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Sleeman, P.

Publication date

2022

Document Version

Proof

Published in

A life in linguistics

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Sleeman, P. (2022). Partitive pronouns and quantified adverbial NPs: a labeling account. In G. Alboiu, D. Isac, A. Nicolae, M. Tănase-Dogaru, & A. Tigău (Eds.), *A life in linguistics: A festschrift for Alexandra Cornilescu on her 75th birthday* (pp. 513-525). Bucharest University Press.

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PARTITIVE PRONOUNS AND QUANTIFIED ADVERBIAL NPs: A LABELING ACCOUNT

Petra Sleeman*

Abstract

In previous research it was found that some native speakers of Dutch reject the combination of the partitive pronoun ER with an elliptical quantified adverbial NP, whereas others accept it. The goal of this paper is to investigate if the interspeaker variation might be due to variation in the syntactic analysis of the verb. On the basis of a Grammaticality Judgment Task on the acceptance of various types of attributive participles within the NP, this hypothesis is confirmed. To account for the interspeaker variation, a labeling analysis is proposed.

Keywords: partitive pronoun, quantified adverbial NP, intransitive verb, attributive participle, labeling theory

1. Introduction

Chomsky (1965, 1986a) made a distinction between three types of adequacy of grammars: observational, descriptive and explanatory adequacy.¹ One of the constraints that have been claimed to be universal, i.e. to be part of a grammar that has explanatory adequacy, is the Subjacency Condition (Chomsky 1973).

On the basis of extraction of the partitive pronoun NE, Belletti and Rizzi (1981) argue that the Subjacency Constraint is also part of the Italian grammar. In their seminal paper, Belletti and Rizzi (1981) propose a theoretical account, within a generative perspective, for an asymmetry that is observed in Italian with respect to the use of the partitive pronoun NE, which they assume to be only extractable from object position. They formulate four constraints on the occurrence of NE:

(I) In preverbal subject position only \emptyset , that is the omission of NE, is possible:

- (1) a. *Tre settimane passano rapidamente.*
 ‘Three weeks elapse rapidly.’
 b. *Tre \emptyset passano rapidamente.*
 c. **Tre NE passano rapidamente.*

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¹ This paper is an homage to Alexandra Cornilescu, who has introduced Chomsky’s work to so many students in Romania. I am very grateful to Alexandra for her friendship and support and for the many times that she has allowed me to present at the Annual Conference of the English Department (ACED) in Bucharest, an important international conference, where many well-known linguists and students of Alexandra’s have presented their work on generative grammar.

(II) In object position only NE is allowed, as in (2):

- (2) a. *Gianni trascorrerà tre settimane a Milano.*
'Gianni will spend three weeks in Milan.'
b. **Gianni trascorrerà tre Ø a Milano.*
c. *Gianni NE trascorrerà tre a Milano.*

(III) In (VP) adverbial NPs, both options are excluded, as shown in (3):

- (3) a. *Gianni è rimasto tre settimane a Milano.*
'Gianni remained three weeks in Milan.'
b. **Gianni è rimasto tre Ø a Milano.*
c. **Gianni NE è rimasto tre a Milano.*

(IVa) Postverbal subjects with *essere* ('to be') pattern with objects:

- (4) a. *Sono passate tre settimane.*
are elapsed three weeks
'Three weeks elapsed.'
b. **Sono passate tre Ø.*
c. *NE sono passate tre.*

(IVb) Postverbal subjects with *avere* ('to have') pattern with adverbial NPs:

- (5) a. *Hanno parlato tre ragazze.*
have spoken three girls
'Three girls spoke.'
b. **Hanno parlato tre Ø.*
c. **NE hanno parlato tre.*

Belletti and Rizzi account for most of the differences by claiming that NE can only be extracted from an argument position that is related to the verb by shared superscripts, departing slightly from Chomsky's own definition of the Subjacency Condition, but still respecting the idea of "bounding nodes" (Chomsky 1973), reformulated later by Chomsky (1986b) in terms of "barriers" (Cornilescu 1995). This means that extraction of NE is only possible from subcategorized complements of transitive (2) and unaccusative verbs (4) (see Burzio 1986 for convincing support for the analysis of the subject of unaccusative verbs as the underlying complement), but not from subjects, as in (1) and (5), or quantified adverbial phrases (3), because these are not arguments sharing a superscript with the verb. In these cases, extraction leads to a Subjacency violation.

