What Does Structural Accusative Mean?
An Argument against the Aspectual Theory*

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This paper considers the source of structural accusative case against certain assumptions within “constructionist” or event-based syntax (Ramchand 1997; Kratzer 2004; van Hout 2004; Borer 1994, 2005; Richardson 2007, a.o.). On a constructionist analysis, the syntactic mapping of a verb’s arguments is determined by the functional (typically, aspectual) structure in which verbal roots are inserted, rather than by the verb’s lexical semantics alone, thereby capturing certain lexical redundancy in syntactic regularity. The trend in this literature is to assume that the syntactic head responsible for accusative case contains a feature that encodes information about the Terminal Bound of the event (whether the event is delimited, bounded, telic). This paper provides evidence for the role of the Initial Bound in determining structural accusative possibilities—that is, how the event is caused or initiated. The central idea is that the NP that is typically treated as bearing the predicate’s external theta role is, in point of fact, not fully specified as such. That is, there is a systematic alternation in most eventive, two-place, non-psych predicates, whereby “abstract initiation” in the sense of Ramchand (2008)—the source of accusative on the present account—is activated by different varieties of \( v \), with observable morphosyntactic differences on the non-Theme (alternating) argument. When \( v\)-VOICE is activated, the non-Theme argument is realized as a canonical nominative Agent. In those cases in which a Natural Force, Instrument, or Source is sufficient

* I thank Hana Filip for very helpful discussion of this work. I am also grateful for the useful comments and criticism of two anonymous *FASL* reviewers, which led to several improvements in the paper. All remaining errors remain my own.
to set the event in motion, the non-Theme argument is realized in an oblique (typically instrumental) case, which activates $\nu$-CAUSE as the source of accusative on the Theme. While accusative may indeed be linked to an aspectual dimension of the predicate, such as the presence of a terminal bound, this aspectual property is shown here as neither sufficient nor necessary for accusative.

1. The Empirical Problem

Unaccusative predicates in Russian and Ukrainian systematically occur with structural accusative on the object. Accusative, however, is possible only in those instances in which causation is asserted. Compare the basic unaccusative in (1), in which accusative does not occur, with the unaccusatives in (2), in which accusative does occur and, thus, can be taken to activate a variety of $\nu$. I dub examples such as those in (2) as Transitive Impersonals: non-agreeing unaccusative predicates that exhibit the transitivity property (accusative) (Lavine 2010a).

(1) Russian Basic Unaccusative: $^\star$ACC
a. Utka $^\star$vylinjala.
duck$\text{NOM,FEM}$ molted$\text{FEM}$
‘The duck molted.’

b. $^\star$Utku $^\star$vylinjalo.
duck$\text{ACC}$ molted$\text{[–AGR]}$

(2) Russian Transitive Impersonal: $\checkmark$ACC
a. Travu vyžglo solncem
grass$\text{ACC}$ burned$\text{[–AGR]}$ sun$\text{INST}$
‘The grass was scorched by the sun.’

b. Kupili užasnye kapli ot blox. Posle primenenija
(we)bought terrible drops against fleas after application
kotoryx [u koški vyžglo šerst’]
of-which by cat burned-off$\text{[–AGR]}$ hair$\text{ACC}$
‘We bought terrible drops for fleas. After their application, the
cat’s hair burned off.’ [Google]
A non-cognate construction in Ukrainian exhibits the same properties:\footnote{Note that the Transitive Impersonal in (3b) is not passive since it contains no basic external argument. To be sure, Ukrainian does form a genuine Transitive Impersonal passive, as in (i):

(i) Koxanku znykloho redaktora bulo znajdeno pracivnykamy milicii.
   mistress\textsubscript{ACC} vanished editor\textsubscript{GEN} was found\textsubscript{[-AGR]} officers\textsubscript{INST} militia\textsubscript{GEN}
   ‘The mistress of the missing editor was found by militia officers.’ [Google]

In what follows, I focus on non-passives in order to control for accusative assignment as a potential implicit subject effect (in the sense of Baker & Vinokurova 2010).}

