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December 15, 2004  
Workshop in Syntax and Semantics  
Final Paper

## Restructuring in English

I argue that restructuring exists in English. Following Wurmbrand (2001), I assume that restructuring is ability for certain verbs in the language to take bare VP complements. I demonstrate that certain verbs which are ‘restructuring verbs’ in other languages take ‘ing-form’ complements in English which are remarkably small. These ‘ing-form’ complements cannot contain an independent T node, nor clausal negation, nor passive voice morphology, nor floating quantifiers. From these facts, I argue that these ‘ing-form’ complements are structurally bare VPs. That the verbs taking these complements tend to coincide with what are the restructuring verbs in other languages strongly suggests that restructuring is as much a phenomenon in English as it is in other languages of the world.

### 1. Introduction

It is often remarked that there is no evidence of a ‘restructuring’ operation in English. Unlike such languages as German, Dutch, Swedish, Italian, and Japanese, when one examines the infinitival complements of English, one finds no phenomenon that would signal the ‘clause unification’ that results from classic restructuring. For sentences such as (1a), independent properties of English rule out the possibility of Italian-style clitic climbing from out of the complement, or auxiliary selection controlled by the lower verb. Furthermore, as (1b) demonstrates, German-style ‘long passive’ is always impossible in English.

- (1) a. Dave tried to eat a hammer.  
b. \*A hammer was tried to eat.

I will argue that, despite the facts in (1), restructuring is a phenomenon in English. The arguments that I shall put forth in support of this proposal are based, in large measure, on the analysis of restructuring defended in Wurmbrand (2001). Numerous facts from German and other languages are marshaled by Wurmbrand in support of the analysis schematized in (2). Under this analysis, a ‘restructured’ complement is a bare VP complement of the matrix V. Thus, following Wurmbrand (2001), restructuring is not an operation, but the ability for certain verbs within the language to take bare VPs as complements.

- (2) [<sub>TP</sub> SUBJ [<sub>VP</sub> V [<sub>VP</sub> V<sub>restructuring-verb</sub> [<sub>VP</sub> V<sub>head-of-restructured complement</sub> ] ] ] ] ]

It is a necessary consequence of this analysis that, in languages with clear evidence of restructuring, bare VP complements are spelled out with infinitival morphology. It would be natural to suppose that in such languages, the infinitive is a morphological ‘default’. That is, in these languages, infinitival morphology is provided

to the verb when no other TAM morphology is available. Now, languages may well differ with respect to the exact distribution of such a verbal morphological default. For example, although the “ing” suffix in English does not have the precise distribution of the infinitival suffix in Italian or German, many have noted that it has much the status of a default verbal morpheme. After all, there is no morphosyntactic unity to the environments in which this English suffix appears: gerunds, participles, progressives, absolutes. Thus, although they do not have the exact same overall distribution, it may nevertheless be that the ‘ing’ suffix in English and the infinitival suffix in languages such as German and Italian are featurally identical. Both may be default verbal morphemes which appear when no other morphology is available to the verb.

It is quite interesting, then, that the English verbs ‘try’ and ‘go’, which in many other languages are restructuring verbs, take a complement headed by a verb suffixed with ‘ing’.

- (3) a. We tried opening the door (but it was locked).  
b. We went fishing for trout.

Equally interesting is the fact that the English adjective ‘easy’, which is argued in Wurmbrand (2001) to take a VP complement in German, may also take such ‘ing-form’ complements.

- (4) It’s easy baking a cake in a microwave.

Over the next few sections, I will argue that the ‘ing-form’ complements in (3) and (4) are syntactically very ‘small’, ultimately no larger than VP.

## **2. The Bare VP Complement of ‘Try’, ‘Go’ and ‘Easy’ in English**

The complements in (3) and (4) seem to bear the default verbal morpheme of English. This suggests the possibility that the complements in these sentences are bare VPs, and thus are the true English equivalents of the ‘restructured complements’ in languages such as German, Italian and Japanese.

Of course, it is also well known that certain verbs in English can take nominalized, gerundive complements. Such nominal complements would be morpho-syntactically quite similar to the hypothesized bare VP complements. Both would bear the ‘ing’ suffix and take accusative DPs as complements. Indeed, I shall argue that the ‘ing-form’ complement in sentence (5) is an instance of such a large, nominalized TP structure.