Dutch also has a partitive pronoun, alternatively called a quantitative pronoun (Blom 1977), which is ER in this language. Barbiers (2017) shows that the Subjacency Constraint on the extraction of ER also seems to hold for Dutch. ER can be extracted from indefinite NPs in direct object position, i.e. argument position (6), but not from quantified adverbial NPs, i.e. from adjunct position (7):

- (6) a. *Ik heb twee boeken gelezen.*
 I have two books read
 ‘I have read two books.’
 b. *Ik heb ER twee gelezen.*
 I have PAR.WK two read
 ‘I have read two.’
- (7) a. *Ik ben twee dagen in Spanje gebleven.*
 I am two days in Spain remained
 ‘I have remained two days in Spain.’
 b. **Ik ben ER twee in Spanje gebleven.*
 I am PAR.WK two in Spain remained

However, intuitions seem to vary, because according to Bennis (1986), ER has to be used both with a direct object, as in (6), and with a quantified adverbial NP, as in (7b) and (8):

- (8) *Van die vier weken ben ik *(ER) twee in Milaan gebleven*
 of those four weeks am I PAR.WK two in Milano remained
 ‘Of those four weeks I remained two in Milan.’

In order to delve into native speakers’ intuitions about such sentences with a partitive pronoun in combination with an intransitive verb such as ‘remain’, Sleeman (2023, to appear) submitted a Grammaticality Judgment Task to native speakers of Dutch. The results showed that most native speakers shared Bennis’ intuitions. This raised the question if ER-extraction in Dutch does not respect Subjacency and if Subjacency may not be a universal constraint. Sleeman (2023, to appear) assumes, however, that Subjacency is a universal constraint, which has to be respected by ER-extraction. In Sleeman (2023, to appear), two possible explanations for the results are given. One hypothesis is a test effect and the second is variation in the internal grammars (I-grammars) of the speakers.

In this paper, I will attempt to support the second hypothesis. On the basis of another, but similar, type of construction in Dutch, I will show that the internal grammars of native speakers may differ. I will account for the different intuitions with respect to (7b) and (8) in terms of Chomsky’s (2013) labeling theory.

The paper is structured as follows. In Section 2, I present the results from Sleeman (2023, to appear). In Section 3, the methodology for the research on another construction, noun phrases containing attributive participles, as well as the results are presented. These results lending support for Hypothesis 2, it is shown in Section 4 how Chomsky’s (2013) labeling theory can account for the diverging intuitions with respect to (7b) and (8). The paper ends with a short conclusion.

2. Previous research

In Sleeman (2023, to appear), a Grammaticality Judgment Task consisting of 28 sentences was submitted in online form to a group of 28 native speakers of Dutch.² The test contained all kinds of sentences with or without ER or with a noun instead of ER, in all kinds of contexts. The test contained three non-contrastive sentences with an intransitive verb and an elliptical quantified adverbial noun phrase with the partitive pronoun ER. Besides the verb ‘remain’, as in (7b), the sentences contained the intransitive verbs ‘sleep’ and ‘swim’:

- (9) [*Koen heeft maar vier uur geslapen.*] - *Koen heeft ER maar vier geslapen.*
Koen has only four hours slept Koen has PAR.WK only four slept
‘[Koen has only slept four hours] – Koen has only slept four.’
- (10) [*Ik heb twee kilometer gezwommen.*] *Ik heb ER twee gezwommen.*
I have two kilometers swum I have PAR.WK two swum
‘[I have swum two kilometers.] – I have swum two.’