(3) Ukrainian

a. Basic Unaccusative: *\textsubscript{ACC}

   *\textsubscript{ACC}
   \begin{tabular}{l}
   Xatu bulo zhere\textsubscript{[–AGR]}no.  \\
   house\textsubscript{ACC} was burned-down\textsubscript{[-AGR]}
   \end{tabular}

b. Transitive Impersonal: √\textsubscript{ACC}

   \begin{tabular}{l}
   Xatu bulo spaleno blyskavkoju.  \\
   house\textsubscript{ACC} was burned-down\textsubscript{[-AGR]} lightning\textsubscript{INST}
   \end{tabular}
   ‘The house was burned down by (a strike of) lightning.’

On the standard Minimalist assumption that probe-hood in T and \(v^*\) is defined in terms of subject-object agreement, yielding nominative and accusative, respectively (Chomsky 2008), it must be merely stipulated that \(v\) is \(\phi\text{-incomplete}\) when accusative is unavailable in (1–3) and that \(v\) is \(\phi\text{-complete}\) when accusative occurs. Indeed, the licit appearance of overt accusative in these instances might be treated as indirect evidence for abstract object agreement. Note, however, that there is no object-agreement in Slavic and virtually none at all in Indo-European—in fact, there is an inverse relation between overt case marking and overt object agreement (see Nichols 1986; Baker 1996, 2008; and Markman 2009 for discussion). That nominative is the spell-out of agreement on T remains uncontroversial. But given the distribution of object agreement, as described above, we might then ask what exactly accusative spells-out? In what follows, I assume that T and \(v\) contain different kinds of features—the former host the familiar uninterpretable \(\phi\)-features that are deleted by Agree; the latter (\(v\)) must contain some feature that distinguishes the accusative possibilities in (1–3).
There are various varieties of $v$ that have been proposed in the literature, which are summarized in (4):

   a. $v$-VOICE (argument-projecting)
   b. $v$-$\phi$ (abstract object agreement)
   c. $v$-TELIC/QUANT (event-denoting/ culmination)
   d. $v$-CAUSE (event-denoting/Initiation)

The full range of possibilities is schematized in (5):

Note first that $v$-VOICE, proposed by Kratzer 1996 (and akin to Chomsky’s 1995 $v$), is responsible both for the projection of an external argument and structural accusative assignment. This achieves a phrase-structural account for Burzio’s Generalization, but fails to account for Transitive Impersonals, where the transitivity property occurs in the absence of the argument projecting property (see also Bowers 2002). Transitive Impersonals (like (2) and (3b)) were stipulated in Lavine & Freidin 2002 to contain a $\phi$-complete $v$ (4b). The idea was that $v$ had to be capable of valuing accusative on the sole structurally-Case-marked NP, since Transitive Impersonals on this account have no other source
for structural Case. (See Markman 2004, 2009; Tsedryk 2004; Harves 2006; and Szucsich 2007 for critical discussion.) The principal problem for the Lavine & Freidin 2002 account was its inability to predict the ungrammaticality of accusative formed from the basic (monadic) unaccusatives above and the (b) sentences in (6–7).

(6) Russian
a. Transitive Impersonal
   Šarik protknulo bulavkoj.
   balloon\textsubscript{ACC} pierced\textsubscript{[–AGR]} pin\textsubscript{INST}
   ‘The balloon was pierced by a pin.’

b. Basic Unaccusative
   *Šarik lopnulo.
   balloon\textsubscript{ACC} burst\textsubscript{[–AGR]}

(7) Ukrainian
a. Transitive Impersonal
   Kulju bulo rozirvano cvjaxom.
   balloon\textsubscript{ACC} was pierced\textsubscript{[–AGR]} nail\textsubscript{INST}
   ‘The balloon was pierced by a nail.’

b. Basic Unaccusative
   *Kulju bulo trisnuto.
   balloon\textsubscript{ACC} was burst\textsubscript{[–AGR]}

