Syntactic transitivity of SE-reflexives in Polish*

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This paper argues for a specific syntactic analysis of constructions with the reflexive SE-type clitic ‘się’ in Polish, focusing on derived and inherent SE constructions that exhibit nominative case marking on the DP. A minimalist account is provided for semantically distinct but morphosyntactically identical uses of SE. The framework adopted is that of Bowers 2002 who argues for an articulated vP with a Transitive Phrase (TrP) nested between vP and VP. In canonical transitive sentences Tr° probes for the object DP and assigns it accusative case. I propose that in SE-sentences, the clitic merges in as the head of TrP. ϕ-incomplete, SE blocks the assignment of ACC.

1. Overview

Recent approaches to constructions with the reflexive SE-type clitic can be divided into two main types: (quasi-)argumental and lexical or semantic. The (quasi-)argumental approaches treat the clitic as one of the verb’s arguments, a reflex of an argument, or a residue of NP movement (Rizzi 1986, Pesetsky 1995, Sportiche 1998, McGinnis 1999, Steinbach 1999, 2002, Alboiu et al. 2002 and a forthcoming paper, among others). Lexical or semantic approaches analyze SE as a valence-reducing morpheme that suppresses one argument in the lexicon or a reflexive operator affecting the predicate at the level of Logical Form (Marantz 1984, Chierchia 1989, Reinhart 1996, Reinhart and Siloni 1999, Lubowicz 1999, among others). This paper explores the option of treating SE as a featurally underspecified functional morpheme which affects directly the VP domain with which it merges by disallowing the assignment of accusative case to the internal argument. I place the clitic in the head of the Transitive Phrase of Bowers 2002. While Bowers’ Transitive Phrase merges in between the VP and vP and is therefore part of “lexical syntax” in the sense of Hale and Keyser 1993 (and later), it is nevertheless a functional category with an EPP-feature licensing syntactic movement. I adopt

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Hornstein’s (1999, 2001) version of theta-theory where theta-roles are satisfiable via movement and where a DP can check more than a single theta-role. I argue that this syntactic treatment of SE together with a feature-movement approach to theta-theory capture the morphosyntactic properties of derived and inherent reflexives in Polish in a more unified manner than either (quasi-)argumental or lexical approaches.

The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 introduces the relevant Polish SE data along with a summary of previous treatments of the SE-type clitic in Polish and an overview of treatments of SE in other languages. Section 3 lays out the theory adopted, starting with theta-theory and continuing with phrase structure. Section 4 contains the details of the proposal. The derivations of derived and inherent SE-uses are in Section 5. Section 6 concludes the paper.

2. Data and previous approaches to SE

2.1 Data

The uses of the reflexive clitic się in Polish can be divided into four types. First, the clitic occurs with verbs that are most often used in canonical transitive frames. As transitives, these verbs have a Nominative (NOM) subject and an Accusative (ACC) Object. With SE, the ACC marking disappears, leaving the sentence with only a NOM subject. These uses of SE can be termed “derived” reflexives since they all have ACC-marked transitive counterparts. These SE-uses are shown in (1).

A note about the labels adopted for the data. The names I designate for the different types of SE-uses in this section are not meant to suggest a specific theoretical interpretation. Rather, they are more or less descriptive terms, intended to characterize the verb type in question in an informal manner. Also, the position of the clitic in the sentence is not entirely fixed. I do not investigate the prosodic factors that condition where the clitic surfaces, concentrating only on the syntactic and thematic properties of the sentences.

(1) Derived reflexives

a. Body reflexive – the Agent performs the action on himself

Janek umył się.
JanekNOM washPST.3SG SE
‘John washed (himself).’

Cf. Canonical transitive
Janek umył samochód.
JanekNOM washPST.3SG carACC
‘John washed the car.’

Other examples: ubierać ‘to dress’, golić ‘to shave’, czesać ‘to comb’

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1 One type of derived SE-use I am omitting from the analysis is the reciprocal construction as in Janek i MarysiaNOM spotkali3.PL sięREFL ‘John and Mary met (each other)’. Since the focus of this paper is the description of the function of SE in derived and inherent reflexives in general, I concentrate on the clitic’s apparent role as a syntactic verbal (de)transitivizer. The mechanisms responsible for the reciprocal semantics of the subject/object in the reciprocal construction would detract from the main argument and its supporting evidence.
b. **Body-part reflexive** – subject is an Agent or Theme, body part is affected

Janek skrzywił się.
JohnNOM scowlPST.3SG SE ‘John scowled/made a face.’

Cf. Canonical transitive
Janek skrzywił drut.
JohnNOM turn/twistPST.3SG wireACC ‘John turned/twisted the wire.’

Other examples: *skaleczyć się* ‘to cut (oneself)’, *zranić się* ‘to hurt (oneself)’


c. **Inchoative (derived unaccusative)** – Theme as subject, no Agent implied

Szklanka zbiał się.
glassNOM breakPST.3SG SE ‘The glass broke.’

Cf. Canonical transitive
Janek zbił szklankę.
JohnNOM breakPST.3SG glassACC ‘John broke the glass.’

Other examples: *tamać* ‘crack/break’, *kłaść* ‘to lie down’, *chować* ‘to hide’
*wydostać* ‘to get out’, *chylić* ‘bow down’, *przewracać* ‘to turn over/fall’


d. **Middle** – property of Theme subject is expressed; arbitrary Agent

Te koszule dobrze się piorą.
these shirtNOM.PL wellADV SE washPRES.3PL ‘These shirts wash well.’

Cf. Canonical transitive
Janek pierze te koszule.
JohnNOM washPRES.3SG these shirtACC.PL ‘John is washing/washes these shirts.’

Other examples: any verb that denotes an action that can be described as generic


e. **Psychological** – states with an Experiencer and a Theme-type argument

Janek interesował się lingwistyką.
JohnNOM interestPST.3SG SE linguisticsINSTR ‘John was interested in linguistics.’

Cf. Canonical transitive
Lingwistyka interesowała Jankę.
linguisticsNOM interestPST.3SG JohnACC ‘Linguistics interested John.’

Other examples: *martwić* ‘to worry’, *dziwić* ‘to wonder’, *obrażać* ‘to offend’, *nudzić* ‘to bore’, *przystraszyć* ‘scare’, *cieszyć* ‘to rejoice/be glad’
f. **Up-to-completion** – perfective prefix and Agent/Experiencer subject

Janek na-sprzątał się.

JohnNOM PERFcleanPST.3SG SE

‘John got enough of cleaning (of the house)’ / ‘John is all “cleaned out”.’

Cf. Canonical transitive

Janek (po)-sprzątał dom.

JohnNOM (PERF)cleanPST.3SG houseACC

‘John cleaned/was cleaning the house.’