The results reveal that ER in combination with intransitive verbs was accepted in on average 67% of the cases (‘remain’: 68%; ‘sleep’: 46%; ‘swim’: 86%), which shows that in most of the cases ER was accepted.³ The results are visualized in Figure 1.

² Sleeman (2023, to appear) also presents the results of another test of 75 sentences, which was submitted to a group of 30 native speakers of Dutch. The test contained three sentences with an intransitive verb and an elliptical quantified adverbial NP with ER, three corresponding sentences without ER and three with a noun instead of ER. The sentences contained again the intransitive verbs ‘remain’, ‘sleep’ and ‘swim’. They had a coordinated form and were presented in a contrastive way, as in (i)-(iii):

- (i) [*Ik zal vier dagen in Rome blijven*] *en ik zal ER twee in Napels blijven.*
I will four days in Rome remain and I will PAR.WK two in Naples remain
‘I will remain four days in Rome and I will remain two in Naples.’
- (ii) [*Iris heeft acht uur geslapen,*] *maar Koen heeft ER maar vier geslapen.*
Iris has eight hours slept but Koen has PAR.WK only four slept
‘Iris has slept eight hours, but Koen has slept only four.’
- (iii) [*Gisteren heb ik één kilometer gezwommen*] *en vandaag heb ik ER twee gezwommen.*
yesterday have I one kilometer swum and today have I PAR.WK two swum
‘Yesterday I have swum one kilometer and today I have swum two.’

Since Belletti and Rizzi’s (1981) and Barbiers’ (2017) judgments concern non-contrastive sentences, a second test of 28 sentences was created, which was submitted to a new group of 28 native speakers of Dutch. In this section only the results of the acceptance of the non-coordinated sentences are presented, but see fn. 3 for a brief comparison with the results of the coordinated sentences.

³ Besides the three non-coordinated sentences, the test also contained 9 coordinated sentences, as presented in fn. 2, containing the verbs ‘remain’, ‘sleep’ and ‘swim’. There was a variant with ER, a variant with a noun instead of ER and a variant without a noun or ER. The variants with a noun were accepted in 97% of the cases and the variants without ER and without a noun were accepted in 3% of the cases. The three coordinated sentences with ER were accepted on average in 87,5% of the cases (‘remain’: 85,7%; ‘sleep’: 78,6%; ‘swim’: 96,4%). In the longer test mentioned in fn. 2, the mean percentage of acceptance of the coordinated sentences was also 87,5%: ‘remain’: 83%; ‘sleep’: 77%; ‘swim’: 93%. The results of the two tests show that they were quite comparable for the coordinated sentences. For the non-coordinated sentences, the distribution of acceptance for the three verbs is the same as for the coordinated sentences (highest percentage of acceptance for ‘swim’ and lowest for ‘sleep’). The average percentage of acceptance is higher for the coordinated sentences with ER (87,5%) than for the non-coordinated sentences (67%). This suggests that coordination positively influences the acceptance of ER.