If accusative can occur in the unaccusatives in (6–7a), then why not in (6–7b)? Monadic unaccusatives were stipulated to contain a defective $v$ in Lavine & Freidin 2002, but this property remained to be derived.\textsuperscript{2} Alternatively, if Slavic (like Indo-European more generally) lacks object agreement, then the question remains as to what is responsible for this pattern of accusative. In the case of dyadic unaccusatives, where accusative appears, what exactly does the non-Theme argument contribute to the accusative-Case-assigning potential of the predicate? I will argue that accusative appears only in the case of dyadic unaccusatives in which the

\textsuperscript{2} Note also that we are ignoring, for the moment, an obvious difference in the argument structure between the (a) and (b) examples in (6–7).
non-Theme argument activates an event-related $v$-head. Monadic unaccusatives, in contrast, are mono-eventive, i.e., they are either semelfactives or achievements, and, as such, assert only the transition from one state to another, and therefore do not engage an accusative probe in $v$.

2. Accusative is Sensitive to the Structure of the Event

On the idea that accusative valuation is sensitive to the structure of the event, we might ask, to which part of the event: the Initial or Terminal Bound?

2.1 Terminal Bound: Delimitation or Boundedness

The idea that an aspectual head ($v$-TELIC/QUANT) values accusative has been proposed for Finnish (Kiparsky 1998), Scottish Gaelic (Ramchand 1997), Hebrew (Borer 2005), Dutch (van Hout 2000, 2004), Icelandic (Svenonius 2002), Slavic (Pereltsvaig 2000, 2007; Babko-Malaya 2003; and Richardson 2007, a.o), and elsewhere (see also Borer 1994 and Kratzer 2004). The TELIC/QUANT head denotes delimitation, boundedness, or the property of quantity (i.e., that the event is non-cumulative and non-divisive). A quantized event is marked by internal divisions or change—it is not identical from moment to moment as the event unfolds, in contrast to homogeneous events, wherein all the parts of the event are uniform (Krifka 1998; Filip 2000, 2003; Borer 2005).

Compare (1b) and (2a), repeated below. Both are TELIC/QUANT predicates formed via lexical prefixation ($vy$- is a QUANTITY prefix denoting a telic event), but only (2a) is grammatical:

(1) b. Russian Unaccusative: *ACC
   *Utku vy-linjalo.
   duck$_{ACC}$ TELIC-molted$_{-AGR}$
   [Intended: ‘The duck molted.’]

(2) a. Russian Unaccusative: √ACC
   Travu vy-žglo solncem
   grass$_{ACC}$ TELIC-burned$_{-AGR}$ sun$_{INST}$
   ‘The grass was scorched by the sun.’
The Aspectual Theory of Accusative is given in the implication in (8) (which reads: “if the predicate is telic or quantized, then assign accusative to the object NP”):

(8) The Aspectual Theory of Accusative
\[ v\text{-TELIC/QUANT} \rightarrow \text{Object NP:ACC} \]
(see, especially, Kratzer 2004; Borer 1994, 2005; van Hout 2000, 2004; Richardson 2007).

On the Aspectual Theory of Accusative, where accusative is the morphosyntactic reflex of a quantity predicate, we would expect \( v\text{-TELIC/QUANT} \) to value accusative in (1b), just as it does in (2a). Indeed, this case of “causative unaccusatives” presents a special problem for the Aspectual Theory, particularly since unaccusatives are widely defined in aspectual terms, namely, as those intransitives that are telic (Borer 1994, 2005; Arad 1998; and van Hout 2000, 2004). The Dutch examples in (9–10), from van Hout (2004: 72), show that when atelic ‘walk’ and ‘sleep’ are telicized, they pattern with unaccusatives, as indicated by the auxiliary selection (where the ‘be’ auxiliary standardly occurs with unaccusatives).³

(9) Dutch: lopen ‘walk’
   a. Jan heeft urenlang gelopen. [atelic]
      Jan has hours-long walked
      ‘Jan walked for hours.’

   b. Jan is in vijf minuten naar huis gelopen. [telic]
      Jan is in five minutes to home walked
      ‘Jan walked home in five minutes.’

(10) Dutch: slapen ‘sleep’
   a. Winnie heeft dagenlang geslapen. [atelic]
      Winnie has days-long slept
      ‘Winnie slept for days.’

