Chapter 1: Introduction

…
who pays any attention
to the syntax of things
will never wholly kiss you;
   -- e. e. cummings

1.0 Empirical Scope

This study analyzes new uses of old morphemes. The loss of a particular paradigm in the
history of a language does not obligatorily entail the corresponding loss of all of the
paradigm’s exponents. The presence of “stranded,” non-paradigmatic morphology
provides a rich opportunity for reanalysis, as this morphological material comes to
project novel syntactic structures. This study focuses on the new syntactic properties that
such leftover morphemes exhibit. To the extent that genuine explanations are provided,
this work lends empirical support to the generative hypothesis that synchronic variation
across languages can be characterized in the same way as diachronic change within a
single language.

The particular case that I will be concerned with is the old NEUT.SG inflectional
morpheme (/-o/) of the passive-participial paradigm in Polish, Ukrainian, North Russian,
and Lithuanian. The central claim is that this morpheme has been reanalyzed to function
in a purely derivational capacity to mark nonagreeing predicates, such as those in (1):

(1) -no/-to
   a. Polish
      Pszenicę siano jesienią.
      wheat:ACC sowed:[-AGR] in-fall
      ‘They sowed wheat in the fall.’ [adapted from Dziwirek 1994:178]

   b. Ukrainian
      Velyku robotu provedeno.
      great work:ACC carried-out:[-AGR]
      ‘An important job has been carried out.’ [Wieczorek 1987:553]
c. North Russian

У лисиці унесено куро́чку.

‘A fox has carried off a chicken.’ [Kuz’mina & Nemčenko 1971:27]

d. Lithuanian

Gal Jonuko tie grybai atnešta.

‘Maybe Jonukas brought these mushrooms.’ [Ambrazas et al. 1997:281]

These nonagreeing predicates are referred to as -no/-to since present-day nonagreeing /-o/ combines with the passive-participial stems /-n-/ and /-t-/.1 Note that despite certain surface similarities, we will see that the underlying syntax associated with this morpheme varies considerably. That is, /-no/-to/ has not simply been borrowed from one closely-related, contiguous language into another. The goal of this work is to characterize this variation in a way that will make correct, empirically-testable predictions for each of the predicate-types in (1). As we proceed, we will also consider the syntactic effects of nonagreement, more generally. The development of -no/-to in Polish, Ukrainian, North Russian, and Lithuanian provides a fertile ground for testing the basic generative hypothesis that seemingly minor differences in a morpheme’s lexical entry can lead to profound linguistic variation.

Upon initial examination of the data in (1), it is clear that we are dealing with at least two different constructions: (i) the Polish and Ukrainian case, in which the underlying object appears in the ACC; and (ii) the North Russian and Lithuanian case, in which the underlying object appears in the NOM. However, in the more detailed description of the examples in (1), given in (2-3), it is apparent that there is significant surface variation.

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1 In modern Lithuanian, etymological */-o/ is realized as /-a/ and combines with passive-participial /-t-/ and /-m-/.
both within Polish and Ukrainian, as well as within North Russian and Lithuanian, namely, with respect to the seemingly unrelated by-phrase and auxiliary facts.

(2) -no/-to
a. Polish
Pszenicę (* było) siano (* przez rolników) jesienią.
wheat:ACC AUX:PAST sowed:[-AGR] by farmers:ACC in-fall
‘They always sowed wheat in the fall.’

b. Ukrainian
Velyku robotu ( bulo) provedeno urjadnykom
great work:ACC AUX:PAST carried-out:[-AGR] clerk:INST
‘An important job was carried out by the clerk.’

