0. Introduction

Perhaps the major issue that has informed syntactic studies of VSO languages is how different these languages might be from '(fully) configurational' languages like English.¹ The situation arises, of course, because of surface constituency: in VSO languages the verb and its complements are assumed not to form a constituent separate from the subject, but rather to be attached alongside the subject as immediate daughters of S. This flat structure carries with it the promise of a syntax substantially different from that of more familiar languages.

In recent years the potential for difference has been investigated most thoroughly with regard to grammatical relations. It is by now established that many VSO languages distinguish between subjects and nonsubjects in a way analogous to configurational languages (see Anderson and Chung 1976 and many other works). Accordingly, most theories of syntax—even those that define grammatical relations configurationally—are now equipped to make these relations available to languages no matter how flat their surface constituent structure (see, for instance, Anderson 1981, Bresnan 1982, Chomsky 1981, Emonds 1979, Gazdar and Sag 1980, Perlmutter 1982a). These developments suggest that it may be time to pose the question of whether VSO languages have any distinctive syntactic characteristics aside from the obvious characteristic of word order.

¹ By '(fully) configurational' languages I mean languages that exhibit the full range of hierarchical phrase structure configurations, including a (surface) VP. On this view, configurational languages are opposed to several other typological varieties of language, including VSO languages, free word order languages, and so on.

In contrast, some of the literature adopts a position according to which all languages that are not configurational exhibit a cluster of properties typified by the Australian language Warlpiri: extremely free word order, use of discontinuous expressions, and extensive use of null anaphora (see Chomsky 1981; Hale 1983; and the references cited there). The VSO languages that I am interested in are not 'nonconfigurational' in this strict sense; in particular, Chamorro is not a free word order language, although some word order permutations are allowed. Therefore, to minimize confusion and focus on the sense of 'configurational' described at the beginning of this note, I will refer to languages like English as 'configurational' but to VSO languages simply as 'VSO languages'.

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In this rather speculative paper, I use the Government-Binding framework to try to explicate one apparent difference between VSO languages and configurational languages. The difference involves the distribution of gaps produced by WH-Movement and other kinds of extraction – specifically, the absence in VSO languages of the sort of object-subject asymmetries that ought to follow from the Empty Category Principle (ECP). I first suggest that Kayne's (1981) version of the ECP can be extended to the VSO facts if the notion of government that it invokes is defined strictly in terms of surface constituency.\(^2\) I then show that, for VSO languages at least, the notion of government underlying Case Theory and Binding Theory cannot be so defined. The demonstration suggests that the ECP, despite its reference to government, has less in common with other principles of GB than might be supposed. At the same time, this view makes it possible to reduce this contrast between VSO languages and more familiar languages to widely held assumptions about their constituent structure.

The descriptive claims made below could be illustrated with material from several VSO languages. However, to streamline the extraposition, I will concentrate on the VSO language Chamorro and will mention facts from other languages only in passing. Section 1 describes the basic extraction pattern of Chamorro. Section 2 first presents Chomsky's (1981) and Kayne's versions of the ECP and then points out how the latter might be extended to Chamorro. Section 3 provides some evidence about the workings in Chamorro of Case Theory and Binding Theory, establishing ultimately that the government relevant for these theories is different from the ECP notion of government. Sections 4 and 5 form the conclusion.

1. Extraction in Chamorro

1.1. Surface Syntactic Characteristics

A necessary background to any discussion of extraction in Chamorro is an introduction to the surface syntax (for which see also Chung 1981a, 1982a).

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\(^2\) In this paper 'surface constituency' means constituency at S-structure. Since Phonetic Form is mentioned only in note 21 and in the conclusion, this usage should not be too confusing.

Although Chomsky (1981) and Kayne (1981) both assume that the ECP holds at Logical Form, their assumption encounters the problem that the ECP constrains some variables more clearly than others. Because of this, and because it seems unlikely that VSO languages have a nonconfigurational Logical Form, I take the position that the ECP holds at S-structure. Ultimately this position will need to be bolstered by a different account of the quantification facts discussed by Kayne, Rizzi (1982), and others.