Other examples: this prefixal perfectivization + się is a productive process, e.g. *płakać* ‘to cry’ → na-płakać się ‘PERF-cry SE’ = ‘to cry a lot, to cry one’s eyes out.’

Some cases of up-to-completion also involve semantic divergence, e.g. *mówić* ‘to speak’ → z-mówić się ‘to conspire, to arrange’

g. **Affective** – SE internalizes and somewhat “intensifies” the action

Janek pytał się o wskazówki.

JohnNOM askPST.3SG SE for instructionsACC

‘John asked for instructions.’

Cf. Non-SE alternant

Janek pytał o wskazówki.

JohnNOM askPST.3SG for instructionsACC

‘John asked for instructions.’ (more neutral aspectual reading)

Other examples: *patrzeć* ‘to look’

h. **Semantically divergent from transitive alternant**

Janek miał się dobrze.

JohnNOM havePST.3SG SE wellADV

‘John felt/was feeling well/doing well.’

Cf. Canonical transitive

Janek miał psa.

JohnNOM havePST.3SG a dogACC

‘John had (owned) a dog.’

Other examples: *popisać* ‘to write’ → *popisać się* ‘to show off’

*obchodzić* ‘to walk around’ → *obchodzić się* ‘to treat’

i. **Unspecified object (closed class of verbs)**

Janek się bił/gryzł/kopał.

JohnNOM SE beat/bite/kickPST.3SG

‘John used to beat/bite/kick (other children).’ (about a child’s bad behaviour)

Cf. Canonical transitive

Janek bił/gryzł/kopał inne dzieci.

JohnNOM beat/bite/kickPST.3SG other childrenACC

‘John beat/bit/kicked other children.’
The second type of SE-verbs in Polish includes verbs traditionally called inherent reflexives (reflexiva tantum). These verbs occur only with the clitic. They do not have non-SE alternants and cannot take ACC objects. However, similar to the derived reflexives in (1), inherent SE-verbs display NOM subjects.

(2) INHERENT REFLEXIVES (REFLEXIVA TANTUM) – must occur with SE

a. **Unergative** – Agent as sole participant

Janek śmiać się
JohnNOM laughPST.3SG SE
‘John laughed/was laughing.’

Cf. *Non-SE alternant
*Janek śmiać
*JohnNOM laughPST.3SG

Other examples: *gapić się ‘to stare’ odzywać się ‘to speak up’, *starać się ‘to try, to strive’, *tułać się ‘to wander, to rove’

b. **Unaccusative** – Theme as sole participant

Co się tu stało?
whatNOM SE hereADV happenPST.3SG
‘What happened here?’

Cf. *Non-SE alternant
*Co się tu stało?
*whatNOM hereADV happenPST.3SG

Other examples: *goić się ‘to heal (of a wound)’, *zjawiać się ‘to appear’

c. **Psychological** – Experiencer subject

Janek bać się (wilków).
JohnNOM fearPST.3SG SE (wolfGEN.PL)
‘John feared/was afraid (of wolves)”

Cf. *Non-SE alternant
*Janek bać (wilków).
*JohnNOM fearPST.3SG (wolfGEN.PL)

and also:
*Wilki bały Janka.
*wolfNOM.PL fear/scarePST.3SG JohnACC
‘Wolves scared John’ (this verb does not allow the transitive)

Other examples: *podobać się ‘to please, to appeal to’, *awauntuować się ‘to fuss, to brawl’, *mścić się ‘to avenge’, *obawiać się ‘to dread, to fear’
d. **Verbs of motion** – unique DP is both the Agent and the Theme

JohnNOM climbPRES.3SG SE (on/up the mountain)

‘John climbed/was climbing (up the mountain).’

Cf. *Non-SE alternant

*Janek wspinał (pod górę).
*JohnNOM climbPST.3SG (on/up the mountain)

Other examples: ślizgać się ‘to slide’

The SE-uses in (1) and (2) are summarized in (3). The derivations proposed in section 4 make use of this grouping.

(3) Summary of the expressed arguments and semantic types of derived and inherent reflexives in Polish. Brackets indicate optional elements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NUMBER OF OBLIGATORY DPS</th>
<th>THEMATIC RELATIONS</th>
<th>VERB/CONSTRUCTION TYPE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Agent, Theme</td>
<td>(1a) body-reflexive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(1b) body-part reflexive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(2d) verbs of motion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(1i) unspecified object</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Theme(/Experiencer)</td>
<td>(1c) inchoative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(2b) inherent SE-unaccusative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(2c) inherent SE-psych</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(1h) semantically divergent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>arb. Agent, Theme</td>
<td>(1d) middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Experiencer, Theme/Causer</td>
<td>(1e) alternating psych</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Agent, (/Experiencer), (Theme)</td>
<td>(1f) up-to-completion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Agent, (Experiencer), (Theme)</td>
<td>(2a) inherent SE-“unergative”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(1g) affective</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In short, SE in Polish occurs with verbs displaying seemingly different argument and thematic structure.\(^2\) The clitic is “multi-functional”. However, its appearance in the

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\(^2\) SE in Polish is also obligatory in two other types of uses: impersonal and dative constructions. However, my proposal rests on data with SE-uses with nominative DPs shown above and I do not analyze impersonals or datives in this paper. However, in a late vocabulary insertion model of grammar such as that of Distributed Morphology pioneered by Halle and Marantz (1993), the featural deficiency of the clitic makes it a likely candidate for insertion in other (non-nominative) constructions like datives and impersonals. Explorations of the featural properties of Slavic and Romance impersonal SE in Rivero (2000) and Rivero and Milojević Sheppard (2003) offer a strong base on which the mechanics of a late-insertion of Polish SE can be tested.
sentence correlates with Case and agreement morphology that are very consistent. This, in essence, is the puzzle driving the idea for this paper.

2.2 Previous approaches to SE

The most inclusive and descriptively rich analyses of SE-uses in Polish to my knowledge are those of Saloni (1976), Kański (1984) and Kubiński (1987). Kubiński (1987) provides a Relational Grammar-type account for Polish SE using Arc Pair Grammar of Johnson and Postal (1980), including a comprehensive summary of the published approaches to Polish SE up to 1987. The types of SE-uses that emerge from Kubiński’s discussion are approximately those presented in (1) and (2) in the previous subsection, with two differences: the unspecified object construction of (1i) is labeled as the “inversion construction” and inherently reflexive verbs are grouped together, regardless of the thematic relations they express.

More recent research into valency phenomena related to derived and inherent SE-verbs in Polish does not appear to be particularly plentiful. The theoretical approaches often vary, tending to make development of analyses difficult, if not at all unlikely. For instance, Biały (1998) explores Polish intransitive (one-argument) verbs, including derived and inherent SE-uses, but he focuses on phenomena and tests of unaccusativity in general. While rather detailed and aimed at unifying the apparently multifunctional SE, Kupiś (1999, 2000) offers an HPSG account. An interesting, strongly semantic account of Lubowicz (1999) treats the clitic as a lexical operator responsible for the “loss” of theta-roles in SE-marked predicates. I describe Lubowicz 1999 in the summary of lexical approaches to SE below. The literature on Polish SE in derived and inherent constructions is, in short, somewhat sparse.