(3) a. North Russian
U lisicy ( bylo) uneseno kuročka.
at fox:GEN AUX:PAST carried-off:[-AGR] chicken:NOM.FEM
‘A fox has carried off a chicken.’ [Kuz’mina & Nemčenko 1971:27]

b. Lithuanian
Gal Jonuko (* buvo) tie grybai atnešta.
maybe Jonukas:GEN AUX:PAST these mushrooms:NOM.PL brought:[-AGR]
‘Maybe Jonukas brought these mushrooms.’ [Ambrazas et al. 1997:281]

Note first that under the impersonal passive analysis assumed for these predicates in the crosslinguistic passivization literature (see, e.g., Timberlake 1982, Baker 1988, and Baker, Johnson & Roberts 1989), the occurrence of the ACC object in the Polish and Ukrainian examples in (1a-b/2a-b) is exceptional. That is, Polish and Ukrainian, in some sense, escape ACC “case absorption.” In chapter 3, I will show that only the Ukrainian example in (1b) is truly passive. Thus, we will see that it is only Ukrainian -no/-to that challenges Burzio’s Generalization (ACC is assigned in the absence of a thematic, external argument).

In contrast to Ukrainian, Polish -no/-to occurs neither with a by-phrase, nor a tense-marking auxiliary. Furthermore, Polish -no/-to has an obligatory, thematic, external pro-arb argument, indicated in the English gloss in (1a) by the subject they. In chapter 3, it
will be argued that Polish /-no/-to/ is interpreted as the predicate’s formal tense marker; that is, /-no/-to/ in Polish is the auxiliary. The status of this morpheme as a head in the inflection system immediately explains the fully-thematic status of the predicate’s external argument (i.e., pro-arb) and the corresponding lack of a passive by-phrase: there is no passive-participial morphology. Polish and Ukrainian -no/-to are dealt with in chapter 3.

Turning to the -no/-to constructions in North Russian and Lithuanian in (1c-d/3a-b), we note that on the surface these predicates appear to occur with a by-phrase (which is u ‘at’ + GEN in North Russian and bare GEN in Lithuanian), following, at least superficially, the Ukrainian pattern. Note, however, that these by-phrases appear in the non-canonical, preverbal position. North Russian and Lithuanian -no/-to also occur with NOM NPs in a similarly “out of place,” postverbal position. In chapter 4, considerable evidence will be presented to support the claim that -no/-to in North Russian and Lithuanian is neither impersonal nor passive, but rather personal and basic, that is, unaltered by voice-changing morphology (see their English glosses). The unusual word order associated with the North Russian and Lithuanian /-no/-to/ morpheme will be shown to follow from the development of morphological ergativity in these languages. That is, it will be proposed that the /-no/-to/ morpheme triggers an ergative split, marking the perfect tense in North Russian and the evidential mood in Lithuanian. Note further that North Russian -no/-to, like its Ukrainian counterpart, optionally occurs with an overt auxiliary. Use of a tense-marking auxiliary in Lithuanian -no/-to is generally degraded (especially under the “evidential” semantics of this construction, indicated in the English gloss for (1d)). The complementary distribution of the tense-marking auxiliary and this evidential morpheme
in Lithuanian will be taken as evidence that the latter is interpreted (in a sense to be made more specific) in the Tense system, like its Polish counterpart.

A central goal of this study is to provide a principled explanation for these facts, in contrast, for example, to taxonomic description (e.g., passive vs. non-passive) or ad hoc stipulation (e.g., a case-absorption parameter). Following recent work in minimalist syntax (Chomsky 1995a), we will pursue the idea that surface syntactic variation reduces to differences in the narrow part of the lexicon that provides instructions to functional projections. Indeed, the fact that such differences in -no/-to predicates cannot be stated without reference to the functional domain of the clause is taken to constitute evidence for the presence of such functional projections. The radically different morphosyntactic properties that we see in (1-3) will emerge as the result of seemingly minor differences in the categorial status of the /-no/-to/ morpheme itself, and the licensing and selectional requirements that this morpheme imposes on the derivation. It will be shown that when certain questions concerning the properties of Polish, Ukrainian, North Russian, and Lithuanian -no/-to constructions are properly formulated, it can be demonstrated that radically different syntactic structures emerge that otherwise would have gone unnoticed. On the basis of this kind of work, we will see that explanatory adequacy is greatly enhanced by referring to more fundamental differences. Variation in case, by-phrase and auxiliary facts, word order, and a variety of other surface phenomena subsequently reduces to entirely predictable epiphenomenal effects.