- (5) Dave preferred selling magazines door-to-door.

Although gerunds and the hypothesized English bare VPs are predicted to have a very similar surface appearance, they are nevertheless expected to behave differently with respect to more subtle tests. In this paper, we shall examine eight properties that are expected to distinguish bare VP complements from gerundive complements in English.

## 2.1 Independent Tense

Wurmbrand (2001) observes that most restructuring verbs do not permit their complements to ever have independent tense values.<sup>1</sup>

- (6) a. Hans wagte (\*morgen) einen Brief zu schreiben.  
Hans dared tomorrow a letter to write  
\* *Hans dared to write a letter tomorrow.* (Wurmbrand 2001; p. 79)
- b. Hans gelang es (\*morgen) einen Brief zu schreiben.  
Hans managed tomorrow a letter to write.  
\* *Hans managed to write a letter tomorrow.* (Wurmbrand 2001; p. 80)

Interestingly, Wurmbrand discovers that some restructuring verbs do permit their complements to have independent tense values in certain special contexts. Sentence (7) is marginally permissible, so long as it is construed with the glossed meaning.

- (7) ? ...dass die Diebe versuchten den Wagen morgen ueber die Grenze zu schmuggeln.  
that the thieves tried the car tomorrow across the border to smuggle.  
? *The thieves tried to (make arrangements to) smuggle the car across the border tomorrow.* (Wurmbrand 2001; p. 84)

However, when there is clear evidence that the embedded clause has been ‘restructured’, such as when an embedded object has been promoted by ‘long passive’, even verbs like “versuchten” fail to permit an independently tensed complement.

- (8) \* ...dass der Wagen morgen ueber die Grenze zu schmuggeln versucht werde.  
that the car tomorrow over the border to smuggle tried was  
\* *The car was tried to smuggle over the border tomorrow.* (Wurmbrand 2001; p. 84)

Wurmbrand (2001) argues that facts such as these demonstrate that restructured complements lack a TP projection.

If the ‘ing-form’ complements in (3) and (4) are indeed bare VPs, we expect them not to be able to bear an independent tense specification. Note, first of all, that like their German equivalents, the verb ‘try’ and the adjective ‘easy’ marginally permit their infinitival complements to bear an independent tense specification.

- (9) a. ? I tried to leave tomorrow, (but the airline didn’t have any tickets).  
b. ? It was easy to leave tomorrow. (The airline had tons of tickets available.)

Interestingly, however, such an independent tense specification is not possible within the ‘ing-form’ complements of these verbs.

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<sup>1</sup> The German verbs “wagte” and “gelang” are shown in Wurmbrand (2001) to be restructuring verbs.

- (10) a. \* I tried leaving tomorrow, (but the airline didn't have any tickets).  
b. \* It was easy leaving tomorrow. (The airline had tons of tickets available.)

In addition, independent tense specification is not possible within the 'ing-form' complement of "go".

- (11) \* We went fishing for trout tomorrow.

The impossibility of the sentences in (10) and (11) is not due to some general incompatibility between 'ing' suffixation and independent tense. The sentence in (12), for example, is far better than any of the sentences in (9) - (11).

- (12) Dave preferred leaving tomorrow.

The facts in (10) and (11) argue that the 'ing-form' complements of "try", "go" and "easy" cannot have an independent tense specification. They are thus similar to restructured complements in this respect, and behave as if they lack TP projection. By contrast, the 'ing-form' complement of "prefer" can have an independent tense specification, a fact that supports the hypothesis that this complement is a nominalized, gerundive TP.

## 2.2 Partial Control

It is observed in Wurmbrand (2001) that no restructuring verb permits partial control of its complement's subject, even in sentences lacking clear evidence of restructuring. This feature of restructuring verbs is claimed to be connected to their complements' inability to have an independently specified tense value.

Our analysis of the 'ing-form' complements in (3) and (4) correctly predicts that "try", "go" and "easy" do not allow for partial control.

- (13) a. \* I tried to dance together.  
b. \* I tried dancing together.
- (14) a. \* I went to dance together.  
b. \* I went dancing together.
- (15) a. \* For me, it's easy to dance together.  
b. \* For me, it's easy dancing together.