In contrast, research into the properties of SE in Romance languages in particular has resulted in an abundant body of generative literature in the recent years. Although I do not pretend to do justice to the details of the argumentation in the numerous lines of research pursued to account for SE and parallel morphemes, I characterize the two main approaches to SE-verbs as (quasi-)argumental and lexical. (Quasi-)argumental approaches are exemplified in the works of Rizzi (1986), Pesetsky (1995), Sportiche (1998), McGinnis (1999), Steinbach (1999, 2002) and Alboiu et al. (2002 and a forthcoming paper), among others. The common characteristic of the (quasi-)argumental accounts is their treatment of SE as one of the verb’s arguments, a reflex of an argument, or a residue of NP movement. While Rizzi (1996) takes SE to mark the internal argument, the other approaches interpret the clitic as a marker of the external argument. So, while they differ in which argument surfaces as the ϕ-incomplete SE, (quasi-)argumental approaches take the clitic to be syntactically active as a nominal element linked directly to the expression of the verb’s argument structure.

Lexical or semantic approaches to SE such as those of Marantz (1984), Chierchia (1989), Reinhart (1996), Reinhart and Siloni (1999), and Lubowicz (1999), among others, treat the clitic as either a morpheme which, lexically present on the V, reduces the number of arguments a verb requires for the derivation to converge, or as a reflexive operator that reflexivizes the predicate at the level of Logical Form. Importantly, lexical approaches to SE-reflexivization do not place the clitic in canonical positions for arguments. Rather, they see SE as a morpheme that affects the predication properties of
verbs in the semantic representation, resulting in a reduced number of arguments expressed in the sentence.

What I explore in this paper is the theoretical option that the clitic SE is neither an argument (or a marker of one) nor a lexical or semantic detransitivizer. Rather, I place SE in the head of a phrase that marks syntactic transitivity of the verb. The reason this approach differs from views of SE as a valency-reducing morpheme is that it generates SE in a syntactic phrase that formally encodes a verb’s fundamental requirement of syntactic transitivity. The theoretical aim of the paper is, then, to explore SE as a possible marker of syntactic transitivity, itself a topic of recent research pursued, for instance, in Roberge 2003 and Cummins and Roberge 2003. By exploring the syntactic consequences of a Transitive Phrase in the sense of Bowers 2002, I attempt to capture the intuition of native speakers of Polish that the clitic się somehow “internalizes” the action expressed by the verb, no matter if this action can (in the case of derived SE-reflexives) or cannot (in the case of inherent SE-reflexives) be expressed in a canonical transitive structure with ACC marking on the internal argument.

I start the analysis with two fundamental assumptions with which I approach the SE-syncrretism shown in the sentences in (1) and (2).

(4) Assumptions for a treatment of Polish SE

a. SE is a unique lexical item/morpheme (only one lexical entry);
b. different (universal or language-specific) morphological, syntactic or lexical operations result in the apparent multi-functionality of the clitic.

I continue with a description of the theoretical framework adopted, followed by the proposal.

3. The framework

3.1 Thematic requirements

I adopt Hornstein’s (1999, 2001) feature-movement approach to theta-theory. In Hornstein’s system, theta-roles are treated as features active in the syntactic derivation by being able to license syntactic movement. The theta-features are present on verbal or predicative heads as these heads enter the derivation and must be checked to allow verbs to be interpreted. The mechanics of this checking proceed as follows.

The verb requires various thematic types of nominal (or propositional) participants by virtue of its meaning. This requirement is encoded in the theta-features it bears and requires to be checked. Motivated by Greed, a DP/NP establishes a checking relation with the verb and gets the theta-feature “transferred” from the verb. This description of theta-role assignment may seem somewhat imprecise or not technical enough. However, Hornstein calls on Chomsky’s (1995:226) proposal of syntactic operations as “rearrangements of properties of the lexical items of which they are ultimately constituted.” In the process of successive movement of the nominal into various theta-positions, copies of that nominal are created. Hornstein does not discuss the details of whether the thematic information checked by the nominal is “carried” on the DP or “left behind” with the copy. The end result is that the nominal is saturated with the theta-roles
whose features it checked with the verb(s) as it moved through the derivation. I take the description of theta-role assignment as a transfer of thematic information to the nominal to be adequate for the purposes of this paper. The nominals are saturated with the given theta-roles by having the thematic information transferred onto them upon checking the feature with a verbal or predicative head. I assume that the verbal/predicative heads are V° and v°, located in the “lexical” domain of syntax. The details of the phrase structure adopted are discussed in the next subsection; at this point I simply state that the “lexical” domain of syntax is the domain where the verb’s theta-requirements are satisfied and includes the whole vP-VP complex.

Furthermore, motivated by facts of obligatory control structures, Hornstein claims that there is by logical necessity no limit to the number of theta roles an NP-chain can have. A nominal can check more than one theta-feature when it is probed by a verbal or predicative head and nothing prevents that nominal from establishing the required checking relation. I exemplify Hornstein’s movement analysis of theta-roles with his derivation of the English reflexive sentence Mary washed.


   a. Mary washed.
   b. [IP Mary, [pst [vp t, [wash t, ]]]]

The sentence in (5) contains only one DP in the numeration. Mary merges with V° wash as its unique argument. In its initial merge position, Mary checks [Theme]. After the VP merges with v°, the [Agent] feature on v° probes for a DP and targets Mary as the only nominal in the derivation. Mary then moves up to Spec, vP checking [Agent] on v°, and continues to move up to Spec,IP, surfacing as the sentential subject. These syntactic operations result in a reflexive predicate by creating a chain with one argument related to two thematic positions.3 As discussed above, an inherent property of the predicate wash is that it has both an internal and an external theta-role, corresponding to prototypical theta-roles of Theme and Agent, respectively. In the syntax, in Hornstein’s system, these two roles are features carried on two different verbal/predicative heads: [Theme] is on V° and [Agent] is on v°.4

3 Hornstein (1999:81) notes that the moved DP/NP originates in a position from which movement is licit (for reasons other than the fulfillment of theta-requirements). Inherently reflexive verbs like wash (in my terminology, body-reflexives) would not be able to Case-mark their objects. Lacking Case, the nominal would move anyway. In my analysis of się-verbs, I make a parallel claim. It is not theta-features alone that require a DP to move out its merge position. EPP requirements are presumably stronger and are the main probes for movement. To my understanding, the term “reflexive predicate” is key in Hornstein’s analysis of reflexives: in its reflexive reading the predication relation between wash and its argument is different than it is in its transitive reading. The proposal for the Polish SE relates directly to this hypothesis: TrP is a syntactically encoded site of variation of the predication relation between the verb and its argument(s). The placement of TrP between vP and VP also suggests that the predication variation it encodes may in some sense be more idiosyncratic that the predication relation expressed by v°, which, as Bowers claims, is present in every sentence.