It will be argued that nonagreeing predicates in Slavic share the following property: the T(ense) projection is impoverished with respect to its featural composition. Case and AGR, which, as uninterpretable features, are generally taken to drive overt movement of
NPs into T’s specifier (see section 1.2 below), are absent from the numeration of nonagreeing predicates and, thus, fail to be projected on T. This is under the standard assumption that the formal features associated with the functional domain of the clause correspond to the elements in the numeration that need to be formally licensed. Note that the subject positional constraint, known as the Extended Projection Principle (EPP), is left as T’s sole uninterpretable feature. This study, thus, crucially examines those instances in which the EPP and NOM case do not overlap (i.e., where the EPP is not redundant with case).

Compare, for example, the agreeing Polish canonical passive in (4) with its nonagreeing -no/-to counterpart in (5):

(4) Polish: Canonical Passive
Ta książka była czytana przez Janka.
‘This book was read by Janek.’

(5) Polish: -no/-to
Tę książkę zawsze czytano z przyjemnością.
this book:ACC always read:[-AGR]with pleasure
‘They always read this book with pleasure.’ [Dziwirek 1994:191]

In (4), the underlying object appears in subject position ([Spec, TP]), where it redundantly checks NOM case, subject-predicate agreement, and T’s EPP feature. Thus, under such circumstances, T is fully-specified with respect to its feature inventory.

According to earlier GB assumptions, dislocation of the underlying object was believed to be motivated by some version of the Case Filter (since passive-participial morphology was believed to absorb the object’s default ACC case). Note, however, that the example in (4) does not actually provide any clear evidence for one single trigger of the object’s displacement. In fact, the case-motivation hypothesis is particularly mysterious given
examples such as (5), in which the underlying object retains its ACC case. By hypothesis, the movement in both (4-5) could be EPP-triggered, with NOM case and subject-predicate agreement in (4) checked as “free riders” (see, e.g., Marantz 1991). The example in (5) shows that this alternative hypothesis is, at least, possible, although the definite description of the object NP confounds a true explanation for this movement with a plausible discourse motivation.

We will see in chapter 3 that the preverbal position in Polish -no/-to is, indeed, an A-bar position, associated with presupposed, definite material. Ukrainian -no/-to, in contrast, allows indefinite, non-D(iscourse)-linked objects to appear preverbally; in fact, it will be argued that such movement is forced by the EPP. Note how the cognate examples in Polish and Ukrainian minimally differ in (6-7) with respect to word order under neutral discourse:

(6) Polish -no/-to
a. Wsadzono cudzoziemca do więzienia.
   placed:-NO foreigner:ACC to prison
   ‘They put a foreigner in prison.’

b. Znaleziono niemowlę w koszu.
   found:-NO baby:ACC in basket
   ‘They found a baby in a basket.’

(7) Ukrainian -no/-to
a. Inozemca bulo posadzono do v’jaznyci.
   foreigner:ACC was placed:-NO to prison
   ‘A foreigner was put in prison.’

b. Nemovlja bulo znajdreno u košyku.
   baby:ACC was found:-NO in basket
   ‘A baby was found in a basket.’

\[2\] Discourse-neutral word order is defined throughout the dissertation as a felicitous response to an out-of-the-blue question, such as *what happened?*
An immediate problem, taken up in chapter 3, is how to account for EPP-satisfaction by raising of an internal argument in Ukrainian (7), versus the lack of such movement in Polish (6)? Does Polish simply lack the EPP, and would anything interesting follow from such a parameterization of the EPP-feature? In the discussion of Polish and Ukrainian -no/-to in chapter 3, a principled analysis is provided for this word-order difference that unifies the facts in (6-7) with the seemingly unrelated by-phrase and auxiliary facts mentioned earlier. For now, let us note that it is precisely the Ukrainian case in (7) that teases apart the EPP, not only from case and subject-predicate agreement, but, in contrast to the Polish example in (5), from discourse interpretation, as well. The preverbal ACC-marked object in Ukrainian -no/-to is optionally interpreted as an indefinite; (7a-b) felicitously respond to out-of-the-blue questions that assume no previous discourse.