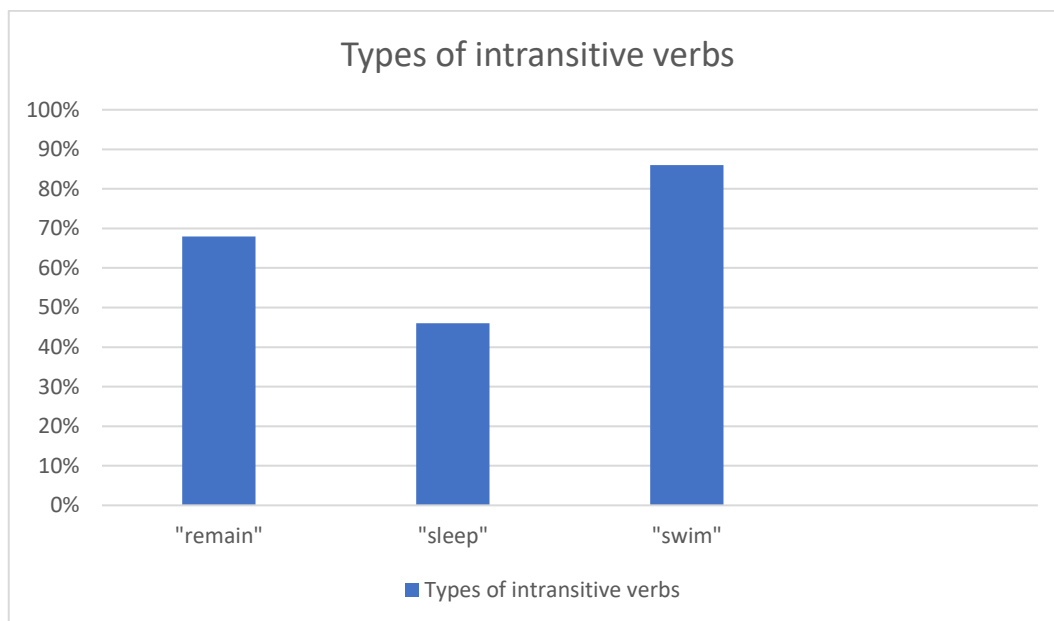


Figure 1: Percentages of acceptance of the partitive pronoun in combination with three types of intransitive verbs in non-coordinated sentences

In spite of these results, Sleeman (2023, to appear) does not reject Belletti and Rizzi's (1981) claim that the extraction of the partitive pronoun has to respect Subjacency. Instead, she offers two possible hypotheses to account for the results. The first one is that the native speakers have consciously or unconsciously compared a variant with and without ER, although for non-coordinated sentences only the variant with ER was present in the test. If they judged both variants marginal, they may have decided that the use of ER is better than leaving it out. The second hypothesis is that native speakers' grammars may differ with respect to the syntactic analysis of this kind of sentences. The native speakers of Dutch for whom the combination of ER with adverbial quantified NPs is acceptable, analyze the verb as a transitive verb and the quantified NP as an argument, viz. a direct object. In this case, extraction of ER does not lead to a Subjacency violation. The native speakers who do not accept the combination of ER with quantified adverbial NPs, analyze the verb as an intransitive verb and the quantified adverbial NP as an adjunct. In this case, extraction of ER leads to a Subjacency violation.

In the next section, I will investigate if intransitive verbs may be analyzed as transitive verbs, on the basis of a different construction.

3. Testing judgments on NPs containing attributive participles

According to Elffers, de Haan and Schermer (2014), in Dutch, as in English (Levin and Rappaport 1986), attributive passive participles may only be used in combination with a noun that is interpreted as their internal argument. This means that the verb may be a transitive or an unaccusative verb, but not an unergative verb, of which the only argument

is the subject, or an intransitive verb that combines with an adverbial quantified NP. In order to know how native speakers analyze verbs in terms of argumenthood, I tested this claim.

I submitted an online test consisting of 34 NPs and sentences, among which 20 fillers, to a group of 27 native speakers of Dutch, who were recruited by means of social media and who all gave their informed consent for anonymous use of their data for scientific purposes. The proper test items consisted of 14 noun phrases containing an attributive passive participle. The participles in these noun phrases were of four types. The noun phrases and the percentages of acceptance are presented below. The most relevant results are visualized in Figures 2 and 3.

Transitive verb (3 noun phrases):

- (11) a. *de geïnvesteerde minuten* (92,6%)
‘the invested minutes’
- b. *de verspilde uren* (100%)
‘the wasted hours’
- c. *de afgelegde kilometers* (96,3%)
‘the accomplished kilometers’

Unaccusative verb (3 noun phrases):

- (12) a. *de vertrokken treinen* (70,4%)
‘the departed trains’
- b. *de gestorven soldaten* (92,6%)
‘the deceased soldiers’
- c. *de vertrokken toeristen* (88,9%)
‘the departed tourists’

Unergative verb (3 noun phrases):

- (13) a. *de gewerkte mannen* (18,5%)
the worked men
- b. *de gelopen kinderen* (11,1%)
the walked children
- c. *de gezongen meisjes* (22,2%)
the sung girls

