain-government) with Move NP allows   a certain freedom in word order. Therefore the hypothesis put forward in den Besten (1981a) is relevant for the discussion about the question of whether German (and maybe Dutch) is a nonconfigurational language. I refer to Haider (1981), Tappe (1982) and Thiersch (1982). One type of evidence for nonconfigurationality is the permutability of NPs in the so-called middle field, i.e. the stretch between COMP and the sentence-final verb. Even though this phenomenon seems to be much stronger in German than it is in Dutch, it can hardly be called 'free' (compare Lenerz 1977). Further-more, evidence in favor of a VP is not completely absent (compare Thiersch 1982) in spite of the fact that (a) the frequent SOV order gives - at first sight at least - the impression that there is no VP, and (b) Verb Preposing further disturbs our observations. However, also see the short remarks about $\overline{V}$ in den Besten (1981a). Yet it is possible that a nonconfigurational syntax for German (and Dutch) will be superior to a configurational one.

However, the discussion in the present paper shows that a fairly free instance of inversion of two NPs which is shared by Dutch and German can described in terms of a configurational syntax by means of Move NP. This does not imply that all other cases of NP inversions in Dutch and German can be described in terms of Move NP. However, it does imply that one cannot simply refer to the permutability of NPs in the Dutch and German 'Mittelfeld' when argueing for nonconfigurationality. The pertinent sets of facts need further analysis before they can be used as an argument to that effect.[10]

One may wonder whether it is possible to account for other NP permutations in the same way as we did for Nominative Dative Inversion. The following section will deal with two more cases that may be treated this way.

4. NP permutations with other verbs

4.1. Introduction

As was said above, the possibilities for inverting two NPs (or an NP plus another category) are much stronger in German than they are in Dutch. Nevertheless, inverting categories is not a 'free' phenomenon. In many cases no inversion is possible and where inversion is possible all sorts of conditions (filters?) keep the pertinent permutations inside certain well-defined limits. Overviews of these conditions are given in Lenerz (1977) and Abraham (1982). It looks like there are three types of reorderings. The first type comprises Topicalization and WH Movement, rules moving elements to COMP. The second type involves what might be called S-internal and VP-internal 'Topicalization' (cf. Thiersch 1982). Examples of the latter type are:

(28)a.G Ich glaube, daß diesen Baum$_{ACC}$ ein Förster$_{NOM}$ gefällt hat

     I believe that this tree a forester cut-down has

  b.G Schenken Sie Ihre Stimme unserer Partei

     Give you your vote (to) our party

I have little to say about such cases. Examples like (28)a. seem to me to be fairly restricted in usage. Examples like (28)b. seem to be more natural, although the DAT ACC order is preferred.[11]

The phenomenon of Nominative Dative Inversion seems to belong to a different class. Below I will treat two more classes of verbs that allow similar permutations.

4.2. Nominative Dative Inversion with nonpsychological verbs

It is noted by Lenerz (1977: 105 f.) that a couple of Nominative Dative verbs, i.e. helfen 'help', dienen 'serve', schaden 'damage, harm', which allow agentive Subjects, permit Nominative Dative Inversion. However, this inversion is possible only if the Nominative is not an Agent:

(29)a.G --, daß meinem Vater$_{DAT}$ dieses Mittel$_{NOM}$ nicht helfen kann

     --, that my father this remedy not help can

  b.G?ˇ --, daꞬ meinem Vater$_{DAT}$ die Krankenschwester$_{NOM}$ nicht helfen kann

     --, that my father the nurse not help can

Both examples are grammatical if the order of constituents is NOM DAT. Now note that the Nominative NP in (29)a. does not seem to have the instrumental reading which it can have if the order is NOM DAT. Furthermore, the verb helfen as used in (29)a. hardly allows a syntactic passive (not even with an instrumental durch-PP), if at all, whereas the verb helfen as used in (29)b. can be passivized quite easily:

(30)a. ??--, daß meinem Vater durch dieses Mittel geholfen worden ist

     --, that (to) my father by this remedy helped been ˙has

  b. --, daꞬ meinem Vater von der Krankenschwester geholfen worden ist

  . --, that (to) my father by the nurse helped been ˙has

A lot more could be said about the properties of helfen but if the above remarks are correct, it seems inevitable to conclude that helfen has a dual status: It is an ergative verb in (29)a. and an intransitive verb in (29)b.. The corresponding structures roughly look as follows:

(31)a. $[_S[_{NP}\ \underline{e}\ ]\ [_{VP}[_{NP}$ meinem Vater $]\ [_{\overline{V}}[_{NP}$ dieses Mittel $]$ help-$]]$ INFL $]$
                                                       -C   +C

  b. $[_S[_{NP}$die Krankenschwester$]\ [_{VP}[_{NP}$ meinem Vater$]\ [_{\overline{V}}$ help-$]]$ INFL $]$
                                                          -C   +C

Structure (31)a. permits two orders, DAT NOM and NOM DAT. Structure (31)b. allows only one.

4.3. Nominative Accusative Inversion with psychological verbs

Lenerz (1977) mentions a couple of 'psychological' verbs that permit an Inversion of a Nominative and an Accusative. Consider the following example:

(32)a.G --, daß meinen Vater$_{ACC}$ deine Geschichten$_{NOM}$ überhaupt nicht

   D --, dat mijn   vader$_{ACC}$ jouw verhalen$_{NOM}$ volstrekt niet

     --, that my   father your stories   totally   not

   G interessieren

   D interesseren

     interest

   b.G --, daß deine Geschichten$_{NOM}$ meinen Vater$_{ACC}$ überhaupt nicht

   D --, dat jouw verhalen$_{NOM}$ mijn   vader$_{ACC}$ volstrekt niet

   G interessieren

   D interesseren

Such inversions are quite common and one may wonder whether they can still be dealt with under a Move NP analysis, since we may assume that the Direct Object bears structural Case.[12] And that means that the position that can be used to account for Nominative Dative Inversion, more specifically to account for a VP internal Nominative NP, is taken.

It seems to me that a solution is possible, although I have my doubts about it. Let me first state that the set of 'psychological' NOM ACC verbs is not a unified class. Furthermore, each verbs seems to allow several 'readings'. I will not go into a discussion of all the problems that arise if one wants to study these verbs and I will restrict myself to a couple of them that seem to share some properties. The examples will be taken from Dutch. The pertinent verbs are interesseren 'interest', ergeren 'irritate', verwonderen 'surprise', and verbazen 'surprise'. These verbs hardly allow a reading such that the Nominative NP serves as an Agent or Instrument. Interesseren is an exception in that it can take an Agent phrase:

(33)a. Dat$_3$ interesseert mij$_2$
     That interests   me

   b. Hij$_1$ heeft mij$_2$ daar$_3$voor geïnteresseerd
     He   has me   that-for interested

The object of the preposition voor bears the same relationship to interesseren as the Nominative NP does in example (33)a. and that relationship is not that of an Agent or Instrument. Therefore, it does not come as a surprise that

(33)b. can be passivized, whereas it is not clear whether (34) may be considered to be the passive related to (33)a.:

(34)   Ik wordt daardoor geïnteresseerd

       I am (?) that-by interested

There are two problems in the analysis of (34). First, it is not clear whether the verbal element <u>worden</u> is the passive auxiliary <u>worden</u> 'be' or the copula <u>worden</u> 'become'. Second, the <u>door</u>-PP may be the passive <u>by</u>-phrase but that is not necessary. As for the latter problem, consider the following example:

(35)   Daardoor / Door zulk soort   argumenten heeft hij mij

       That-by / By   such type (of) arguments   has   he me

       geïnteresseerd voor die baan

       interested   for that job

Thus <u>door</u>-PPs may also occur in active sentences and they may cooccur with passive <u>door</u>-phrases witness the following example:

(36)   Daardoor ben   ik door hem voor die baan geïnteresseerd

       That-by have-been I by him for that job interested

Thus <u>daardoor</u> in (34) does not need to be a passive <u>door</u>-phrase. In fact (34) can be paraphrased as (37) with the copulalike verb <u>raken</u> 'get, become' instead of <u>worden</u>:

(37)   Ik raak daardoor geïnteresseerd

       I get that-by interested

Yet, it seems to be possible to assign a passive interpretation to (34) but in that case it should be related to an elliptical usage of the agentive variant of <u>interesseren</u> which leaves out the <u>voor</u>-PP. Thus, (33)a. may have two readings: a nonagentive one and an agentive one. In the latter case the Subject will bear the semantic role of Instrument while the <u>voor</u>-PP has been left out. I will restrict myself to the nonagentive reading.