In chapter 2, we will see that the same facts hold for nonagreeing, impersonal predicates in Contemporary Standard Russian, as well. That is, in the examples in (8), NOM case, agreement, and discourse interpretation are likewise factored out as possible triggers for movement of the ACC object, leaving, again, by hypothesis, T’s subject-positional constraint (the EPP) as the sole trigger:

(8) Russian: Impersonal (Ditransitive Unaccusative)
   a. Rabočego ubilo oskolkom plity.
      worker:ACC killed:[-AGR] shard:INST of-concrete-slab
      ‘A worker was killed by a shard of concrete slab.’
      [Moskovskij komsomolec 9-10-99]
   b. Ženščinu zadavilo “kovrom-samoletom“ v parke Gor’kogo.
      woman:ACC crushed:[-AGR] carpet airplane:INST in park of-Gorky
      ‘A woman was crushed by the flying carpet [attraction] in Gorky Park.’
      [Moskovskij komsomolec 9-13-99]

The word order given in (8) is the only felicitous response to a question eliciting wide focus. That is, note the surprising fact that focus projection to the entire clause is made
possible by movement of the structurally-case-marked direct internal argument. Under standard instances of scrambling, such movement is generally taken to disrupt the projection of focus. 

Data on the crosslinguistic properties of expletive-associate chains are introduced in chapter 2 in order to determine whether the nonagreeing predicates in (8), as well as the Ukrainian examples in (7), involve a null form of expletive-Merge. Under the assumption that insertion of an expletive in such cases would be EPP-motivated, the overt raising of the direct internal argument in (7-8) would appear to be redundant with the expletive and, thus, ruled out on independent considerations of economy, which is clearly not the case. It will be argued that the EPP in such examples is satisfied by overt lexical material; the EPP-motivation for the insertion of null expletives is, thus, ruled out. Further evidence against the presence of null expletives in (7-8) is provided on the basis of the existential quantificational force that is associated with such expletives in languages in which they appear overtly. While the examples in (7-8) are, indeed, existentially closed, they need not be. It will be shown that the direct object can receive either a definite or generic interpretation. In such cases, the presence of a null expletive with existential quantificational force would be left with nothing to quantify over, resulting in a violation of the independent ban on vacuous quantification. To summarize, it will be argued that the structures in (7-8) do not involve the insertion of an EPP-satisfying null expletive. In chapter 3, it will be argued that the EPP in the Polish examples in (6) is satisfied differently, namely, by a fully-thematic, covert (pro-arb) subject.

Note that Babby (1989, 1994a) argues on independent grounds against the presence of a null expletive in structures such as (7-8).
The structures in (7-8) are ACC-case-assigning unaccusatives: they have one or two internal arguments and, crucially, no external one. The absence of an external argument is the result either of its dethematization, as in the passives in (7), or its non-selection, as in the impersonals in (8). On the surface, we are left with Burzio-style movement without Burzio-style motivation. Burzio’s Generalization (Burzio 1986) states (informally) that ACC cannot be assigned internally if a theta role is not assigned externally. In those instances in which a predicate fails to assign as external theta role, the direct internal argument is, thus, forced to move to subject position to receive case. Recall that in (7-8), we have movement of objects that are already case-marked. In chapters 2-3, Burzio’s Generalization is essentially supported (movement to subject in the absence of a thematic subject is, indeed, instantiated), though its underlying motivation (i.e., case) is challenged.