³ In (9b) lopen ‘walk’ is telic, as indicated by ‘in-X-time’ modification. In (10) the verb particle attached to slapen ‘sleep’ builds the quantity predicate.
b. Winnie was binnen vijf minuten in-geslapen [telic]
   Winnie was within five minutes TELIC-slept
   ‘Winnie fell asleep within five minutes.’

We observe then that telicity is linked in the literature both to un accusativity (9–10) and to structural accusative (8). It follows that the Aspectual Theory of Accusative fails precisely where it is best suited to apply: in the case of those verbal predicates which are defined in the exact aspectual terms (telic/quantity) that are argued to give rise to accusative. On the Aspectual Theory, accusative is stipulated to appear on the object NP of TELIC/QUANT predicates only so long as nominative is already discharged—a decidedly non-Aspectual notion (van Hout 2000: 259–260; Borer 2005: 80–81; Richardson 2007: 102–105). So $v$-TELIC/QUANT is responsible for accusative in two-place predicates only. That is, the generalization in (8) misses the entire class of monadic unaccusative verbs.

We now turn to the role of the Initial Bound in accusative valuation. On the theory advanced here, it will be argued that accusative is sensitive to the initiating event only, i.e., $v$-CAUSE.

2.2 Initial Bound: $v$-CAUSE
Recall that $[\text{TELIC/QUANT}]$ on $v$ is insufficient to value accusative in the case of monadic unaccusatives—prototypical $[\text{QUANTITY}]$ predicates, as in (11–12):

(11) Russian Basic Unaccusatives
a. Utka vy-linjala
   duck$\text{NOM,FEM}$ TELIC-molted$\text{FEM}$
   ‘The duck molted.’

b. *Utku vy-linjalino.
   duck$\text{ACC}$ TELIC-molted$\text{[–AGR]}$

(12) a. Reka $\text{za}$-merzla
    river$\text{NOM,FEM}$ TELIC-froze$\text{FEM}$
    ‘The river froze up.’
Now note that accusative appears on the object NP of dyadic unaccusatives so long as the non-Theme argument asserts a causative sub-event (i.e., identifies v-CAUSE). So, Transitive Impersonals are necessarily dyadic and causative (Lavine & Franks 2008; Lavine 2010a). Consider the appearance of accusative in (13):

(13) Russian Transitive Impersonal

Počemu Evropu zamelo, a Rossiju zamorozilo?
why Europe\textsubscript{ACC} covered\textsubscript{[-AGR]} and Russia\textsubscript{ACC} frozen\textsubscript{[-AGR]}

‘Why was Europe covered with snow and Russia frozen over?’

Note, on this analysis, that zamelo ‘covered with snow’ and zamorozilo ‘frozen over’ must then be causative dyadic verbs, even if we can’t name the natural force responsible for the events they describe. We know the verbs are dyadic, in any event, and that no valency-reducing operation has applied. This illustrates, now in a new way, the variable mapping of the non-Theme argument in two-place non-psych predicates: it remains unstated, but is interpreted both semantically (it is causative) and syntactically (as evidenced by the appearance of accusative). On a compositional analysis of verb meaning, the non-Theme argument is freely generated either “high” (Spec, v-VOICE) or “low” (complement to V, as a non-volitional Causer, which identifies non-argument projecting v-CAUSE) (Travis 2005; Folli & Harley 2005), as indicated in the examples in (14–15):

(14) Russian Variable Behavior: \textit{vy-žec’} ‘burn’

Agentive Transitive (v-VOICE)

a. Mal’čik \textit{vyžeg} na grudi obraz Putina.

\text{boy}_{\text{NOM,MASC}} \text{burned}_{\text{MASC}} \text{on chest} \text{image}_{\text{ACC}} \text{of-Putin}

‘The boy branded an image of Putin on his chest.’

Transitive Impersonal (v-CAUSE)

b. Travu \textit{vyžglo} solncem.

\text{grass}_{\text{ACC}} \text{burned}_{\text{[-AGR]}} \text{sun}_{\text{INST}}

‘The grass was scorched by the sun.’
(15) Ukrainian Variable Behavior: *s-palyty* 'burn'

Agentive Transitive (*v*-VOICE)

a. Vorohy spalyly jixnju xatu.
   
   enemies_{NOM,PL} burned-down_{PL} their house_{ACC}
   
   ‘Enemies burned down their house.’