4 But if it is the lexical head V that is intrinsically characterized as requiring a “doer” and an affected entity, then a fair question to ask at this point is why both [Agent] and [Theme] are not checked when the unique DP merges as the complement to V°. Why does v° and not V° check [Agent] if the Agent argument surely
Besides the prototypical Agent and Theme theta-relations, I argue that a finer-grained analysis of theta-roles such as that explored in Pesetsky 1995 is needed to capture the theta-relations present in Polish SE-constructions. A greater distinction within the Theme and the Agent proto-relations is necessary and is successful within the featural approach to theta-roles. While it preserves the traditional division between external and internal theta-roles, Pesetsky’s approach allows for encoding additional theta-relations such as Causer for external arguments and Target and Subject Matter for internal arguments. Along with the traditional Agent, Theme, and Experiencer, these theta-roles complete the inventory of theta-roles needed for my account of the Polish SE. I propose the following checking configurations for the various theta-roles involved in Polish SE-sentences.

(6) Checking configurations proposed for the theta-roles involved in SE-sentences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXTERNAL THETA-ROLES:</th>
<th>INTERNAL THETA-ROLES:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Merge: outside of VP</td>
<td>Merge: within VP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agent: Spec,(vP)</td>
<td>Experiencer: Spec,VP or Comp,VP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Causer: Spec,(vP)</td>
<td>Theme/Target/Subject Matter: Comp,VP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In my analysis, internal theta-roles are always checked inside the VP. I follow Basilico (1998) who explores possible structural differences between internal arguments. He proposes that arguments merging in as complements of \(V^o\) are predicated of the head V only and are an inseparable part of the event described by the verb – they are, in other words, prototypical Themes. In contrast, arguments generated in Spec,VP are predicated of the whole VP phrase and are semantically separable from the event, at least more separable than canonical Themes. These would be the common Experiencers. In cases where there are two internal arguments, a Theme and an Experiencer, [Theme] is checked as the DP merges in Comp,VP while [Experiencer] is checked when a DP merges in Spec,VP. In cases with only one internal argument, the internal theta-role, no matter what its identity, is checked when the DP merges in Comp,VP. Some types of Polish SE-verbs derived in section 5 below exemplify the latter case: Experiencer is the only internal argument and so the feature is checked as the DP merges with the sister \(V^o\).

The next subsection introduces the phrase structure adopted for the treatment of SE in Polish.

carries out the action described by the lexical \(V^o\)? I speculate a twofold answer. One, only one theta-feature can be checked provided a checking relation is established: Mary in (5) cannot check both features following a single merge. Two, it is an inherent property of the \(vP\)-VP complex that thematic relations are checked in particular structural positions. The event-defined, affected, result-oriented nature of the Theme relation allows the internal argument to receive its theta-role only as a complement to \(V^o\). On the other hand, the affecting, causal nature of the Agent relation requires the external argument to receive its theta-role outside the VP. I do not pursue the question of why Theme and Agent theta-role assignment is divided between \(V^o\) and \(v^o\) any further.
### 3.2 Phrase structure

My proposal for Polish SE is framed within a version of minimalist checking theory (Chomsky 2000, 2001) as outlined in Bowers 2002. The computational component is sensitive to abstract/formal features and any other properties or associated features (e.g. phonological features) are irrelevant to computational operations themselves. Furthermore, the proposal argues for a structurally complex VP of the type first proposed by Larson (1988) and developed, among others, by Hale and Keyser (1993, 1997, 1998). I follow Bowers (2002) who proposes that a Transitive Phrase is nested between the inner VP and the vP and is directly involved in the licensing of the verb’s complements. Like a CP, TP, and vP, TrP is a functional category. While vP encodes the basic relation of predication in a clause and is present in every sentence, not every sentence involves a TrP.\(^5\) TrP is optionally selected by v and is present in every (syntactically) transitive predicate.

According to Bowers (2002:185), the obligatory presence of vP with any VP and the optional presence of TrP result in four possible structural configurations of verbs: (a) syntactically transitive, that is, those with an external argument in v that selects TrP; (b) syntactically unergative, that is, those with an external argument in v that selects VP; (c) syntactically unaccusative, that is, those without an external argument in v that selects VP; and (d) impersonal transitive, that is, those with a TrP but with no external argument in v. These four configurations are shown in (7).

(7) Universal typology of verbs (Bowers 2002)

\[\begin{align*}
\text{a. transitive} & \quad \text{b. unergative} \\
& \quad \text{c. unaccusative} \quad \text{d. impersonal transitive} \\
& \quad \text{As predicted by the theory and seen in (7d), TrP may be present with verbs that would not be considered canonical transitives. Bowers provides the examples of impersonal}
\end{align*}\]

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\(^5\) Bowers 2002 uses PrP (Predication Phrase) to be a generalization of the category vP. I will use the label vP in this paper.
transitive sentences in Russian and impersonal passives in Ukrainian which license ACC objects but, in his theory, do not express an external argument.

The phrase structure adopted is represented in (8). The relevant features that require checking are placed underneath the node of the category that bears them and probes for a goal to value them. Arrows indicate the point of initial merge of the DP arguments.

(8) Phrase structure adopted

```
TP
  | Subject
  | T°
  | vP
  | [EPP][@][NOM]
  | [EPP][Agent]
  | Tr°
  | VP
  | [EPP][φ]
  | [ACC][trans]
  | V°
  | DP
  | [Theme]
  | [Experiencer]
```

Thus outlined phrase structure lends itself to distinguishing the more regular and predictable aspects of verb meaning from those that are somewhat idiosyncratic, unpredictable and have traditionally been assigned to the lexicon. Parallel to structural approaches to syntax where layers of “sentential syntax” and “lexical syntax” are distinguished (Hale and Keyser 1993, 1997, 1998; Travis 2000b), I claim that the vP-TrP-VP complex, although a fully syntactic entity, can also house idiosyncratic or lexical properties of predicates. It is between the vP and the VP that a verb’s thematic requirements are satisfied; this is where thematic saturation takes place. Entities above the vP do not (directly) reflect the lexical idiosyncracies of verbs: tense and NOM assignment are examples of operations at the level of “sentential syntax”. Since the aim of this paper is to unify the syntax of lexically divergent verbs, the discussion focuses on the vP-level and below.

I now turn to the syntactic operations behind the structure in (8). Beginning with the merge of the most embedded categories, we have the V° and an object DP. It is likely that V° is, in fact, composed of a root V and a functional V node, as in Harley 1995, Travis 2000a or various works in the framework of Distributed Morphology (Halle and Marantz 1993), but that is not crucial for this discussion. If it has the feature [Theme] as part of its meaning, V° checks [Theme] with its sister DP. If Experiencer is the only internal theta-role of the verb, the feature [Experiencer] is checked with the DP merging as the complement of V°.

