0. Introduction

The grammar of English allows null VP to occur in certain contexts where the gap has no local antecedent. The antecedent may be in previous discourse, as in (1), or in a previous conjunct, as in (2) and (3):

(1) A: Did you finish that problem?
    B: No, I didn’t [VP e]

(2) John has left and Bill has [VP e] too.

(3) John wants to leave and Bill would like to [VP e] too.

Although a clause-internal antecedent for the gap is not required, there are grammatical constraints on the occurrence of the gaps. It is argued in Zagona (1982) that these and related constructions (VP preposing and tag questions) are licensed by a special property of English INFL. That node may contain lexical elements related to VP, including modals, do and to, which, I argued, make INFL a lexical governor for VP. Hence, null VP, like other empty categories, is subject to the EMPTY CATEGORY PRINCIPLE (ECP): [e, e] must be properly governed.

In Spanish, which lacks any parallel verbal morphemes in INFL, there are no parallel constructions with null VP. The equivalent of (2), for example, is ungrammatical:

(4) *Juan ha salido y Pablo ha [e] también.
    Juan has left and Pablo has too.

The parameter distinguishing English and Spanish was characterized in Zagona (1982) in terms of a feature of INFL – [V] – as shown in (5):

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The feature [+V] of English extends to INFL the governing properties of verbs. Spanish lacks this feature, and INFL remains as a defective head which cannot properly govern VP.¹

The claim that the ECP is relevant for the licensing of null VP constructions is based principally on the interaction of auxiliary cliticization and null VP structures. Crucial cases involve contrasts such as the following:²

(6)a. John has left and Bill has [e] too.
   b. John’s left
   c. *and Bill’s [e] too.

(7)a. John wants to leave and I want to [e] too.
   b. I wanna leave.
   c. *John is leaving and I wanna [e] too.

In structures for (6a) and (7a), INFL is lexically headed at S-structure, allowing INFL to govern the following VP. The structure which is relevant for (6a) is shown in (8):

(8) \[ i \, [e-\, has_i] \, [vP \, t_i[vP \, e]] \]

In the (c) examples, following cliticization of the auxiliary, INFL is devoid of its lexical features, resulting in its inability to properly govern the following category:

(9) \[ *[i \, o \, e] \, [vP \, e]\]

However, there are both empirical and conceptual limitations to the analysis outlined above which are related to the use of the categorial feature [V] to characterize the parameter. (I will briefly outline certain criticisms in Section 1.) It is argued in this paper that it is not [V], but

¹ Stowell's (1981) version of ECP was assumed.
² The constructions in (6b) and (7b) are usually referred to as AUXILIARY REDUCTION (AR) and to contraction respectively. Kaisse (1983) argues that the AR forms cannot be derived by phonological rules from full lexical items, and must be clitic forms in the syntax. Reanalysis of to is discussed in Section 2 below. There is, of course, an extensive literature on to contraction, discussion of which is beyond the scope of this paper. I am concerned here only with the property of the clitic/contracted forms (which I take to be uncontroversial) that they do not behave as lexical heads of INFL.