On the basis of -no/-to constructions in Polish, Ukrainian, North Russian, and Lithuanian, as well as impersonal predicates in Contemporary Standard Russian, the following questions will be addressed in considerable detail: Does the EPP hold in the absence of both an agreeing subject and an expletive pronoun? (chapters 2-3); Does the EPP in Slavic necessarily involve definiteness and, thus, A-bar movement? (chapters 2-3); Does the lack of an agreeing subject entail the lack of a genuine external argument? (chapter 4); Does the presence of a NOM NP entail subject-predicate agreement? (chapter 4). The answers to these questions provide insight into the set of possible universal syntactic primitives (or features). As I have alluded to repeatedly in this section, this dissertation makes the strong argument for EPP in Slavic. The advantage of examining nonagreeing predicates is that we can factor out considerable redundancy in the domain
in which the EPP is held to apply. The specific conclusions that are reached for Slavic
should have considerable implications for other morphologically-rich languages
containing constructions in which the highest thematic argument is neither external nor
NOM. The question of the EPP is posed particularly sharply for those languages in which
“EPP-saving” expletive pronouns are not available as a lexical (or syntactic) resource.

1.1 Basic Theoretical Assumptions

This dissertation is written for generative linguists interested in Slavic, nonagreeing
predicates, or, more specifically, how the EPP applies in such predicates. This work
should also be of interest to specialists in the Slavic languages who are interested in
generative linguistics. The minimalist-style questions that I pose may be considered the
“right questions” to the extent that new phenomena and more genuine explanations
emerge that would otherwise have been overlooked. A central concern of generative
syntax, for example, is the dislocational property of human language. A basic idea from
much earlier work in generative syntax is that lexical items are often pronounced not
where they are interpreted. The various economy constraints of minimalism force an
explicit characterization of this fact; that is, assuming the strongest version of economy,
there should be no movement at all (strictly speaking, not even the basic concatenation of
items from the lexicon); so when formal syntactic movement persists in applying, the
exact trigger that “overrides” absolute economy needs to be properly identified and
incorporated, in some sense, into the grammar.

In what follows in this subsection, I will provide an overview of the relevant aspects
of recent theory that will be made use of in subsequent chapters. It will be assumed that
the reader is familiar with basic minimalist concerns and the standard minimalist machinery. Sections 1.1.1-1.1.3 below are, thus, designed to show where my use of the framework deviates from standard assumptions, rather than providing an exhaustive discussion of the assumptions themselves.

1.1.1 Merge, Move, and [+/- Interpretability]

The most basic syntactic operation is Merge. Merge concatenates two items from the lexicon and projects the label of one of them, the head. Let us assume that Merge is motivated by a head’s need to discharge its theta roles. Move (or “re-Merge”) may subsequently apply just in case the initial instances of Merge leave behind features that are not interpretable at one of the two (not necessarily linguistic) interfaces, PF (sound) and LF (meaning). Uninterpretable features are uninterpretable precisely at one of the two interfaces. In the functional domain of the phrase marker (e.g., vP, TP, and CP), they are checked (and eliminated) by virtue of entering into a relation with lexical material bearing a matching feature. The need to establish such a checking configuration is believed to be the actual trigger for movement. So movement is motivated by the requirement that uninterpretable features be eliminated.

