

## **On Burzio's Generalization and unexpected accusatives: Evidence from Polish experiencer constructions**

**The problem:** despite the conceptual and empirical problems that inhere in correlating assignment of accusative case [ACC] with external theta-role assignment by a verb captured under Burzio's Generalization [BG], BG is maintained in mainstream minimalism, where the properties of ACC assignment/valuation and external theta-role assignment are severed from the verb, and where, as in Chomsky (2008), the external argument [EA] is introduced by  $v^*/v$ /Voice while case is valued by functional heads via AGREE and is dependent on  $\phi$ -AGREE. Thus, although assignment of the external theta role is dissociated from the verb itself, ACC is still correlated with external theta-role assignment, a view criticized by, among others, Marantz (1991/2000) and Baker (2012, 2015), who have argued for a configurational dependent case theory, on which a case can be a dependent case such that it is assigned at Spell Out (or realized at PF) only when there is another non-lexical case-marked DP in the domain, (structural) ACC being dependent on nominative case [NOM] in nominative-accusative languages. Based on Russian Transitive Impersonals (1), Lavine (2010) and Lavine and Babby (2019) [LB], who adopt Chomsky's functional head case model, argue that ACC may be assigned in the absence of Voice, which they take to introduce an agent. Absent (agentive) Voice, the head assigning ACC is  $v$ -Cause, whose EA, a non-volitional causer, is realized as an oblique VP-internal argument. The verbal roots that license  $v$ -Cause are all lexically causative ([+c]). Absent [+c] on a verbal root,  $v$ -Cause is not licensed and ACC is not assigned (absent agentive Voice). Thus, while ACC is independent of  $v$ -Voice (and of the presence of NOM in the structure), it is still correlated with theta-role assignment in LB in languages in which  $v$ -Voice and  $v$ -Cause work independently, as in Russian and Ukrainian as well as in Icelandic (Fate Accusatives), in which the causer may be abstract (or suppressed (2)), but where its presence is syntactically identified (see LB for arguments). Alternatively, the presence of the causative subevent is identified by the presence of a causer-PP adjunct (3). In this respect, LB differ from Schäfer (2008), Alexiadou *et al.* (2015) and Wood (2015), where ACC is dissociated from theta-role assignment, arguments being licensed under AGREE in syntax at the VoiceP-level, Voice having different 'flavors', but where the presence of an ACC-marked argument is still dependent on the presence of an element in the specifier of Voice that can be realized as NOM, as in e.g. the Fate Accusative and New Passive in Icelandic (where the specifier of non-thematic Voice (Voice<sub>Exp(itive)</sub>) is filled with an expletive clitic or pronoun). In the model of Alexiadou *et al.* (2015), the argument that has valued the  $\phi$ -features of Voice is realized with NOM morphology at PF and the one that does not is realized with ACC morphology, and thus (4) from Lekakou and Pitteroff (2018, (55)) is out in German as it is the object that values the  $\phi$ -features of Voice<sub>Exp</sub>, *sich* in the specifier of Voice<sub>Exp</sub> not having valued  $\phi$ -features and not being able to value features of Voice<sub>Exp</sub>.

**Proposal and analysis:** in this paper, we provide further evidence militating against the dependence of ACC on Voice having a filled specifier and against the dependence of ACC on NOM. The data that we analyze here in some detail are Polish stative NOM-ACC object experiencer structures (5) and the impersonal middle construction [IM] with a dative (6), also known as the Involuntary State Construction (Rivero 2003), which we analyze as a syntactically derived experiencer predicate in which the (abstract) functional head introducing the dative experiencer has the semantics of a mental attitude verb (*find* in English). We argue here that whether the property of ACC assignment/valuation is correlated with the property of assignment of an external theta-role and/or correlates with NOM in the domain depends on the set and featural make-up of functional heads in a given language, as expected on minimalist assumptions. BG-languages (English) are languages in which the **active** Voice head has  $\phi$ -features and a probing unvalued structural case feature [Case: \_ ], whose presence is conditioned by the presence of an element with an unvalued case feature in its specifier, which needs to be EA. In other words, English bundles ACC and EA on Voice, hence BG. In other languages, the specifier need not be an EA or it may be empty (Polish). When Voice comes with unvalued  $\phi$ -features and case, the features probe and the case feature is matched by the closest active goal, i.e. DP with [Case: \_ ], which may be the object of a transitive verb ((6), and (1) and (3), if available), or an experiencer argument (5). The unvalued case feature of an object matching the unvalued case feature of Voice is interpreted at PF with whatever morphology is available under feature realization algorithms in individual nominative-accusative languages (sensitive to syntactic context), typically with ACC morphology, but not always. For example, some individual roots taking arguments interpreted as themes (that can passivize) require that their case feature be realized with instrumental