An important question to address at this point, once the VP is formed, is what makes it merge with TrP. Something must be triggering the VPs of canonical transitive
structures (recall 7a) and impersonal transitive structures (7d) to merge with Tr°. One way to assure that a verb merges with Tr° is by positing a [transitive] feature on verbs that exist in structures of type (7a) and (7d). This feature would express transitivity as a basic, irreducible component of the verb’s lexical properties, similar to theta-features. This may seem like an arbitrary solution. However, having defined the domain of “lexical” syntax as to be the whole vP-TrP-VP complex, it is reasonable to expect that within this complex the V° will establish checking relations motivated by its lexical requirements which may appear to be idiosyncratic. In any case, [transitive] in this system would be a formal feature encoding the verb’s syntactic transitivity and would be present on verbs merging in structures of types (7a) and (7d).

Bowers argues that the assignment of ACC and the checking of the feature of the external theta-role are divided between Tr° and v°. While earlier works, notably those following Burzio 1986, expressed transitivity as essentially an association of structural case and theta-role assignment housed in v°, the existence of structures such as the impersonal transitive in (7d) provides a compelling counterexample to a unified treatment of case and thematic relations: the presence of ACC is independent of the presence of an external argument (and vice versa). Bowers proposes that it is Tr° that checks ACC and v° checks [Agent].

If the assignment of ACC correlates with checking [EPP] and [ϕ], then in order to assign ACC, Tr° must bear these features. In sentences that surface with ACC, Tr° searches for a (local) category to check [EPP] and [ϕ] and, as a result, assign ACC. The object DP, having the internal theta-role transferred from its sister V°, is a felicitous goal for Tr°. The DP moves by short object movement and merges in Spec,TrP, checking the required features on Tr°.6 The morphologically visible result of this Specifier-Head relation in TrP is the assignment of ACC to the DP.7 (9) illustrates the movement operations in a canonical transitive sentence. The features relevant to the discussion and valued following a feature match between a probe and a goal are in italics. In a canonical transitive sentence like JohnNOM washes the carACC, the main checking relations established are:

- [Theme] checked as the object DP merges with V°;
- [EPP], [ϕ], [ACC] checked as the object DP moves to [Spec, TrP];
- [Agent], [EPP] checked as the external argument DP merges in [Spec vP];
- [EPP], [ϕ], [NOM] checked as the external DP moves to [Spec, TP].

---

6 Bowers (2002:185) characterizes syntactic movement in minimalist terms of Chomsky 2000, 2001. The mechanics are as follows. Displacement occurs upon matching of a probe with a goal, inducing Agree. The goal, that is, the category determined by the uninterpretable case feature, then merges into a position determined by an EPP-feature in the label of the probe. For Bowers, [EPP] is found on T° as well as on v° and Tr°. Since it is an uninterpretable selectional feature that requires the merge operation in the Specifier of the category bearing it, [EPP] forces the merge of DPs into the Specifier position of TP, vP, and TrP in order to be valued. The operation Move implies the entire process of feature matching, valuation and deletion of uninterpretable features of the goal. I follow Bowers’ use of the term “Move” in the rest of the paper.

7 Bowers treats Case as a feature checked along with [EPP] and [ϕ]. My proposal for Polish SE does not rely crucially on this view of case assignment; case can be assigned post-syntactically as a morphological reflex of particular syntactic configurations.
Derivation of a canonical transitive sentence in Polish

[Agent] and [Theme] checked with two overt DPs

Janek umył samochód.

JohnNOM washed the carACC → ‘John washed the car.’

The question that emerges at this point is what prevents other arguments besides the direct object from merging in Spec,TrP and receiving ACC. This question is especially important given the Hornstenian approach to theta-roles: a DP does not have to merge into a thematic position as it enters the derivation; it must simply check the required theta-feature(s) at some point in the derivation. What, then, allows the object DP to raise to Spec,TrP before another DP merges into this position? If Merge is “free” and Move is “costly”, merging into Spec,TrP directly instead of moving into this position would be required to obey Economy. One possibility is that the TrP-VP complex is a (weak) phase inside which all required operations must take place before any subsequent merges of new items.\(^8\)

The assignment of ACC by Tr\(^ {\circ} \) leaves v\(^ \circ \) to check the feature of the external theta-role with the DP that merges in its Specifier. This DP is then targeted by T\(^ \circ \) which requires the checking of [EPP] and [\( \varphi \)] in order to assign NOM. The derivation converges with the fulfillment of case and theta requirements of the verb and its arguments. Languages whose verbs display agreement morphology with the subject, among them Polish, would also presumably require V\(^ \circ \) to move all the way up to T\(^ \circ \) (or AgrS). Following Bowers, I assume that this movement is cyclic: V\(^ \circ \) first moves to Tr\(^ \circ \), then to v\(^ \circ \), and then to T\(^ \circ \) (AgrS).

Having outlined Bowers’ system, I proceed with my proposal for derived and inherent sentences with SE in Polish.

\(^8\) The proposal of TrP as a phase boundary parallels that of Legate 2003 where unaccusative and passive VPs are phases.
4. Proposal for Polish SE

I propose that Polish sentences with SE of the derived and inherent types are all transitive in the strict syntactic sense of Bowers 2002: the VP is nested in a TrP, which, in turn, is nested in a vP. However, while some SE constructions have underlying a canonically transitive structure of (7a), others have no external arguments and are derived from the agentless transitive configuration of (7d). I propose that SE in constructions with nominative subjects is generated as the head of the Transitive Phrase; that is, SE is a type of verbal transitivizer. In contrast to true or canonical transitives where Tr° checks a full set of \( \varphi \)-features, [EPP], and assigns ACC, SE in Polish is \( \varphi \)-incomplete, blocking the assignment of ACC to the DP in Spec,TrP. However, following Bowers, Tr° headed by SE still contains an EPP-feature, probing for an appropriate goal to merge into its Specifier position and value [EPP]. The apparent lack of semantic content of the deficient Tr head does not force the head to be phonologically null: in Polish, I propose, a deficient Tr° is realized as SE.\(^9\)

Furthermore, Polish verbs that are (a) canonically transitive, (b) have SE-alternants (derived reflexives) or (c) take the clitic obligatorily (inherent reflexives) have, by the stipulation made above, the feature [transitive]. This feature is checked when the VP merges with Tr°, no matter whether the Tr° is \( \varphi \)-complete or defective. This is the feature that guarantees a match between VP and Tr°. Of course, the verb must also be specified for theta-roles it needs to have saturated.