Note that, by hypothesis, it is not the moved element itself that enters into a checking relation with a functional head, but rather the matching feature that the moved element contains. As a result, it has been proposed that in the case of “weak” features, which are stipulated as interpretable at PF, only the matching features move, covertly, after Spell-Out (Chomsky 1994). Under such an analysis, in the case of “strong” features, which are indeed uninterpretable at the PF interface, the appropriate feature moves pre-Spell-Out, and “pied-pipes” the lexical material with which it is associated. It has been noted by
many that feature-strength does not appear to follow from anything in the grammar and, consequently, has the stipulative feel of a mere analytical convenience. That is, stipulation of feature strength is simply a way to express in formal terms those instances in which Procrastinate, the constraint that favors covert movement, is systematically violated. In an attempt to provide a more restrictive theory, the present work appeals neither to feature strength nor to covert feature-checking. Instead, it is assumed that all features are strong and, thus, must be checked as soon as they enter the derivation. This has the effect of removing the strict complementarity assumed in Chomsky (1993, 1994) between theta-assignment and feature-checking. Features are assumed to be checked, if possible, at Merge. Move applies in those instances when Merge does not provide a licit checking configuration (defined by some sense of locality) for an uninterpretable feature.

The uninterpretable features include the D-feature of T (responsible for EPP-effects), as well as the structural case features of T (NOM) and v (ACC), and the subject-predicate agreement features of the former (assuming the lack of object agreement in Slavic). As mentioned earlier, the feature inventory of functional heads can be impoverished if particular features (such as NOM case, for example) are absent from the numeration. In the case of nonagreeing predicates, T contains only a D-feature.

1.1.2 The EPP as a Selectional Feature

Recent work has questioned whether the D-feature of T is a formal, morpholexical feature in the same way that case and agreement are. Chomsky (1998) abandons the D-

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4 We will not be concerned with T’s Tense feature. Let us note merely that Slavic does not have V-T movement along the well-known French pattern (see Bailyn 1995). On a way to account for verb-movement facts without resorting to feature strength, see Bobaljik & Thráinsson 1998.

5 The [+Interpretable] features are the categorial features of lexical items (D, V, etc...) and the agreement features of nominals.
feature analysis of the EPP and proposes, instead, that each of the “core functional projections” (vP, TP, and CP) has its own EPP-feature as a selectional property of the functional head. Under Chomsky’s proposal, T selects a filled specifier in the same way that a lexical head may subcategorize for a complement. In chapter 2 (section 2.1.4), I suggest that Chomsky’s reassessment of the (source of the) EPP revives the essence of earlier proposals by Rothstein (1983, 1984). In the latter’s view, the clausal subject position is an open function that requires syntactic saturation (in the same way that a head’s arguments need to be saturated lexically). Note that under either proposal (D-feature checking or selection), the EPP in Slavic nonagreeing predicates crucially fails to overlap with case, agreement, and discourse function. This will be taken to provide straightforward evidence for some notion of the EPP as part of the universal inventory of uninterpretable features, capable of driving overt syntactic movement.

1.1.3 Economy and Phrase Structure

Formal syntactic movement is, thus, driven by the need to eliminate an uninterpretable feature in the functional domain of the phrase marker. Checking theory predicts that in the absence of such an uninterpretable feature, movement should not occur. It follows that each instance of Merge (or Move) satisfies the basic economy condition known as Last Resort, which bans all unnecessary movements. The following formulation of Last Resort is from Bobaljik (1995):

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6 Chomsky (1998) notes, however, that only the EPP-feature of T is obligatorily instantiated; v’s EPP-feature (related to object-shift) and C’s EPP-feature (related to wh-movement) apply only optionally in some languages, and fail to apply completely in others (in the overt syntax). In this sense, the EPP-feature of T is still somehow privileged.

7 Of course, I am glossing over the problem of scrambling and its interaction with feature-checking. See chapter 2, section 2.3.1, and the sources cited there, for discussion.
A syntactic operation (Merge/Move) involving two elements ($\alpha, \beta$) is licit only if it satisfies some property [i.e., theta role or formal feature] of either $\alpha$ or $\beta$ (or both).

Move is, thus, a Last Resort operation. If there were no EPP-feature in the Tense projection of the Russian impersonals in (8), for example, Last Resort would predict a V-initial structure; that is, there would be no principled motivation for the direct internal argument to move out of the VP under neutral discourse. I will show that the same analysis holds for the Ukrainian -no/-to examples in (7).