Intransitive verb with “adverbial quantified NPs” (5 noun phrases):

- (14) a. *de gelopen kilometers* (88,9%)
the walked kilometers

- b. *de gezommen meters* (96,3%)
the swum meters
- c. *de geslapen uren* (85,2%)
the slept hours
- d. *de gewerkte dagen* (96,3%)
the worked days
- e. *de te lang gebleven minuten* (51,9%)
the too long stayed minutes

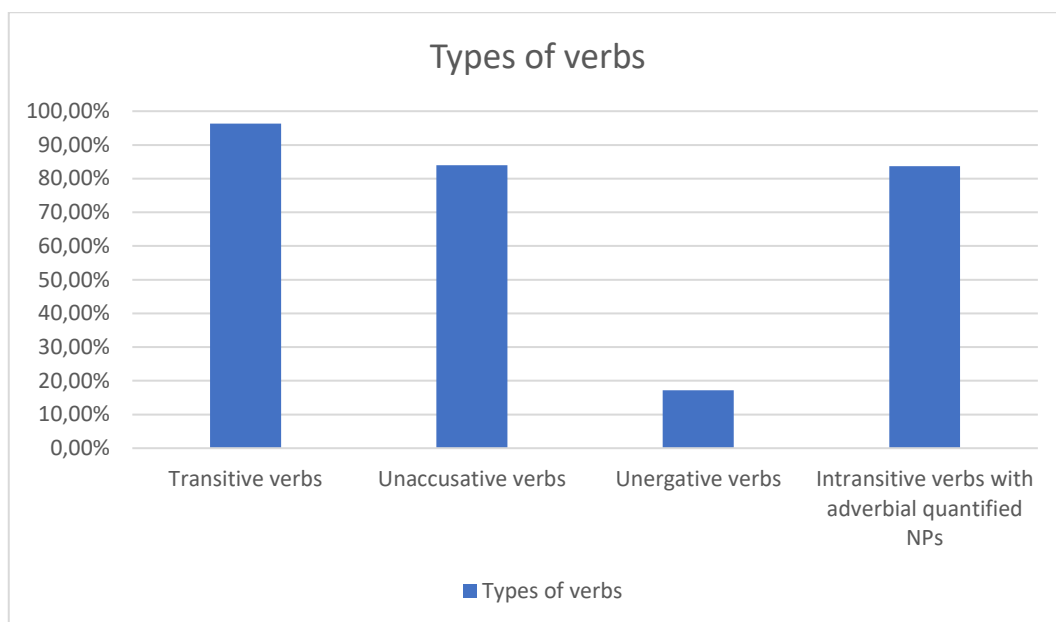


Figure 2: Average percentage of acceptance of types of participial verbs as attributes within the NP