Transitive Impersonal (*v*-CAUSE)

b. Xatu bulo spaleno blyskavkoju.
   
   house_{ACC} was burned-down_{[AGR]} lightning_{INST}
   
   ‘The house was burned down by (a strike of) lightning.’

To summarize, the Aspectual Theory of Accusative fails to predict the alternation between the absence of accusative in the case of monadic, though telic, unaccusatives and the presence of accusative in the case of dyadic unaccusatives with “low causation”. These facts follow straightforwardly from an account of accusative which postulates an independently functioning causative head that probes accusative, regardless of the properties of *VOICE*.

The idea that *CAUSE* is a sufficient condition for accusative is formalized in the implication in (16) (which reads: “if *v*-CAUSE is active, then assign accusative to the object NP”). This is also illustrated in the tree in (17), in which *v*-CAUSE is shown to operate independently as an accusative probe, while *v*-TELIC/QUANT, on its own, it not.

(16) *v*-CAUSE → Object NP:ACC

(17)  

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      ---------
     /       |
   /       ----
|         |
(FA)       v-VOICE'  
|             |
/               |
v-VOICE         v-CAUSE'  
|               |
/             |
v-CAUSE     v-TELIC/QUANT'  
|            |
/        |
v-TELIC/QUANT     VP  
|        |
\       |
\     |
\   |
\ |
ACC
```
In other words, accusative means causation, either volitional (v-VOICE) or non-volitional/non-intentional (v-CAUSE), so long as a non-Theme argument initiates a change of state on the Theme. Note, additionally, as a FASL reviewer remarks, that v-CAUSE, as a sufficient condition for the appearance of accusative, does not rule out the agreeing counterpart of Transitive Impersonals. Compare the “personal” counterpart to (2a): solne:NOM.NEUT vyžglo:NEUT travu:ACC ‘the sun scorched the grass’. In either case, accusative is linked to the CAUSE-head, regardless of whether the predicate shows subject agreement and attendant nominative. Note that the focus on Transitive Impersonals, in addition to ruling out VOICE as a source for accusative, likewise rules out a “Nominative First” condition on accusative (such as that developed in Woolford 2003).

3. A Constructionist Approach to Variable Behavior

Recall that on the constructionist view, it is not the lexical semantics of the verb that determines syntax, but the functional structure in which the root verb is inserted, as in (18):

(18) vP
    \[ v \]
    \[ VP \]
    \[ √V \]

4 The same reviewer considers why trava ‘grass’ appears in the nominative, rather than accusative, in the passive-participial expression in (i), since solnem ‘sun:INST’ is no less causative here than in the Transitive Impersonal:

(i) Trava byla vyžžena solncem.
    GrassNOM.FEM was scorchedFEM sun:INST
    ‘The grass was scorched by the sun.’

Note that the proposal outlined in this paper does not assert that CAUSE is the sole source of case, but rather a sufficient source for accusative, in the absence of other active case-assigning heads. Nominative in (i) is assigned by agreement with Tense. In the absence of agreeing Tense, accusative is available in the Transitive Impersonal (2b) or, indeed, in passives, as in the Ukrainian construction. That agreeing Tense “trumps” the accusative feature in CAUSE is a pervasive phenomenon which is not pursued further here. One might also wonder why Russian does not allow an impersonal passive plus accusative. This, I take to be a purely lexical matter—Russian lacks a dedicated marker of non-agreement in its passive paradigm. See Lavine 2005 for further discussion.
The idea is that $v$ is responsible for the assignment of event-related roles. Folli & Harley (2005: 99) observe: “... we can hypothesize construction of different event structures on top of the single verbal entry.” This is precisely what is responsible for the phenomenon of variable behavior, such as that between “high” and “low” causation ($v$-VOICE, which is argument projecting; and $v$-CAUSE, which is not—see (14–15)).

3.1 *Psych Verbs*