On the other hand, the verb "prefer" always permits partial control of its complement's subject, be the complement infinitival or 'ing-form'.

- (16) a. Dave preferred to dance together.  
b. Dave preferred dancing together.

These facts support the hypothesis that the ‘ing-form’ complements in (3) and (4) are bare VPs, while the complement in (5) is a full, nominalized TP.

### 2.3 Clausal Negation

Clausal negation is demonstrated in Wurmbrand (2001) not to be permitted within restructured complements. When the complement of a restructuring verb in German shows clear evidence of having been ‘restructured’, it is not possible to have clausal negation within that complement.

- (17) \* ...weil der Kuchen nicht zu essen versucht wurde.  
Since the cake not to eat tried was  
\*...since the cake was tried not to eat. (Wurmbrand 2001; p. 118)

This property of restructured complements follows naturally from their having the structure of bare VPs.

The hypothesis that the ‘ing-form’ complements in (3) and (4) are also bare VPs predicts that they should also resist clausal negation. The data in (18)-(20) demonstrate the accuracy of this prediction.

- (18) a. I tried not to cry, (but the tears wouldn’t stop).  
b. \* I tried not crying, (but the tears wouldn’t stop).<sup>2</sup>
- (19) a. \* I went not to fish for trout.  
b. \* I went not fishing for trout.
- (20) a. It’s easy not to catch a cold. (Just take vitamins.)  
b. \* It’s easy not catching a cold. (Just take vitamins.)

Again, the impossibility of a clausal negation within these ‘ing-form’ complements cannot be due to some superficial, morphophonological prohibition. Clausal negation is readily accepted into the ‘ing-form’ complement in (21).

- (21) a. Dave preferred not to meet on Tuesdays.  
b. Dave preferred not meeting on Tuesdays.

These facts support the hypothesis that the ‘ing-form’ complements in (3) and (4) are bare VPs, while the complement in (5) is a full, nominalized TP.

### 2.4 Passive

It is commonly held that voice morphology does not originate within the VP. Rather, it is introduced by functional heads well outside the minimal verbal structure. Our analysis of

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<sup>2</sup> The first sentence in (18b) is acceptable under a ‘tactic reading’, one in which ‘not crying’ was tried as a means to some other end. This reading for ‘try’ seems to be factive, and so it is ruled out by the consequent parenthetical comment in (18b).

the ‘ing-form’ complements in (3) and (4) therefore predicts that it should not be possible for the heads of these complements to appear in passive voice. On the other hand, we predict that the nominalized TP complement in (5) should be able to appear in passive voice.

The sentences in (22) demonstrate that our predictions regarding the complement of “prefer” are born out.

- (22) a. Dave would prefer to be seen with his brother.  
b. Dave would prefer being seen with his brother.

It seems that passive voice is as possible in the ‘ing-form’ complement of “prefer” as in its infinitival complement. Unlike “prefer”, however, the ‘ing-form’ complements of “try”, “go” and “easy” resist passive voice.

- (23) a. Dave tried to be seen with his brother.  
b. \* Dave tried being seen with his brother.
- (24) a. It’s easy to be hated. (People are so jealous and petty these days.)  
b. \* It’s easy being hated. (People are so jealous and petty these days.)<sup>3</sup>
- (25) a. Dave went to be tattooed.  
b. \* Dave went being tattooed.

The impossibility of passive voice in the ‘ing-form’ complements of “try”, “go” and “easy” supports the view that these complements are bare VPs.

## 2.5 Extraposition

In Japanese, it is not possible for a restructured complement to be extraposed from the verb (Miyagawa 1987). That is, a complement in Japanese can only show clear diagnostics of restructuring if it is directly adjacent to the verb. Given our assumed analysis of restructuring, this fact could follow from a prohibition against the extraposition of bare VPs.<sup>4</sup> When combined with our analysis of the ‘ing-form’ complements in (3), (4) and (5), such a prohibition could account for the data in (26)-(29).

- (26) a. Dave preferred, very much, to do all of it the next day.  
b. Dave preferred, very much, doing all of it the next day.
- (27) a. We went, in our best clothes, to fish for trout.  
b. \* We went, in our best clothes, fishing for trout.