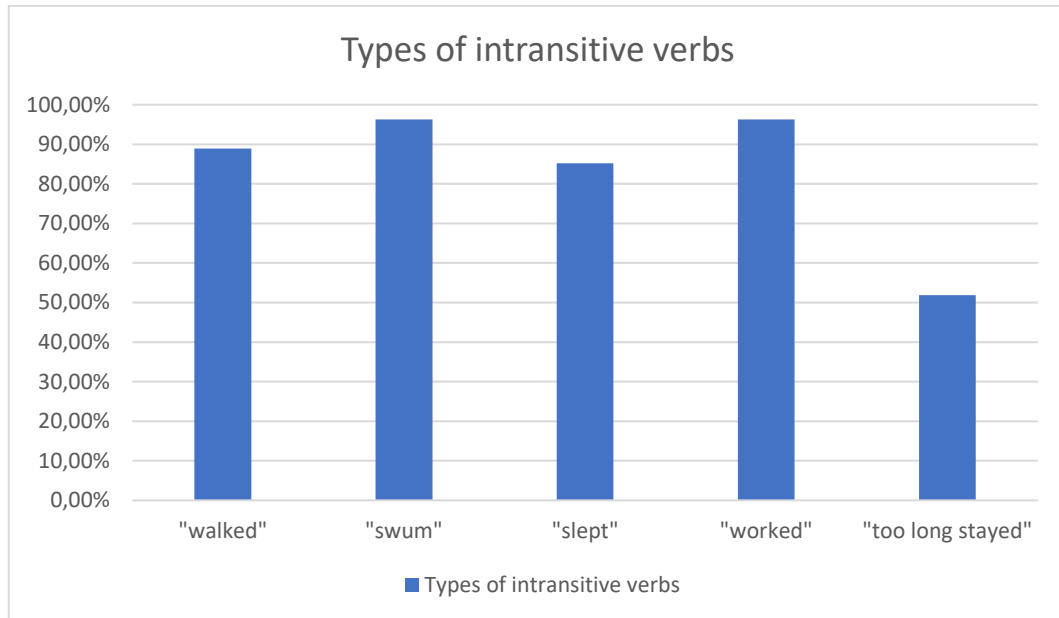


Figure 3: Percentage of acceptance of different types of intransitive verbs as attributes within an NP functioning as a “quantified adverbial NP”

The results for the transitive verbs (96,3% of acceptance on average), for the unaccusative verbs (84% of acceptance on average) and the unergative verbs in which the noun phrase has the role of the external argument (17,2% of acceptance on average) are in accordance with Elffers, de Haan and Schermer’s (2014) claims about the types of verbs that are accepted in attributive participles in noun phrases. However, the rather high acceptance of intransitive verbs that combine with adverbial quantified noun phrases (83,7%) is not, although the acceptance of the unaccusative verb ‘remain’ is much lower (51,9%) than the acceptance of the other four verbs (91,7% on average), but this could also be due to the fact that ‘remain’ was preceded by an adverbial phrase, whereas the other participles were not. The results for the intransitive verbs go in the direction of those for the transitive verbs, suggesting that the speakers who accept (14a-c) analyze them as transitive verbs.

4. Accounting for the variation

The data of the previous section confirm the second hypothesis presented in the Introduction and Section 2, which was that native speakers who accept a partitive pronoun in combination with a noun-less quantified adverbial NP analyze the noun phrase as a direct object, whereas speakers who do not, analyze the verb as an intransitive verb and the noun phrase as an adverbial quantified NP. In this section I propose a theoretical account for this analysis, making use of Chomsky’s (2013) labeling theory. I focus especially on the data presented in Section 2 and not on the NPs for which the results were presented in the previous section, and which just served to verify the second Hypothesis.

Chomsky (2013) assumes that there is a fixed labeling algorithm (LA) that licenses syntactic objects (SOs) so that they can be interpreted at the interfaces, operating at the phase level along with other operations. This means that in Chomsky (2013) it is assumed that Merge applies freely. Under Chomsky's (2013) approach, syntactic objects created through merge receive a label through minimal search (MS). Chomsky (2013: 43) distinguishes two cases:

(i) Suppose $SO = \{H, XP\}$, H a head and XP not a head. Then LA will select H as the label, and the usual procedures of interpretation at the interfaces can proceed.



(ii) The interesting case is $SO = \{XP, YP\}$, neither a head [...]. Here minimal search is ambiguous, locating the heads X, Y of XP, YP, respectively. There are, then, two ways in which SO can be labeled: (A) modify SO so that there is only one visible head, or (B) X and Y are identical in a relevant respect, providing the same label, which can be taken as the label of the SO.

For (iiA) Chomsky assumes that SO can be modified for labeling by raising either XP or YP. If, for instance, XP is raised, the lower XP copy is invisible to LA, since it is part of a discontinuous element, so therefore SO will receive the label of YP.

Chomsky illustrates case (iiA) by means of Moro's (2000) analysis of copular constructions. Moro takes copular structures to be of the form [copula-small clause], as in (16). The small clause is of the form [XP, YP]. To label SO, one of the terms of the small clause, either XP or YP, must raise, which, as Moro shows, has interpretive consequences. Chomsky illustrates XP raising. If XP is raised, the result is as in (17), with two copies of XP. Since the lower XP is part of a discontinuous element, it would be invisible to LA. Therefore, β receives the label of YP.