In summary, SE heads a Transitive Phrase that obligatorily merges with VP. \( \varphi \)-incomplete, SE cannot assign ACC. Since theta-assignment is separate from case assignment in this system, the presence of SE does not change or reduce the thematic requirements of the verb. Depending on the lexical meaning of the verb, the derivation may include internal and external theta-roles satisfied by a merge of a DP into the structural positions listed in (6).

The next section describes the derivations of Polish SE-sentences using the theta-theory and phrase structure described above.

\(^9\) In footnote 40, Bowers (2002:219) mentions that the SE-type morpheme in Russian, -sja, functions as a marker of unaccusativity and middle voice (similar to Polish). Depending on the external (viewpoint) aspect of the verb – perfective or imperfective – Bowers suggests that -sja be placed in Tr° or v°. He does not pursue the idea of -sja in TrP any further. The proposal I am making does not involve viewpoint aspect. While I adopt the phrase structure and syntactic mechanisms of Bowers 2002, my proposal for Polish SE was made independently of Bowers’ suggestion regarding -sja.
5. Derivations of SE-constructions

5.1 Body and body-part reflexives and verbs of motion

In the reflexive reading of *wash* in Polish there is only one overt DP that both carries out and undergoes the action of washing. The unique DP has, in other words, the properties of both the Agent and the Theme relations required by the verb *wash*. The sentence also requires SE. SE heads TrP required by the [transitive]-marked verb. Having merged with the VP, [EPP] of SE probes for an appropriate goal to merge into Spec,TrP. Having merged with V° and checked [Theme], the DP of a body-reflexive SE construction then raises to Spec,TrP, checking [EPP]. The DP then continues to move up to check [Agent] and [EPP] in Spec,vP, followed by the final move to Spec,TP, and the assignment of NOM. If there had been two DPs in the numeration, the derivation would have crashed despite there being two theta-features to check. On my account, case theory would rule out such derivations because only one case, NOM, is available for assignment in the transitive structure with a ϕ-incomplete Tr°.10 The derivation of body, body-part and verbs of motion uses of SE is schematized in (10).

(10) Body, body-part reflexives, and verbs of motion

[Theme] and [Agent] checked with one overt DP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Reflexive</th>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Janek</td>
<td>się</td>
<td>umył</td>
<td>‘John washed (himself).’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JohnNOM</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>washed.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janek</td>
<td>się</td>
<td>skrzywił</td>
<td>‘John scowled/made a face.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JohnNOM</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>twist</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janek</td>
<td>się</td>
<td>wspinał</td>
<td>‘John was climbing (up the mountain).’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JohnNOM</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>climb</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10 The impossibility of two cases in one NP-chain has been explored in other approaches to SE. For example, in their analysis of derived reflexives in Romance, Alboiu et al. (forthcoming, p.11-12) account for the ungrammaticality of *John, washed John*, by appealing to Reinhart and Reuland’s (1993) General Condition on A-chains which forbids both copies of the DP to be case-marked and referential. Only the higher copy of the chain can bear NOM and be referential; the lower copy must surface as an underspecified argument realized as the anaphor *himself*. The case facts are identical in Polish derived SE-sentences: only one copy of the DP can bear case. However, since I do not treat SE as an underspecified argument or a copy of an argument, I cannot allow the clitic to bear ACC or be an argument-like marker of ACC. Nonetheless, because the unmarked case that is obligatorily realized in NOM-ACC languages is NOM, NOM and not ACC must be realized on the unique DP in derived reflexives. Burzio (2000) takes an optimality-theoretic view stating that these facts fall out of the syntactic component making use of ranked (and violable) principles which, in the case of NOM-ACC languages, parallel a “NOM-requirement” filter before Spell-out to PF. Of course, this requirement can be translated as a “strong” or highly-ranked [EPP] requirement on T°. I leave this issue aside for the time being.

11 Body reflexives can also have non-agentive readings (in this example, if John’s facial muscles contracted involuntarily). They would then be derived like inchoatives in (11).
A note about inherent SE verbs of motion such as *wspinał się* ‘to climb/to move up’ and *ślizgać się* ‘to skate’ introduced in (2d). Like body and body-part reflexives, these verbs have only one DP argument plus the clitic. The DP in the sentence *Janek wspinał się* ‘JohnNOM was climbing/moving up’ both volitionally carries out the action and undergoes it. The verb therefore has both a Theme-type and an Agent-type requirement. However, unlike body or body-part reflexives, these motion verbs with SE do not have transitive alternants. In the theory I adopt, this means that the VP housing these verbs of motion can only merge with a defective Tr°. A ϕ-complete Tr° would need to assign ACC and these verbs do not surface with direct objects. Again, case theory would rule out such unfelicitous derivations.

I now continue with SE-uses involving one DP and only one internal theta-role.

5.2  *Inchoatives, unaccusatives and semantically divergent SE-verbs*

Inchoative, unaccusative and some semantically divergent SE-verbs exemplify structure (7d) in the typology of Bowers (2002). To derive these uses, the verb must be syntactically transitive, merging with Tr°, but it must also merge with an agentless \( v° \). The DP checks only [Theme] or [Experiencer] as it merges with V°. Furthermore, unless Tr° is j-incomplete, the derivation will crash for case reasons. Attracted first to Spec,TrP by [EPP] on Tr°, the DP checks this feature, and then moves up to the subject position.

(11) Inchoatives, inherent unaccusatives and semantically divergent SE-verbs

[Theme] or [Experiencer] checked with one overt DP

- **Szklanka**  
  glassNOM  
  *zbiła się.*  
  broke SE \( \rightarrow \) ‘The glass broke.’

- **Janek**  
  JohnNOM  
  *bał się.*  
  fear SE \( \rightarrow \) ‘John was afraid.’

- **Janek**  
  JohnNOM  
  *miał się dobrze.*  
  had SE well \( \rightarrow \) ‘John was feeling good/doing well.’
The derivation of semantically divergent SE-uses according to the schema in (11) is a good example of the vP domain being lexical. Recall Janek miał się dobrze, JohnNOM had SE well = ‘John was feeling good/doing well’ introduced in (1h). When the verb ma ‘has’ merges with a defective Tr° with SE, its interpretation changes from one of owning to one of feeling/being in a certain mental or physical state. It is therefore reasonable to suspect that the Experiencer theta-role is the internal theta-role assigned to the DP by the verb: Janek is experiencing the state of well-being, rather than being a typical Theme.

5.3 Middles

Middle constructions are interesting because they are thematically “in between” the two SE-uses just discussed. Similar to the SE-verbs in (10), they involve a Theme and an Agent, but they have only one overt DP, like the SE-verbs in (11). I first briefly present Bowers’ analysis of middles in English. Bowers provides the example of English middles to argue that Tr° may host a null marker to allow a middle reading such as in These shirts wash easily. Bowers claims that the main interpretative difference between the middle voice and the canonical transitive John is washing the shirts is agentivity. The middle construction appears to lack an Agent (no one washes the shirts; what is described is their property) while retaining a decidedly transitive character, arguably more transitive than in canonical unaccusatives such as John arrived (Bowers 2002:219).