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<sup>3</sup> The first sentence in (24b) is possible under a reading in which ‘being hated’ is easy for one to endure. This reading, however, is rendered pragmatically impossible by the following parenthetical comment.

<sup>4</sup> The existence of such a prohibition in German is not clear. Wurmbrand (2001) explicitly discusses cases in which it appears as if a restructured complement has undergone rightward scrambling. Of course, numerous options are available to the analyst regarding possible reasons for this cross linguistic difference.

- (28) a. I tried, with all my might, to untie my shoes.  
b. \* I tried, with all my might, untying my shoes.
- (29) a. It was easy, in the old days, to buy ivory.  
b. \* It was easy, in the old days, buying ivory.

It seems that only “prefer” allows its ‘ing-form’ complement to extrapose. If the ‘ing-form’ complements in (27)-(29) are bare VPs, the impossibility of the ‘b’ sentences would follow from the proposed prohibition against extraposition of VPs. Such a prohibition would fail to rule out sentence (26b), so long as one assumes that the ‘ing-form’ complement of “prefer” is not a bare VP, but a nominalized, gerundive TP.

## 2.7 Possessors

A standard assumption regarding VP is that it does not contain the external argument of the verb. Of course, external arguments are readily available within gerunds, where they appear as possessive specifiers. Our analysis of the ‘ing-form’ complements in (3), (4) and (5) can therefore explain the following interesting contrasts.

- (30) I preferred (my) visiting a registered doctor.
- (31) I tried (\* my) visiting a registered doctor.
- (32) I went (\*my) visiting a registered doctor.
- (33) For me, it’s easy (\*my) visiting a registered doctor.

As these data reveal, the ‘ing-form’ complement of “prefer” can contain a possessive specifier. This accords with the view that the complement in (5) is a nominalized, gerundive TP. The ‘ing-form’ complements of “try”, “go” and “easy”, however, cannot contain possessive specifiers. Note that such specifiers can only be construed as subjects of the embedded V. Thus, their impossibility is expected under the view that the ‘ing-form’ complements of these verbs are VPs, which lack a position for the subject.

## 2.8 Floating Quantifiers

It is often observed that floating quantifiers in English mark positions available to subjects, either at the surface or underlyingly. Given that VP does not contain any position available to a subject, our analysis of the complements in (3) and (4) predicts that floating quantifiers should not be possible within them. On the other hand, no principle is known to prevent floating quantifiers from appearing within gerunds, where subject positions are expected to appear. Thus, our analysis of the ‘ing-form’ complement of “prefer” predicts that floating quantifiers should be allowed in this position. The following data bear this prediction out.

- (34) a. We would prefer to all ride the train together.  
 b. We would prefer all riding the train together.
- (35) a. We tried to all ride the train together, (but there weren't enough tickets.)  
 b. \* We tried all riding the train together, (but there weren't enough tickets.)
- (36) a. We went to all ride the train together.  
 b. \* We went all riding the train together.
- (37) a. It was easy to all ride the train together.  
 b. \* It was easy all riding the train together.

## 2.9 Intermediate Summary

The data in sections 2.1 – 2.8 demonstrate that the ‘ing-form’ complements of “try”, “go” and “easy” have the following properties.

- (38) Properties of ‘Ing-Form’ Complements to “Try”, “Go” and “Easy”
- a. They cannot have an independent tense valuation.
  - b. They do not permit partial control of their subject.
  - c. They cannot contain clausal negation.
  - d. They cannot contain passive morphology.
  - e. They cannot be extraposed.
  - f. They cannot contain possessive specifiers.
  - g. They cannot contain floating quantifiers.

It is argued in Wurmbrand (2001) that the properties in (38a,b) follow from a verbal projection not containing its own TP node. Moreover, property (38c) would suggest that these ‘ing-form’ complements can neither contain a NegP, and property (38d) argues that they do not contain a VoiceP either. Finally, properties (38f,g) argue that these projections do not even contain a vP, as they seem to have no position available to subjects. Therefore, these various properties together suggest that the ‘ing-form’ complements of “try”, “go” and “easy” are no larger than bare VPs.

By contrast, we have found that the ‘ing-form’ complement of “prefer” has the properties in (39).