(16) [be [lightning, the cause of the fire]]

(17) XP copula $\{\beta$ XP, YP}

Another case is successive cyclic movement. Chomsky argues that (18a) is ungrammatical, because the XP *in which Texas city* has not moved to a higher Spec,CP, as in (18b). Therefore, in (18a), YP cannot receive a label, whereas it can in (18b):

- (18) a. *They thought [_{α} in which Texas city [C, [JFK was assassinated]]]?
 b. In which Texas city thought they that JFK was assassinated?

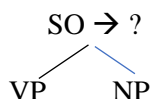
Chomsky illustrates (iiB) by means of (19), which differs from (18a) in that it contains an indirect question:

(19) They wondered [_α in which Texas city [_β C [JFK was assassinated]]].

Although in (19) the XP *in which city* does not move to a higher Spec,CP, the sentence is grammatical. Chomsky assumes that in (19) the most prominent feature, namely Q, is shared by XP and YP. This feature is shared by C and by the head of *in which Texas city*. Searching {XP, YP}, LA finds the same most prominent element, Q, in both XP and YP, and takes that to be the label of SO α.

Let us turn now to adjunction constructions to see how labeling would proceed. Adjuncts may be adjoined to VP, as in case (ii) distinguished by Chomsky:

(20) SO = {VP, NP}, neither of which is a head



There is no movement of VP or NP (iiA) and VP and NP do not share features (iiB). Therefore, it is not clear how SO can be labeled. For this reason, Park and Yoo (2019) argue that adjunction structures can or must remain label-less for syntactic licensing.

On the basis of VP fronting, Kim (2019) argues, however, that adjunction structures do receive a label. The point of departure of Kim’s argumentation is Bošković (2018: 262). Bošković argues that unlabeled elements cannot undergo movement. The reason is that unlabeled elements are not phases. According to Chomsky (1998, 2001) only phases can undergo movement. On the basis of VP-fronting data, as in (21), Kim shows, however, that adjunction structures formed by adverb-attachment do move:

(21) Completely read the book, George will.

This suggests that the adverb + VP construction in (21) does have a label. To account for the fact that the adverb + VP construction receives a label, Kim makes use of Saito’s (2016) Anti-Labeling device. Saito proposes that the case marker in Japanese serves as an anti-labeling device that makes a constituent invisible for labeling. The idea is that morphological case makes a phrase opaque for minimal search, so that in a configuration {XP, YP}, the SO will receive the label of the “other” term. Extending Saito’s analysis, Kim suggests that an adverbial suffix (covert or overt) serves as an anti-labeling device as well. Kim refers to Larson (1987: 250-252), who argues that adverbial affixes are some kind of case markers: the adverbial marker *-ly* in English, forming an adverbial, can be compared to a preposition + noun combination with an adverbial function. The extension of Saito’s Anti-Labeling device would thus give a label to adjunction constructions, accounting for their movement in sentences such as (21).

Kim observes that the proposed analysis only applies to preverbal adverbs, as in (21). Following, among others, Stroik (1990), Kim analyzes postverbal adverbs as complements, which means that whereas SOs with preverbal adverbs are labeled according to Chomsky’s

(2013) Labeling Algorithm (iiA), SOs with postverbal adverbs could be labeled following Labeling Algorithm (i).

According to van Gelderen (2018), however, LA (i) can also be seen as a solution for labeling problems, which is a more dynamic approach. Besides the solutions provided in (iiA) and (iiB), she argues that there is another mechanism that could resolve labeling problems, namely the change from phrase to head where the XP in {XP, YP} is reanalyzed as X. This is expressed by van Gelderen's (2004) Head Preference Principle:

(22) Head Preference Principle (van Gelderen 2004): Be a head, rather than a phrase.

Van Gelderen shows "how regular patterns of language change can be seen as resolutions to the labeling paradox" (2018: 113), as expressed by the Head Preference Principle.