or dative morphology in Polish. In Polish, a language without BG-effects, the structural case feature of an object is licensed by Voice with a case feature, but Voice does not bundle EA and case and it may have a case feature in the absence of an element with a case feature in its specifier (like T), unless Voice is realized with an element with no case feature (or one that absorbs Voice's features), as in Polish anticausatives and in personal middles (7), in which *się* realizing Voice is featureless (or it absorbs Voice's features) and the object valuing the features of T is realized with NOM morphology. We show here that the structure in (5) is not a double unaccusative, but a double ergative with no causing subevent (and no v-Cause), with the (ACC-marked) experiencer c-commanding the (NOM-marked) stimulus. On the assumption that ACC is structural here, as diagnosed by the shift to genitive under negation, the experiencer object shares the Voice's unvalued structural feature of case, which is spelled out with ACC morphology (and genitive in the context of negation) at PF. The stimulus values the features of T and is realized with NOM morphology at PF. Polish IMs (6) have been analyzed as having a syntactically represented agent in Rivero (2003) and her later work, but we demonstrate here that the agent is not syntactically represented in such structures, as Polish IMs with a dative do not license agentive adverbials and purpose clauses (see also Krzek 2013). Assuming that the dative experiencer originates in the specifier of an applicative head between Voice and vP in (6), if ACC were realized on an argument that does not value the features of Voice, as argued by Alexiadou *et al.* (2015), the verb's object could not be spelled out as ACC, as it values Voice's  $\phi$ -features, contrary to fact (6) and in contrast to German (4). The Voice head involved in IMs has a case feature despite the fact that *się* in its specifier lacks unvalued  $\phi$ -features (and case) or lacks  $\phi$ -features (and case) altogether, unlike Voice<sub>się</sub>. Thus, Polish NOM-ACC object experiencer structures and IMs with a dative provide further evidence for dissociating ACC from assignment of an external theta-role, whether agent or causer. As *się* cannot realize NOM in Polish, IMs with a dative also provide evidence against the dependence of ACC on NOM in languages in which assignment/valuation of ACC is not dependent on Voice having an element with a case feature in its specifier, whether thematic (BG-language) or not necessarily (a. o. Alexiadou *et al.* 2015, Wood 2015). At the same time, Polish provides evidence for a non-thematic 'flavor' of Voice in natural language, originally suggested by Schäfer (2008).

**Data:** (imp: impersonal (3.sg.neuter); imperf: imperfective, agreeing; SE: reflexive clitic)

- |     |   |               |                             |           |               |                                 |        |           |             |
|-----|---|---------------|-----------------------------|-----------|---------------|---------------------------------|--------|-----------|-------------|
| (1) | Ledyšku   | rastopilo     | solncem.                    |           |               |                                 |        |           | Russian     |
|     | icycle-ACC  | melted-imp    | sun-INSTR                   |           |               |                                 |        |           |             |
|     | 'The icycle was melted by the sun/The icycle melted due to the sun.'        |               |                             |           |               |                                 |        |           | (LB, (6b))  |
| (2) | Bátinn  | rak           | á                           | land.     |               |                                 |        |           | Icelandic   |
|     | boat.the-ACC  | drove         | to                          | land.     |               |                                 |        |           |             |
|     | 'The boat drifted ashore.'  |               |                             |           |               |                                 |        |           | (LB, (16a)) |
| (3) | Ego   | tošnilo       | ot                          | zapaxa.   |               |                                 |        |           | Russian     |
|     | he-ACC  | nauseated-imp | from                        | smell-GEN |               |                                 |        |           |             |
|     | 'He became nauseated from the smell.'                                       |               |                             |           |               |                                 |        |           | (LB, (9))   |
| (4) | *Ich glaube,  | dass          | es                          | sich      | einen         | Roman                           | leicht | liest.    |             |
|     | I believe   | that          | it                          | SE        | a-ACC         | novel-ACC                       | easily | reads-imp |             |
|     | 'I believe that reading a novel is easy.'                                   |               |                             |           |               |                                 |        |           | German      |
| (5) | Kłopoty   |               | finansowe                   |           | martwią       | Marię.                          |        |           |             |
|     | problems-NOM  |               | financial <sub>A</sub> -NOM |           | worry-imperf  | Mary-ACC                        |        |           |             |
|     | 'Financial problems worry Mary.'  |               |                             |           |               |                                 |        |           | Polish      |
| (6) | Tę  | książkę       | czytało                     | mi        | się           | przyjemnie.                     |        |           |             |
|     | this-ACC  | book-ACC      | read-imp                    | me-DAT    | SE            | with.pleasure.                  |        |           |             |
|     | 'Reading this book was pleasant for me/I found reading this book pleasant.' |               |                             |           |               |                                 |        |           | Polish      |
| (7) | Ta  | książka       | czyta                       | się       | przyjemnie.   | 'This book reads with pleasure' |        |           |             |
|     | this-NOM  | book-NOM      | reads-imp                   | SE        | with.pleasure |                                 |        |           |             |

### Selected references

Alexiadou *et al.* 2015. *External arguments in transitivity alternations*. OUP. ♦ Baker, M. 2015. *Case: Its principles and its parameters*. CUP. ♦ Lavine, J. and L. Babby. 2019. A new argument for lexical underspecification of causers. To appear in *Linguistic Inquiry* 50. ♦ Lekakou, M. and M. Pitteroff. 2018. This is personal: Impersonal middles as disposition ascriptions. *Glossa* 3(1). ♦ Rivero, M. L. 2003. Reflexive clitic constructions with datives. *FASL* 11. ♦ Wood, J. 2015. *Icelandic morphosyntax and argument structure*. Springer.