I challenge Bowers’ view that there is no external theta-relation in middles. A matter of general consensus in the literature (Sportiche 1998, Kemmer 2000, Manney 2000, Steinbach 1999, 2002, among others) is that middles involve an external argument, some sort of Agent. Someone has to wash the shirts; otherwise, the middle reading is reduced to an inchoative construction where the fully internalized action of washing is adverbially characterized. For a syntactic account of middles and inchoative this is an undesirable analysis. The null agentive argument must be present.

I analyze Polish middles as indeed involving an external theta-role, perhaps not a prototypical but an arbitrary Agent. A middle in Polish is derived as in (12).
(12) Middles

[Theme] and an agentive role checked with DPs (overt and null, respectively)

\[
\text{Te koszule dobrze się piorą.}
\]

These shirtsNom wellAdv SE wash \(\rightarrow\) ‘These shirts wash well.’

5.4 Alternating psychological SE-verbs

Relying on the treatment of psych-verbs in English in Pesetsky 1995, alternating psych-verbs in Polish display a subtle but intriguing change of theta-relations depending on the alternant. In both the transitive and the SE cases, the human/sentient being is the Experiencer. The object of the psychological state, however, differs slightly in its thematic content: in the transitive alternant it is an agent-like Causer, while in the SE alternant, it is a Theme-like Subject Matter. I show the two alternants of psych-verbs in (13a) and (13b) respectively.
(13) Alternating psych SE-verbs

a. Transitive alternant
   [Experiencer] and Agent-like [Causer] checked with two overt DPs

   \[\text{Lingwistyka}\] \text{interesuje}\ Janka.
   \text{LinguisticsNOM interests JohnACC} \rightarrow \text{‘Linguistics interests John.’}

b. SE alternant
   [Experiencer] and Theme-like [Subject Matter] checked with two overt DPs

   \[\text{Janek}\] \text{interesuje się lingwistyką.}
   \text{JohnNOM interests SE in linguisticsINSTR} \rightarrow \text{‘John is interested in linguistics.’}
In the ACC-marked case in (13a), bearing the only internal theta-relation with the verb, *Janek* merges in as the complement of V°, checking [Experiencer]. It is then probed by [EPP] in Tr°, undergoes short object movement and gets ACC. *Lingwistyka*, on the other hand, is the causer of the psychological state experienced by *Janek*. As such, *lingwistyka* merges in to Spec,vP, checks [Causer] and moves up to the beginning of the clause, receiving NOM. However, when the verb surfaces with the reflexive clitic as in (13b), the theta-relations in the sentence change slightly. *Janek* still checks [Experiencer] with V°, but *lingwistyka* is now the Subject Matter, the bearing a Theme-type theta-role of his psychological experience. For this reason, *lingwistyka* receives Subject Matter from V° and, following Basilico 1998, *Janek* enters the derivation by merging in the Spec,VP position. Probed by the [EPP] on Tr°, *Janek* begins to move up and eventually surfaces with NOM. Interestingly, since Tr° is defective and cannot assign ACC, *lingwistyka* checks instrumental case. I do not discuss what head licenses oblique cases. An Applicative Phrase or a Prepositional Phrase are possible options.

5.5 Up-to-completion constructions

A curious but very productive use of SE is that of the up-to-completion construction, shown in (14).

(14) Up-to-completion constructions

*Janek* na-sprzątał się. [Agent] and [Experiencer] checked with overt DP; [Theme] with null object

JohnNOM PERF-cleaned SE → ‘John is sick of cleaning (the houseGEN).’

= ‘John is all “cleaned out”.’
In a canonical transitive sentence with *sprzątał* ‘(he) cleaned’, an overt, ACC-marked object DP would be spelled out. When the perfective prefix *na-* is added, however, SE is required. The correlation of SE and *na*-prefixation leads me to propose, following Travis 1991, 1994, 2000 a,b, 2003, Filip 2000, and Pereltsvaig 2000, that an Aspect Phrase (AspP) merges with the VP. AspP encodes situational aspect. Asp° in (14) bears the feature [telic], indicating that the event is bounded. As with other SE-alternants of otherwise canonical transitive verbs, the thematic relations in the up-to-completion construction differ somewhat from its transitive counterpart. Besides checking [Agent], the up-to-completion construction simultaneously makes Janek an Experiencer of the action. The gloss of (14) into English (hopefully) renders the Polish interpretation of Janek as a (self-)affected entity. This sentence, then, expresses three thematic relations: Agent, Experiencer, and Theme. Licensing of the null argument in (14) is discussed in the next subsection.

5.6  *Unergatives* and unspecified object constructions

What about inherent SE-“unergatives”? Examples of inherent SE-verbs such as *miaż się* ‘to laugh’ and *gapić się* ‘to stare’ suggest that the inventory of Polish verbs with SE includes verbs that express only an Agent. If, according to Bowers’ verb typology in (7), unergatives do not involve TrP, how do verbs such as *miaż się* ‘to laugh’ and *gapić się* ‘to stare’ support the current proposal? I propose that these verbs (at least in Polish) are syntactically transitive; that is, that they contain a TrP. According to Bowers’ verb typology, then, Polish SE-“unergatives” are not structural unergatives. They have the transitive structure of (7a), containing an agentive *v°* and an object in Comp,VP. Since the object position of these verbs is available for cognate objects, paralleling the English *laugh a merry laugh*, but the cognate objects cannot bear ACC, we can be confident that the TrP in these “unergatives” is defective.

Similar to SE-“unergatives”, the structural relation of object is also present in a small, closed class of regular transitive verbs (equivalents of the English *kick, bite, scratch*). These are the unspecified object constructions such as *Janek się gryzł/ kopał/ drapał* ‘JohnNOM used to bite/ kick/ scratch (others)’ seen in (1i). In these sentences, the addition of SE allows for an unspecified object reading, where the object is an entity different than the agentive subject. The syntax must be able to derive a body-reflexive and an unspecified object reading when these verbs are used with SE since both readings are felicitous. *Janek* can be interpreted as kicking himself or others. I claim that in both cases, the object is licensed by moving to Spec,TrP. Unlike in the reflexive reading, however, there are two DPs in the unspecified object reading: one checking [Agent] and one checking [Theme]. TrP is defective and headed by SE; for this reason, the object cannot surface with ACC. Having received its Theme theta-role from V° and raised to Spec,TrP to check [EPP], the object DP in the unspecified object construction surfaces as

---

12 The specific semantics of these “adverse action” verbs may point to a possible historical reason why the SE-alternants of these verbs developed a use where the subject is not the entity affected by his own action: kicking, biting and scratching would not likely be commonly used reflexive actions (although the reflexive reading is also available).
a phonetically null DP. Both SE-“unergatives” and unspecified object constructions are, then, underlyingly transitive: both have Agents and objects.