Accusative with Object Experiencer verbs is likewise ruled out with Transitive Impersonals; here only the “low” reading is possible on the non-Experiencer argument, in this case, the Stimulus or Target of Emotion (Pesetsky 1995), which is unable to initiate the change of state necessary for accusative (Lavine 2010b). Both the ungrammatical Impersonal Psych Predicate in (19) and the grammatical Transitive Impersonal in (20) are dyadic unaccusatives, but only (20) identifies a causative sub-event.

(19) Russian Impersonal Object Experiencer Predicate

*M* Mal’čika napugalo igruškoj.

\begin{verbatim}
boyACC frightened[–AGR] toyINST
\end{verbatim}  
[Intended: ‘The child got frightened at the toy.’] [Tsedryk 2004:426]

(20) Russian Transitive Impersonal

Mal’čika udarilo tokom.

\begin{verbatim}
boyACC struck[–AGR] electrical-currentINST
\end{verbatim}  
‘The boy got an electrical shock.’

Ukrainian (21–22) show the same contrast:

(21) Ukrainian Impersonal Object Experiencer Predicate

*M* Pasažyriv bulo rozdratovano novynoju.

\begin{verbatim}
passengersACC was annoyed[–AGR] newsINST
\end{verbatim}  
[Intended: ‘Passengers were annoyed at the news.’]

(22) Ukrainian Transitive Impersonal

Čerez zahrozu vybuxu bulo zatrymano pojizd.

due-to threat of-bomb was delayed[–AGR] train:ACC

‘A train was delayed due to a bomb threat.’
Note that the “causer” reading on the Stimulus argument is possible only on the subject of the personal agreeing form, much like English “the toy frightened the boy” (see also Dowty 1991: 579–581).

3.2 Ukrainian Eventive vs. Stative Participial Predicates

In one Ukrainian alternation—the Transitive Impersonal vs. the agreeing participial predicate—the availability of accusative is reflected on the predicate-final morphology. Consider (23a–b):

(23) Ukrainian
  Transitive Impersonal
  a. Derevo zrubano.
     treeACC cut-down_[–AGR]
     ‘The tree was felled.’
  Agreeing Participial Predicate
  b. Derevo zrubane.
     treeNOM.NEUT.SG cut-downNEUT.SG
     ‘The tree is cut down.’

The sentence in (23b) asserts only the state of the tree, not the event that brought about this state. The Transitive Impersonal in (23a) asserts the presence of an unidentified argument with CAUSE-to-V semantics, thus accounting for the presence of v-CAUSE and the accusative marking on the Theme. Only (23a) is appropriate when followed by ce stalošja v ponedilok ‘this happened on Monday,’ where the pronoun ce ‘this’ refers to the event. In (23b) there is no such event for ce to identify.

The connection between causation and accusative is further revealed in the Ukrainian examples in (24–25) (from Shevelov 1963: 142):

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5 An anonymous reviewer points out that for certain Experiencer verbs, an internal ot ‘from’ + GEN PP occurs with accusative in the impersonal form where the bare instrumental fails (see esp. Szucsich 2007 for discussion):

(i) Ivana vzbesilo ot ètix slov / *ètimi slovami.

IvanAACC enraged_[–AGR] from these wordsGEN these wordsINST

I take this to mean that the ot + GEN PP, for those psych verbs that pattern with it, activates v-CAUSE. That such predicates are causative, while Experiencer–Stimulus predicates are not, indicates that the ot + GEN Source argument functions more like a Natural Force than a Stationary Theme (Stimulus).
(24) Osnovne značenja slova zoseredženo v koreni. [Intended: ‘The basic meaning of the word is concentrated in its root.’]

(25) Našu hazetu tisno zvjazano z čytačamy. [Intended: ‘Our newspaper is closely connected with its readers.’]

The examples in (24–25) are degraded because there is no person or natural force (CAUSE) that can concentrate the meaning of a word in its root or physically connect a newspaper to its readers. Compare (24–25) with their nominative/agreeing counterparts in (26–27):

(26) Osnovne značenja slova zoseredžene v koreni. [Intended: ‘The basic meaning of the word is concentrated in its root.’]

(27) Naša hazeta tisno zvjazana z čytačamy. [Intended: ‘Our newspaper is closely connected with its readers.’]

3.3 Selectional Restrictions on v