    Now note that the above mentioned verbs <u>interesseren</u>, <u>ergeren</u>, <u>verwonderen</u> and <u>verbazen</u> allow variant constructions in which the arguments are reordered:

(38)a. $\underline{Dat}_3$ interesseert $\underline{mij}_2$

      That interests   me

  b. $\underline{Ik}_2$ interesseer $\underline{mij}_2$ $\underline{daar}_3$voor

      I   interest   myself that-for

(39) a. $\underline{Dat}_3$ ergert $\underline{mij}_2$

    That irritates me

   b. $\underline{Ik}_2$ erger $\underline{mij}_2$ $\underline{daar}_3$aan / $\underline{daar}_3$over

    I irritate myself that-on that-about

The variant construction involves the use of an inherent reflexive pronoun. The pronoun as such is superfluous from a semantic point of view and therefore the pair of Subject and reflexive pronoun in (38)b. and (39)b. corresponds to the Direct Object in the a.-examples. The PP in the b. examples corresponds to the Subject phrase in the a.-examples.

  Now compare the following two examples:

(40) a. --, dat ik_{NOM} mij_{ACC} daarvoor interesseer

    --, that I me that-for interest

   b. --, dat mij_{ACC} dat_{NOM} interesseert

    --, that me that interests

(The German counterparts of these examples are exactly parallel in structure.) Let us suppose that the 'inverted' Nominative in examples like (40)b. and (32)a. and b. are in an Oblique position that cannot get Casefrom the verb. Chain-government will do the rest. The hypothesis that there is an Oblique position between the Direct Object and the verb can be argued for on the basis of the following observations: First, if a verb subcategorizes for a Direct Object and a Prepositional Object, the PP will follow the Direct Object. This word order can be illustrated with (33)a. above. This observation applies both to Dutch and to German. Second, in German verbs subcategorizing for an ACC and a Genitive phrase require the order ACC GEN:

(41) a. --, daβ er $[_{VP}[_{\overline{V}}$ den $Karl_{ACC}$ des $Diebstahls_{GEN}$ beschuldigt hat]]

    --, that he Charles (of) (the) larceny accused has

   b. --, daβ sie $[_{VP}[_{\overline{V}}$ uns_{ACC} unseres $Geldes_{GEN}$ beraubt haben]]

    --, that they us (of) our money robbed have

In the corresponding Dutch structures appear PPs with $\underline{van}$ 'of' instead of Genitive phrases:

(42) a. --, dat hij $[_{VP}[_{\overline{V}}$ $Karel_{ACC}$ van $diefstal_{PP}$ beschuldigd heeft]]

   b. --, dat zij $[_{VP}[_{\overline{V}}$ ons_{ACC} van ons $geld_{PP}$ beroofd hebben]]

As expected these $\underline{van}$-PPs show up in the canonical position for Prepositional Objects. Finally, in German a couple of verbs take two Accusatives (cf. den Besten 1981b.). One such verb is $\underline{lehren}$ 'teach':

(43)   --, daβ er$[_{VP}[_{\overline{V}}$ $mich_{ACC}$ $Deutsch_{ACC}$ gelehrt hat]]

    --, that he me German taught has

Given the passive structure (44) we may conclude that the first ACC in
(43) bears structural Case, whereas the second NP is an Oblique Accusative:

(44)   --, da3 ich von ihm Deutsch$_{ACC}$ gelehrt worden bin
         --, that I by him German   taught been   have

Thus it seems reasonable to assume that a verb can subcategorize for two
NPs under $\overline{V}$, the first one bearing structural Case the second one bearing
Oblique Case. Something similar applies to verbs subcategorizing for an
NP and a PP.[13]