- (39) Properties of ‘Ing-Form’ Complements to “Prefer”
- a. They can have an independent tense valuation.
  - b. They do permit partial control of their subject.
  - c. They can contain clausal negation.
  - d. They can contain passive morphology.
  - e. They can be extraposed.
  - f. They can contain possessive specifiers.
  - g. They can contain floating quantifiers.

Following Wurmbrand (2001), the properties in (39a,b) would entail that these complements contain TP projections. That these complements contain TP projections would also correctly predict all the properties in (39c-g). These data therefore argue that the ‘ing-form’ complements of “prefer” are full TPs, though ones undergoing some nominalization.

If the analysis of Wurmbrand (2001) is correct in that ‘restructuring’ is nothing more than the ability of certain verbs to take bare VPs as complements, then these facts argue that restructuring is a phenomenon in English.

### 3. Case Assignment in English VP Complements

One of the strongest pieces of evidence Wurmbrand puts forth in support of the proposal that restructured complements are bare VPs is German’s so-called ‘long passive.’ In such structures, passive morphology on a matrix verb is correlated with promotion of the *embedded* object into subject position. Such structures support the hypothesis that the restructured complement is a VP, under the now common assumption that accusative case can only be assigned by a ‘little’ v.

We might therefore expect that ‘long passive’ should be possible in English, so long as the promoted object is moving out of an ‘ing-form’ complement to a restructuring verb. Sentences such as (40), however, demonstrate that this is not the case.

(40) \* The book was tried reading.

The absence of ‘long passive’ in English is something of a puzzle for our analysis of the complements in (3) and (4). However, it should be noted that there are many other languages with restructuring in which long passive is not possible. For example, although the Romance languages were some of the first languages to be described as having ‘restructuring’, they have never been independently reported to have a ‘long passive’ construction, and native speakers are reported to reject such structures, sometimes quite vehemently (David Pesetsky p.c.). Nevertheless, these languages display phenomena somewhat similar to German’s long passive. For example, one well-known diagnostic for restructuring in Romance is so-called ‘clitic climbing,’ in which a logical object of the embedded verb appears to have been promoted to the matrix clause. Are there any constructions in English which, though not perfectly identical to German’s long passive, might at least be somewhat analogous to it?

In fact, there are. The verbs “need” and “merit” can appear in structures like the following.

- (41) a. The floor needs washing.  
b. This book merits reading.

In these sentences, the subject of the verb is non-thematic. Moreover, it is intuitively co-referent with an object gap inside the ‘ing-form’ complement of the verb. It seems, then, that the subject of the sentence has been promoted from the object position of the embedded ‘ing-form’ complement. One possible reason for such promotion is that the verbs in these sentences are unaccusative, and so do not project vPs. Because no vP is

present in these sentences, the objects of the embedded verbs must move to the matrix subject position to receive case. Such an analysis is along the same lines as the analysis Wurmbrand (2001) puts forth for similar unaccusative restructuring verbs in German.

Another fact worth mentioning in this context is that many, though not all, of the adjectives which in English permit ‘tough-movement’ out of infinitives also permit similar movement out of ‘ing-form’ complements.

- (42) a. Beer bottles are easy to shoot with a shotgun.  
b. Beer bottles are easy shooting with a shotgun.
- (43) a. A cake would be tough to bake in a microwave.  
b. A cake would be tough baking in a microwave.
- (44) a. Mary is fun to tease about her hair.  
b. Mary is fun teasing about her hair.
- (45) a. Soup is good to eat when you’re sick.  
b. \* Soup is good eating when you’re sick.

Interestingly, when the subject is promoted out of an ‘ing-form’ complement, the movement no longer displays any of the A-bar properties that ‘tough-movement’ in English typically does.

- (46) a. Mary is easy to want to like.  
b. \* Mary is easy wanting to like.
- (47) a. ? Mary is easy to tell Dave that you like.  
b. \* Mary is easy telling Dave that you like.
- (48) a. That book is tough to read without hating.  
b. \* That book is tough reading without hating.
- (49) a. That ledge is easy to put books on top of.  
b. \* That ledge is easy putting books on top of.