To summarize, varieties of v distinguish between an Agent—an intentional actor, merged as the Spec, v-VOICE—and an inanimate force capable of initiating a change of state, identified with v-CAUSE. The internal argument that identifies v-CAUSE may be said to “transfer” a semantic feature to an event-related head (such as CAUSE or TELIC/QUANT), which may be understood as a semantic correlate to syntactic AGREE (see Svenonius 2002 and Ramchand 2008). That is, the event-related head has no value until it is assigned one by an argument of the verbal predicate (see also Borer 2005).

In a theory in which there are (at least) two different varieties of v, we expect selectional restrictions on which variety of v is compatible with a certain mapping of arguments. Observe in (28) that CAUSE introduces a change of state initiated by a non-intentional participant, while VOICE introduces a genuine external argument:
(28) Russian
Agentive Transitive (v-VOICE)
   a. Oxotnik        ubil        olenja.
      hunterNOM.MASC.SG  killedMASC.SG  deerACC
      ‘A hunter killed a deer.’

Transitive Impersonal (v-CAUSE)
   b. # Olenja   ubilo      oxotnikom.
      deerACC  killed[–AGR]  hunterINST
   c. Olenja   ubilo      (sbilo)    mašinoj.
      deerACC  killed[–AGR]  (hit[–AGR])  carINST
      ‘A deer was killed (hit) by a car.’

   (v-VOICE)
   d. # Mašina      sbila    olenja.
      carNOM.FEM.SG  hitFEM.SG  deerACC

In (28a), nominative oxotnik ‘hunter’ is an intentional subject of v-VOICE.
The example in (28b) inappropriately asserts that a hunter caused the killing of the deer without intention or sentient participation (v-CAUSE).
This scenario is compatible, for example, with the unlikely event of a hunter falling from the sky and crushing the deer. The example in (28c) is a standard Transitive Impersonal: an internal argument denoting a lack of intention appropriately identifies v-CAUSE. Nominative mašina ‘car’ in (28d), as an external subject of v-VOICE, inappropriately asserts intention on the part of a non-sentient vehicle.

The projection of arguments from the lexicon is thus determined syntactically in (28), with respect to how the causing event is construed, demonstrating different lexical entries and entailments for v (following Folli & Harley 2005).

4. Conclusion: Varieties of v and their Clustering

We have observed that v-φ is uninformative with respect to accusative possibilities and verb alternations—there is no evidence, even indirect, which suggests a role for abstract object agreement. As for the remaining varieties of v reviewed here, we have seen that v-CAUSE and v-
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TELIC/QUANT cluster together, in the absence of v-VOICE, as in the case of Transitive Impersonals. One important question to consider is whether v-CAUSE must necessarily bundle with v-TELIC/QUANT. Note first that in the absence of v-CAUSE, as in the case of monadic unaccusatives, v-TELIC/QUANT fails to occur as an accusative probe. The question, then, is whether v-CAUSE occurs as an accusative probe in the absence of v-TELIC/QUANT. Observe that the Transitive Impersonals in (29–30) show structural accusative in the absence of any telicizing prefix or quantity reading:

(29) Russian: v-CAUSE, v-TELIC/QUANT
    Počemu kogda plačes’, [ ot slez žžet glaza]?
    why when you-cry from tears burn [–AGR] eyesACC
    ‘Why is it that when you cry, your eyes burn from the tears?’

(30) Russian: v-CAUSE, v-TELIC/QUANT
     at her legs ACC cramp [–AGR] from lack calcium
    ‘Her legs cramp from a lack of calcium.’

The burning and cramping events in (29–30) are homogenous: every sub-interval of the event denotes the same burning and cramping—there are no event divisions. So v-CAUSE appears to value accusative in the absence of a quantity interpretation; more generally, the absence of v-CAUSE is sufficient to rule out accusative in the case of quantity monadic unaccusatives, psych verbs, and stative participial predicates (in Ukrainian), thus arguing in favor of its independent status.

References


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