Suppose then that the structure underlying examples like (32) look
rougly as follows (leaving out adverbials):

(45)
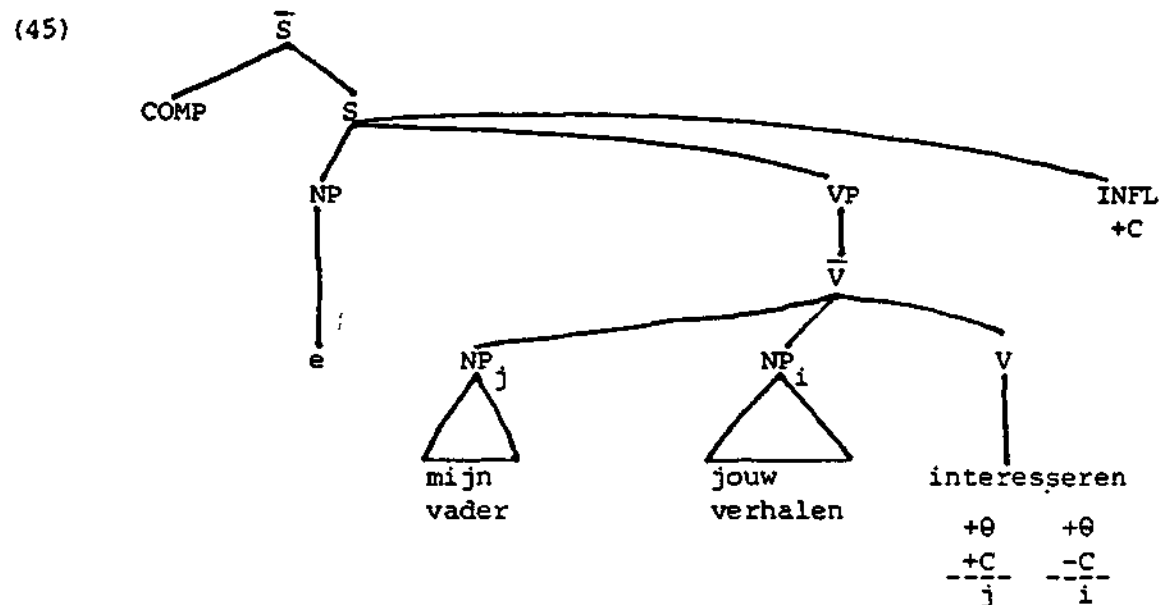
In structure (45) the verb can assign a thematic role to NP_j and NP_i.
However, while the verb is able to assign structural Case - which does
not require the presence of a nonthematic Subject -, it is not able to
assign Case to the NP in the Oblique position. The pertinent NP will
acquire Nominative Case via chain-government or by moving into the
(NP,S) position.

If the above analysis can be upheld two conclusions can be drawn.
First, there is a second class of ergative verbs which instead of not
assigning Case to the DO do assign Structural Case while absorbing
$\overline{V}$ internal Oblique Case. Second, NOM ACC Inversion need not be an
argument in favor of nonconfigurationality.

5. Conclusion

To sum up: This paper discussed some aspects of the Ergative Hypothesis,
morespecifically the variant of that hypothesis that can be found in den
Besten (1981a). It has been shown how this hypothesis can be applied to
various construction in Dutch and German and how it renders a nonconfigur-
ational syntax superfluous in so far as these phenomena are concerned.

Notes

1 There is no reason to believe that Oblique Case in SVO structures like
(1)a. will ever be realized as Dative Case in languages with morphological
Case, as can be concluded from the Icelandic examples in n. 10. We rather
have to analyze (1)a. as containing two Accusatives, the first one being
structural, the second one being Oblique. Compare the German example (43).

2 Verbs that take a Dative, such as <u>helfen</u> 'help' and <u>begegnen</u> 'meet'
may differ from verbs taking Genitive because this lexical requirement
can be fulfilled by the NP that is the sister of $\overline{V}$. For other verbs taking
Oblique Case see section 4.3.. Note that there are no verbs in German taking
ACC plus DAT in that order. The ACC DAT order is the marked variant of the
DAT ACC order. This may be an instance of VP-internal 'Topicalization' (cf.
section 4.1.) but other analyses could be envisaged which would also account
for the marked status of the pertinent order.