(15) SE-“unergatives” and unspecified object constructions

[Agent] checked with overt DP; [Theme] checked with cognate or null object DP

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{Janek} \quad \text{się} \quad \acute{\text{s}}\text{miał} \\
\text{JohnNOM} \quad \text{SE} \quad \text{laughed} \rightarrow \text{‘John laughed/was laughing.’}
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{Janek} \quad \text{się} \quad \text{bił/gryzł/kopał.} \\
\text{JohnNOM} \quad \text{SE} \quad \text{beat/bite/kickPST.3SG}
\end{array}
\rightarrow \text{‘John used to beat/bite/kick (other children).’ (about a child’s bad behaviour)}
\]

The possible mechanism licensing null DP objects deserves particular attention since the structure in (15) relies on the presence of the structural position for objects. The apparent problem, especially in the case of SE-“unergatives” such as śmiać się ‘to laugh’, is that the presence of the object position does not imply that an internal theta-role is saturated, at least not when there is no cognate object expressed. The question, then, can be stated as follows. What exactly is the relation between an object position and an internal theta-role: could a verbal head require an object position but not require an internal theta-role? Answering this question is crucial for the syntactic representation of null objects (and null arguments in general). Besides the SE-“unergatives”, the unspecified object construction and the middle construction involve phonologically null internal and external arguments, respectively. These arguments are theta-saturated because of the strong interpretation of the presence of a Theme and an Agent. In the approach presented, these arguments check the relevant theta-features and so must be active in the syntactic derivation. They cannot, by the feature-movement account of theta-roles be present only at LF. But what is the syntactic mechanism licensing such arguments?
Roberge (2003) and Cummins and Roberge (2003) explore the possibility that direct object positions are syntactically licensed, characterizing syntactic transitivity as the “internal-argument counterpart to the EPP” (Cummins and Roberge 2003:2). In their system, the object requirement on V parallels the sentential subject requirement encoded in the [EPP] on T°: it is a strictly structural notion, independent of factors contributing to the interpretation of that object. Roberge (personal communication) states that what is responsible for the presence of an object position must not be confused with what is contributing to the interpretation of that object. While all verbs require objects in the syntax, it is lexical, semantic and pragmatic factors that determine whether the object will actually be interpreted. Formalizing their proposal, Roberge (2003) and Cummins and Roberge (2003) propose that objects are a consequence of the predication requirement on the verb. The verb becomes a predicate by merging with a complement, as schematized in (16).

(16) Syntactic objects as consequences of the predication requirement on the verb (adapted from Roberge (2003) and Cummins and Roberge (2003))

```
VP ← PREDICATE
  LEXICAL VERB V Object
```

By separating the input that lexical semantics and pragmatics have on the interpretation of objects from purely syntactic reasons for having object positions, Roberge and Cummins open the door to unifying similar surface structure of SE-constructions despite their variable thematic properties. For the current proposal, on this view, every verb would merge with an object nominal, regardless of case assignment on the object and regardless of whether the nominal is pronounced or null. The next step in developing the current paper could involve positing that object position is always projected as a general transitivity requirement on verbs, regardless of how it ends up being interpreted, and what vocabulary item heads TrP. Although a Transitive Phrase is not implicated in the work of Roberge and Cummins, the [EPP] requirement on Tr° should be explored further as a possible syntactic mechanism of object licensing (and a direct parallel of [EPP]-triggered subject licensing by T°).

5.7 Affectives

The final and rather elusive use of SE to be discussed is the affective. Affective SE-uses have canonical transitive alternants; the affective use changes the semantics of the expressed theta-relations only very slightly. Furthermore, this use is limited to a few lexical items. The difference between Janek patrzył na obraz ‘JohnNOM was looking atPREP the painingACC’ and Janek patrzył się na obraz ‘JohnNOM was SE-looking atPREP the paintingACC’ can be characterized as one of internalization or affectedness: in the SE-alternant, besides being the Agent, Janek is also a type of Experiencer. While Janek still volitionally carries out the action of looking, the action is also affecting him (psychologically), making Janek a simultaneous Experiencer. It is possible that a more
articulated theory of thematic relations would be able to better characterize the interpretation of Janek in the affective SE-use. However, the feature-movement theory of theta-roles adopted allows the verb to optionally saturate a perhaps somewhat atypical Experiencer-type theta-role, along with [Agent]. Janek would, on this account, first merge in Spec,VP, and then raise to Spec,vP to check [Agent]. Obraz ‘painting’ remains a Theme-type argument (most likely a Target following Pesetsky 1995). In both the canonical transitive and the affective uses, the object DP obraz ‘painting’ requires the preposition na ‘at’ to receive case. Again, I leave aside the issue of oblique/inherent case assignment. The derivation of an affective SE-use is in (16).

(16) Affectives (addition of SE changes the semantics slightly)

[Agent] and an Experiencer-type role is checked with the subject, plus the [Theme]:

\[
\text{Janek} \quad \text{patrzył się na obraz.}
\]
JohnNOM was SE-looking at the painting

→ ‘John was looking (more intensely) at the painting.’

\[
\text{vs.}
\]
Non-SE alternant, [Theme] and [Agent] are checked with two overt DPs:

\[
\text{Janek} \quad \text{patrzył na obraz.}
\]
JohnNOM was looking at the painting

→ ‘John was looking at the painting.’ (neutral semantics)
6. Conclusion

Derived and inherent SE-reflexive data from Polish has been presented in this paper in support of the proposal that SE is a $\phi$-incomplete functional morpheme with [EPP] and [transitive] features. I proposed that SE merges in as the head of a Transitive Phrase (Bowers 2002) and probes for a nominal to check these features. The Transitive Phrase merges with VP headed by the lexical V° with an inherent transitivity requirement encoded in the feature [transitive]. Furthermore, the proposal relies on Hornstein’s (1999, 2001) feature-movement approach to theta-roles, allowing a single DP to check multiple theta-roles of the verb via syntactic movement. This particular syntactic treatment of SE together with a feature-movement approach to theta-theory unifies the morphosyntactic properties of derived and inherent reflexives in Polish by positing the same formal checking relations despite varying thematic requirements with various verbs.

By pursuing the option that the clitic SE is a functional morpheme with an [EPP] feature licensing syntactic movement, this paper outlined the consequences of a syntactic treatment of SE without recourse to thematic reduction. The main questions which, when answered, can more accurately weigh the value or show the weakness in treating SE as a this type of syntactic transitivizer are questions related to argument licensing. While I have not answered them at this point, I hope to have provided possible ways to begin looking for the answers. In particular, the issues of verbal object position as a syntactic requirement, null argument licensing, and multiple case assignment need to be researched further to assess the current proposal.

References