It seems, then, that when a subject is promoted from within the ‘ing-form’ complement of the adjectives above, the resulting chain is distinctly more ‘A-like’. A possible analysis of these sentences might therefore simply be the analysis Wurmbrand (2001) puts forth for the ‘easy-to-please’ construction in German, which shows no A-bar properties whatsoever. In these sentences, the unaccusative adjectives do not license the projection of a vP. Because the ‘ing-form’ complements of these verbs are bare VPs, their objects can only receive case if they move to the subject position. As such movement is A-movement pure and simple, the non-A-bar properties of the resulting chain follow necessarily.

We have found, then, that in English too there is some evidence that accusative case cannot be assigned within restructured complements. This is despite the fact that

German-style long passive is as impossible in English as it is in Romance. Perhaps certain extraneous factors simply render the long passive impossible in English and Romance. Nevertheless, there is still evidence in these languages that restructured complements are unable to assign structural case.

#### 4 Remaining Challenges Against Restructuring in English

I have argued that the ‘ing-form’ complements of “try”, “go” and “easy” are quite small, no larger than a bare VP. If Wurmbrand (2001) is correct in that restructuring is simply the ability for certain verbs to take bare VP complements, then it seems restructuring is indeed a phenomenon of English. The wide-spread impression that English does not have restructuring is due to the fact that what are traditionally referred to as English ‘infinitives’ are perhaps always structures at least as large as vP. It is only when one looks to structures bearing the default suffix ‘ing’ that one begins to find evidence of restructuring in English.

There remain, of course, a number of challenges to the hypothesis that restructuring, as standardly understood, occurs in English. The strongest is that, outside of the two verbs described here, intuitions amongst English speakers regarding which predicates are restructuring diverge sharply. Although it is widely known that speakers of languages with restructuring often disagree sharply regarding the set of restructuring verbs, there is generally a rather sizeable set of verbs that are unanimously agreed to fall within the class. Thus far, my experience with English speakers suggests that their intuitions are far less stable. Although I confidently group ‘dare’ and ‘manage’ within the restructuring predicates, few speakers agree with respect to both. Furthermore, only a few speakers agree with me on the acceptability of the sentences in (42)-(44) containing ‘ing form’ complements. The only verbs for which there seems to be relatively unanimous confidence regarding the size of their ‘ing form’ complements are “go” and “try”.

Why are there so few clear cases of restructuring verbs in English? An answer begins to come into view when one considers the class of verbs that are in other languages unanimously considered restructuring. As discussed in Wurmbrand (2001), this class typically includes “try” and “go”, but also “want” and modal verbs such as “must”, “can”, “may”, etc. Strangely, in English none of these latter verbs can take ‘ing-form’ complements.

(50) a. Dave wanted to eat a hammer.  
b. \* Dave wanted eating a hammer.

(51) a. Dave can eat a hammer.  
b. \* Dave can eating a hammer.

(52) a. Dave must eat a hammer.  
b. \* Dave must eating a hammer.

Thus, many of the verbs which are unanimously restructuring in other languages are simply *not* restructuring verbs in English. This explains why the number of verbs that

English speakers agree upon is so small, but it raises questions of its own. Why *aren't* these verbs restructuring verbs in English?

With respect to the modal verbs “can”, “must”, “may”, etc., an answer is readily imaginable. It is commonly held that these ‘verbs’ are really instances of T. Thus, they may be unable to take VP complements as a result of the special selectional properties of the functional T head.<sup>5</sup> Such a straightforward answer is not, however, available in the case of “want”. At this point, it remains a puzzle for future research why “want” in English cannot take a VP complement.

## 5. Conclusion

It has been shown that “try”, “go” and “easy” take ‘ing-form’ complements that are very small in comparison to the ‘ing-form’ complements appearing with “prefer.” Various structural diagnostics converge upon the view that the ‘ing-form’ complements of the former verbs are no larger than VP, while the ‘ing-form’ complements of “prefer” are as large as TP. Under the analysis of Wurmbrand (2001), restructuring is simply the ability for some verbs within a language to take VP complements. We conclude, therefore, that restructuring is a phenomenon in English. Nevertheless, for reasons that are only partly understood at the moment, restructuring seems in English to be restricted to a rather small set of predicates.

## References

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<sup>5</sup> Strictly speaking, in order for such a hypothesis to be consistent with our analyses in section 3, we must subscribe to the distinction between a strong v\*P which assigns case and hosts external arguments, and a weak vP which does neither.