3 If what is said in n. 2 is correct marked verbs can only assign Oblique
Genitive and Oblique Accusative, whereas Dative may be a matter of sub-
categorization.

4 Stowell's proposal to allow for a dual verbal position for the V in
Dutch and German seems to me to stem from a misunderstanding about the
nature of Verb Preposing in root sentences. The most general analysis
that can be envisaged requires that in all cases the finite verb moves
into COMP - also if the resulting word order is SVO. Compare den Besten
(1977).

5 Everaert (1982) claims that Indirect Object NPs in Dutch can nominativize
in certain structures. Unfortunately I cannot agree with most of the examples
he provides. Furthermore I believe that his examples in section 5.4,1,
involve Direct Objects and not Indirect Objects. Also compare section 4.3.
of this paper.

6 For data about such NOM DAT verbs in German I refer to the Duden
Grammatik(1973: 1188bb, 1211, etc.). Unfortunately there is no reference
grammar with a similar thoroughness for Dutch. Therefore I will give
a partially ordered list of such verbs and verbal expressions (without
translations) to fill the gap:

(i) aanstaan, afgaan, bevallen, berouwen, behagen, betamen, bijstaan, bij-
blijven, bekomen (+adv.), duizelen, gebeuren, kosten, lukken, liggen
(+adv.), lusten, mishagen, meevallen, misstaan, mankeren, overkomen,
ontgaan, ontbreken, opvallen, opbreken, ontschieten, ontvallen, opgaan
(SU: een licht), passen, smaken, spijten, schelen, tegenvallen, toe-
komen, toebehoren, tegenstaan, tegenlopen, uitkomen (+adv.), voorstaan,
vallen (+adv.), vergaan, voldoen, zinnen

(ii) (om de oren) fluiten, (te pas) komen, (van pas) komen, (ter ore)
komen,(in de oren) klinken, (over de rug) lopen, (voor ogen) staan,
(door het hoofd) schieten, (ter beschikking) staan, (ten dienste)
staan, (door het hoofd) spelen, (te binnen) schieten, (voor ogen)
zweven

(Many of the examples under (ii) involve Possessive Datives.) This list
does not pretend to be exhaustive.

7 This grammar tacitly assumes an obligatory NP position under S. Since
the order NP_j NP_i is present at D-Structure, one may wonder whether such an
assumption is necessary. A rule S → (NP) VP INFL would do as well. However
note that such a revision involves more than simply changing a base rule.
Therefore, and for reasons explicated in den Besten (1981a), I will stick
to the obligatory (NP,S) position. Yet the alternative has interesting
properties and deserves further investigation. Also compare Chomsky (1981)
and n. 10 below.

78a

Gehört zu Seite 78.
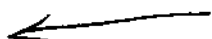
* This paper was originally published in GAGL 21 (1982). The present version
is practically unchanged, except for some minor alterations. For a more recent
paper, combining and partly revising and extending the insights and considerations
contained in this paper and in den Besten (1981a), the reader is referred to my
study 'The Ergative Hypothesis and Free Word Order in Dutch and German' in J.Toman
(ed.). Studies on German Grammar. Foris Publications, Dordrecht (to app.).

8 Note that in case of an optional Subject position DAT NOM order would not require any application of Move NP so that S-Structure would more or less equal D-Strcuture (disregarding Verb Raising):

(i) $[_{\bar{S}}$ COMP $[_S[_{VP}[_{\bar{V}}[_{(\bar{S})}$ $[_S[_{VP}$ NP$_{DAT}$ $[_{\bar{V}}$ NP$_{NOM}$ V $]]]]$ V $]]$ INFL $]]$

9 NP$_j$ need not be preposed if we assume NP$_k$ to be optional. In that case S-Structure will look as follows (disregarding Verb Raising):

(i) $[_{\bar{S}}$ COMP $[_S$ NP$_1$ $[_{VP}[_{\bar{V}}[_{(\bar{S})}$ $[_S[_{VP}$ NP$_{DAT}$ $[_{\bar{V}}$ NP$_{ACC}$ V $]]]]$ V $]]$ INFL $]]$