Last Resort interacts with the other main economy condition, Full Interpretation (first introduced in Chomsky 1986), which requires that all features involved in the derivation be “legible” at the interfaces. It is precisely to avoid a Full Interpretation violation that feature-containing phrases move to a position in which uninterpretable features can be checked and eliminated (see discussion in Epstein & Hornstein 1999). Chomsky’s (1993) formulation of Full Interpretation is given in (10):

(10) Full Interpretation (Chomsky 1995a:130)
Derivations contain no superfluous elements.

Here, by “superfluous elements,” Chomsky refers to syntactic objects that fail to receive an interpretation at one of the interfaces (such as structural case features). Full Interpretation and Last Resort have the effect of infusing research in minimalist-style syntax with a particular methodological rigor. The goal now is to motivate all instances of movement in terms of a universal set of syntactic primitives, namely, the morpholexical features of lexical items or the corresponding features of functional heads that these lexical items impose on the derivation. Now, a central concern of current theory is to establish the precise universal inventory of formal syntactic features and,
then, to determine which of these features are uninterpretable at one of the interfaces, thus, by hypothesis, accounting for all instances of formal syntactic movement.

It has been argued in much previous work that morpholexical feature-checking in Slavic takes place either covertly or not at all; the sole source of displacement in Slavic is argued, instead, to reduce to the establishment of appropriate focus structures (see, for example, Junghanns 1997 and Sekerina 1997). Indeed, upon a finer-grained analysis of discourse-motivated movement, this may turn out to be the case. In the present work, the alternative proposal is pursued. By focusing on clauses with discourse-neutral word order, a plausible case of purely formal, non-redundant, EPP-motivated movement is identified (see also Babyonyshev 1996 and Bailyn 1999). This proposal presents a serious challenge to the view that discourse-motivated scrambling exhausts all (non-\( wh \)) instances of displacement in Slavic. This view also brings work in Slavic in line with theoretically-oriented research on other (non-VSO) languages.

The last point on economy that requires special attention is the question of phrase structure. Following recent minimalist (and Optimality-Theoretic) syntax, I will assume only those functional categories for which there is empirical evidence (Thráinsson 1996, Grimshaw 1997). That is, there is no universal syntactic template. Recall that functional projections, and their features, are inserted into the structure for the sole purpose of formally licensing elements selected from the lexicon for concatenation. For example, the lack of agreement morphology is represented in the syntax by the corresponding lack of a functional projection or feature dedicated to this function. Finally, following much recent work, I will assume that a distinct functional head (light-\( v \)) is responsible for the selection of the external argument. The idea here is that the external argument is selected not by V
alone, but, compositionally, by V plus its internal arguments (Marantz 1984). In this way, phrase structure will be taken to represent both the checking requirements of the lexical items selected for concatenation, as well as the predicate’s thematic structure.

Note that the present framework diverges from Chomsky 1994 in the following way: the ACC case feature is a property of (non-quirky-case assigning, transitive) V; the adjunction of V to v, along the lines of the earlier V-to-AgrO proposal, is not a requirement for the licensing of ACC. This allows for case-checking to take place at Merge for the object, while permitting NOM subjects to Merge into the specifier of vP without inducing a case-mismatch. More importantly, the assignment of ACC case is formally divorced from the presence of an external argument; ACC can be licensed in the absence of a light-v projection. This predicts the class of ACC-case-assigning unaccusatives, discussed in chapter 2 (and exemplified by the Ukrainian impersonal passive construction in (7) and the Russian finite impersonals in (8)).

The sample tree in (11) indicates the possible motivation for each instance of Merge and Move for a canonical transitive predicate. The tree in (12) gives an abbreviated structure for nonagreeing predicates lacking a thematic subject (such as Ukrainian -no/-to). Note that the structure in (12) differs from (11) in the following ways: (i) Tense hosts an impoverished set of features with the result of isolating the EPP; and (ii) vP is not projected, indicating the dethematization of the thematic subject:

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8 Note that under this view, vP is essentially a lexical, rather than functional, category. This is confirmed by the lack of any strong evidence in Slavic for overt object shift of full NPs.