Returning now to the results presented in Section 2, the acceptance of the use of the partitive pronoun with quantified adverbial NPs, two different patterns emerged. While in the linguistic literature the combination of the partitive pronoun and elliptical quantified adverbial NPs has been labeled as "ungrammatical", the previous research presented in Section 2 has shown that for many native speakers of Dutch, this combination is accepted, although the degree of acceptance may depend on the exact context.

On the basis of the results on attributive participles presented in Section 3, I claim that for those who do not accept the combination, the quantified adverbial NP is analyzed as an adjunct, and the verb as an intransitive verb. If the partitive pronoun can only be extracted from a direct object, as observed in the linguistic literature and grammars, this accounts for the fact that for these speakers, extraction of the partitive pronoun from the adverbial phrase gives an ungrammatical result. For these speakers, the VP + adjunct combination would have the form {XP, YP}. Although Kim (2019) analyzes postverbal adverbials as complements, we could also extend the analysis proposed by Kim for preverbal adverbials in terms of Saito's (2016) Anti-Labeling device to (postverbal) quantified adverbial NPs. Sentences such as (23) and (24) show that VP fronting is also possible with adverbial quantified NPs:

(23) Run ten kilometers, John will.

(24) Sleep eight hours, Mary will.

Following Kim's argument, this shows that the SO VP + quantified adverbial phrase has a label. In languages such as Finnish (Kiparsky 2001) and Korean (Maling, Jun and Kim 2001), quantified adverbials bear accusative or nominative case. For (23) and (24) it can therefore be assumed that the quantified adverbial bears a covert case-marker or abstract case, becoming in this way invisible for labeling. The label of the (head of the) VP can then be taken as the label for the SO.

For speakers who do accept extraction of the partitive pronoun from the adverbial quantified NP, which is the case for most of the native speakers, van Gelderen's (2018) analysis can be adopted. These speakers reanalyze {XP, YP} as {X, YP}, in accordance with van Gelderen's (2004) Head Preference Principle (van Gelderen 2004): "Be a head, rather than a phrase". Applying the Head Preference Principle resolves in another way than the Anti-Labeling device the labeling problem raised by verb-adjunct structures. As van

Gelderen (2019) argues, the Head Preference Principle accounts for various cases of language change. Applying the Head Preference Principle suggests that many participants in the research for this paper reanalyze VP as a V, which could mean that they reanalyze the intransitive verb as a transitive verb and the quantified adverbial complement as a direct object. This type of reanalysis would make that they respect the rule according to which partitive pronouns can only be extracted from arguments that are complements. Making use of the Head Preference Principle in their analysis of verb + quantified adverbial NP constructions could ultimately lead to language change, in which the combination of an elliptical quantified adverbial NP and a partitive pronoun is an accepted pattern for all native speakers.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, on the basis of a Grammaticality Judgement Task on the acceptance of various types of attributive participles within the noun phrase, I have confirmed Hypothesis 2, which was that native speakers of Dutch may vary with respect to their syntactic analysis of quantified adverbial NPs in combination with intransitive verbs and their analysis of the verbs themselves.

I have accounted for the divergence in judgments between native speakers with the help of Chomsky's (2013) labeling theory. I claimed that, to solve a labeling problem with respect to verb–adjunct structures, two strategies can be adopted: either making use of the invisible status of the quantified adverbial NP, which it would have because of abstract case marking, or reanalyzing the construction as {X, YP} instead of {XP, YP}.

In the study for this paper as in the previous research, only a limited number of relevant test items were used. This may have caused that the two studies have slightly different results. Reanalysis with 'remain' seemed to apply more in the partitive pronoun construction than in the participle construction, whereas it was the reverse with 'sleep'. To investigate whether some verbs are more likely to be reanalyzed than others, the acceptance of more sentences and NPs should be tested, also with other verbs. Furthermore, the two tests should be carried out with the same group of native speakers, to investigate if the individual analysis is coherent. I leave this for future research.

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