10 The Icelandic facts discussed by Andrews (1976) should also be taken into account. His examples quite clearly show that SVO languages do too evidence Nominative Dative Inversion. Compare the following data taken from Andrews (1976):

(i)a. þeir seldi honum$_{DAT}$ drengina$_{ACC}$
       they sold (to) him the-boys

   b. drengirnir$_{NOM}$ voru seldir (masc.nom.pl.) honum$_{DAT}$
       the-boys   were sold   (to) him

   c. honum$_{DAT}$ voru seldir(masc.nom.pl.) drengirnir$_{NOM}$
       (to) him were sold   the-boys

Note that the Dative NP has to be preposed in order to yield the DAT NOM order of (i)c.. Thus a base rule S → (NP) INFL VP will not do for Icelandic (compare n. 7). Also note that (i)c. is not a case of Topicalization (plus postposing of <u>drengirnir</u>, since Topicalization of <u>honum</u> would generate <u>honum voru drengirnir seldir</u>), because the same phenomenon can be observed in the complements of Exceptional Case Marking verbs, which - as Andrews argues - do not allow Topicalization:

(ii)a. ég tel   drengina$_{ACC}$ hafa verið selda (acc.) honum$_{DAT}$
        I believe the-boys   (to)have been sold   (to) him
    b. ég tel   honum$_{DAT}$ hafa   verið seldir (nom.) drengirnir$_{NOM}$
        I believe (to) him (to) have been sold   the-boys

Quite surprisingly,the NP in (NP,VP) position is Nominative and not Accusative. Thus, we need different rules for Icelandic Case assignment than those required for German and Dutch.

11 The ACC DAT order of (28)b. is nor completely out in Dutch. However, since the (marked) ACC DAT order coincides with the (unmarked) ACC PP order for Indirect Object PPs which are more widespread in Dutch than they are in German, such a construction is shunned in Dutch:

(i)   Ik heb dit boek ?(aan) een goede vriend van mij gegeven
        I have this book ?(to) a   good friend of mine given

(For PP Objects, see section 4.3..) Acceptability is considerably improved if verbs like <u>aanbevelen</u> 'recommend", <u>aanraden</u> 'advise, recommend' and <u>afraden</u> 'dissuade' are chosen which subcategorize for Indirect Object NPs only:

(ii)a. Ik raad   dit uitstapje (*aan) Uwe Majesteit van harte aan
        I recommend this excursion (*to) Your Majesty   warmly
    b. Ik zou dit uitstapje (*aan) mijn broer willen   afraden
        I would this excursion (*to) my   brother like (to) dissuade

12 In Everaert (1982: 5.4.1.) Dutch examples similar to (32) are interpreted as involving NOM DAT verbs. This idea is ill-advised, I think. One

does not need to refer to the fact that the German counterparts of these verbs (except for <u>behagen</u>) take Accusative Objects to argue against this supposition. First of all, four out of six of Everaert's verbs are prefixed with <u>be-</u>. Now <u>be-</u> is generally considered to be a transitivizing prefix, the German verbs <u>behagen</u> being one of the very few exceptions in that it takes a Dative. (The status of <u>behagen</u> in Dutch is not yet clear to me.) Second, as Everaert argues at length, his supposedly intransitive verbs permit personal passives, whereas impersonal passives are ungrammatical:

(i)   Hij werd door dat gedoe geamuseerd
        He was by those doings amused
(ii)   *Hem werd door dat gedoe geamuseerd
       Him was by   those doings amused

Such behavior is in accordance with transitivity. Third, verbs like Everaert's <u>verontrusten</u> 'alarm' and <u>amuseren</u> 'amuse' also show up in lexical passives:

(iii) Hij was verontrust over de uitslag
       He was alarmed   at   the results

Subjects of lexical passives are Themes and therefore correspond to Direct Objects in active structures.

13 This does not mean that Oblique Objects and PP Objects are completely parallel in syntactic behavior. However, they do share the property of separating Direct Objects from Verbs.

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