9 In both (11) and (12), intermediate projections are given for the sake of convention. Note that V is assumed to adjoin to light-v overtly to create a local domain for the assignment of the external theta role. The assignment of the external theta role is compositional in the sense that V adjoins to v only after discharging its internal arguments.
1.2 Generative Syntax and Slavic

The central aim of the generative linguist is to contribute to our knowledge of the underlying principles responsible for human language. The generative linguist is, thus, interested in identifying and characterizing those primitive aspects of linguistic expressions that are truly universal. Given this interest in Universal Grammar (UG), it is reasonable to ask where “Slavic Linguistics” fits in. While this dissertation contains a wealth of empirical data on a variety of Slavic (and other closely related) languages, in some cases, from various historical stages, it is important to note at the outset that the description of these data is subordinated to the broader aim of identifying how Slavic

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10 I thank John Bailyn for discussion of these questions. For a more complete discussion, see Bailyn 2000.
contributes to the larger characterization of Grammar, in general. That is, assuming that
Polish and Ukrainian, for example, are natural languages in the same way that English,
Dutch, Italian, Hebrew, and Quechua are, those aspects of the former that, at first blush,
appear to distinguish Slavic in some way, can be shown to pattern, in some “deeper”
sense, with the latter languages. The purpose of such an exercise is not merely to show
that Polish has something in common with Dutch, but rather to enrich the theory that
seeks to contain both in its empirical scope.

It will be shown in the course of this work that language-specific linguistics shares the
same basic limitations as construction-specific analyses: both are inadequate
explanatorily, and both fail to meaningfully contribute to our understanding of UG.
Generative linguistics, by definition, is comparative. For example, it is precisely by
looking at how structural case is assigned outside of Slavic that we can identify what is
truly interesting about case-assignment within Slavic. Likewise, it is expected that a
proper description of Slavic facts will lead to a greater understanding of the structure of
other, unrelated languages, which are constrained by the same set of universal syntactic
primitives. While “Slavic Linguistics,” per se, cannot possibly constitute a genuine sub-
discipline of linguistics, where language is understood as a property of the mind, there is
no doubt that work in Slavic, just like earlier work in Romance, Germanic, Chinese, and
Japanese will gradually play a more prominent role in the development of modern
syntactic theory, especially as newer developments in theory “catch up” with the
inevitable lag in empirical scope.
1.3 Organization

The chapters to follow are organized in the following way. In chapter 2, the strong case for the EPP in Slavic is made. Here, it is argued that the EPP, under neutral discourse, is checked by overt lexical material, even in the absence of a thematic subject. The null-expletive hypothesis is rejected largely on empirical grounds, relating to the ill-formed quantificational structure that such an expletive would establish. Chapters 3-4 take up the question of -no/-to in Polish and Ukrainian (ch. 3) and North Russian and Lithuanian (ch. 4). It is argued in chapter 3 that a wide range of seemingly unrelated facts that distinguish Polish -no/-to from its Ukrainian counterpart follow from more fundamental differences in the categorial status of the /-no/-to/ morpheme itself (specifically, where in the structure the /-no/-to/ morpheme is interpreted). In chapter 4, it is argued that /-no/-to/ in North Russian and Lithuanian marks an incipient ergative construction. It follows that the preverbal oblique constituent in these languages is a fully-thematic subject, rather than a “demoted” passive by-phrase. The postverbal NOM NP emerges as a true object, a fact that presents a considerable challenge to the standard minimalist case-checking machinery. In chapter 5, I provide some concluding thoughts with an eye toward certain broader implications of this work for current theory. I close with some suggestions for future directions of inquiry.