Unaccusativity meets agentivity and transitivity

1   Germanic basic (change-of-)location verbs are unaccusative (Hoekstra & Mulder 1990, Levin & Rappaport Hovav 1995; see *i.a.* auxiliary selection in (1)); some can be lexically causativised, with apophony (2), but a large subset (incl. 'fall', 'come', 'go', 'walk', 'stand', *i.a.*) are usable without apophony in a way that is simultaneously non-causative, agentive and transitive, allowing passivisation (3b) yet preserving the hallmarks of unaccusativity (3a), to varying degrees (which will be shown to be sensitive to both telicity and prosody). This paper reconciles this close encounter of unaccusativity, agentivity and transitivity with the syntax of argument structure, and extends the proposal to experiencer constructions with (change-of-)location verbs, including those expressing possession, based on the verb 'sit'. (The data below are from Dutch; the paper is empirically broader.)

(1)   ze {zijn/*hebben} gevallen   'they have fallen'
        they are/have   fallen

(2)   het virus {*is/heeft} hen   geveld   'the virus has felled them'
        the virus   is/has   them felled

(3)   a.   ze {$^{\%}$zijn/hebben} dit land aangevallen   ze {zijn/*hebben} dit land binnengevallen
        they are/have this country on.fallen   they are/have this country inside.vallen
        'they have attacked this country'   'they have invaded this country'
    b.   dit land werd (door hen) aangevallen   dit land werd (door hen) binnengevallen
        this country got by them on.fallen   this country got by them inside.fallen

2   Basic (change-of-)location verbs can serve as copular verbs (Hoekstra & Mulder 1990), relating the locative predicate to its subject (the Theme), as in (4). But the predication relation between the spatial PP and the Theme need not involve a verb: cf. *with*-absolutives (*with him in the White House, we're finished*) and 'Mad Magazine sentences' (*him in the White House?! no way!*). A non-verbal locative predication structure with a Theme subject can be the complement of V: (5). My proposal for the syntax of transitive/unaccusative hybrids of the type in (3) is that they unite key aspects of the two structures in (4b) and (5b) into a single monoclausal syntax, schematised in (6). What (6) shares with (4b) is the fact that the basic locational or change-of-location verb is used as a relator of a predication relation; with (5b), (6) has in common the fact that the predication involving the Theme argument is established in the complement of V. In (7), we see the syntax in (6) in its full glory: RELATOR$_2$ is exponed as *vallen* 'fall' (as in (3)) or *schieten* 'shoot', both Ps are spelled out (as *bij* and *in*, resp.), and we see an overt inalienable possessum (headed by *keelgat* 'throat hole'). In the transitive/unaccusative hybrids in (3), the inalienably possessed noun phrase in the locative P's complement is silent. Its External Possessor (DP$_2$, *dit land* in (3a)) is enveloped in a null-headed PP and gets dependent accusative case (Marantz 1991) in actives. The Theme (DP$_1$, *ze* 'they') is promoted to subject, as in unaccusatives in general, unhindered by the PP-enclosed External Possessor.

(4)   a.   he fell off the chair
    b.   [$_{RP}$ [$_{DP}$ *he*] [$_{R'}$ RELATOR=V(*fall*) [$_{PP}$ *off the chair*]]]
(5)   a.   she pulled him off the chair
    b.   [$_{RP2}$ [$_{DP}$ *she*] [$_{R'}$ RELATOR$_2$=v [$_{VP}$ V(*pull*) [$_{RP1}$ [$_{DP}$ *him*] [$_{R'}$ RELATOR$_1$=∅ [$_{PP}$ *off the chair*]]]]]]
(6)   [$_{RP2}$ [$_{PP}$ P DP$_2$] [$_{R'}$ RELATOR$_2$=V [$_{RP1}$ DP$_1$ [$_{R'}$ RELATOR$_1$ [$_{PP}$ P$_{Loc}$ [$_{DP}$ INALIENABLE POSS'UM]]]]]]
(7)   die opmerking {is/*heeft} bij hem in het verkeerde keelgat gevallen/geschoten
        that remark   is/has   by him in the wrong throat.hole fallen/shot
        'that remark went down the wrong way for him, rubbed him the wrong way'

3   In event nominals, an overt P introducing DP_2 becomes obligatory if a patientive reading is intended: whereas (8) with *van* has an agentive reading, DP_2 is unambiguously the undergoer with *op*/*bij* spelling out P. In a verbal environment, the preposition heading the PP in $SpecRP_2$ in (6) can remain silent; but nominals lack the capacity to license silence in their entourage (see Kayne 1984).

(8)   de aanval van/<u>op</u> DP_2 de inval van/<u>bij</u> DP_2 de overval van/<u>op</u> DP_2
          the on.fall of/on DP_2 the in.fall of/at DP_2 the over.fall of/on DP_2

4   If passivisation involves a reversal of the primary predication relation between the predicate and its subject (Den Dikken 2006:§2.7.1; 2020), application of passivisation to (6) reverses the directionality of predication in RP_1, such that PP occupies $SpecRP_1$ and the Theme takes the complement position; RP_2 is left untouched. This produces (9) as the underlier for passive (3b). In (9), DP_1 is licensed *in situ* and does not move. The inalienable possessum does not move either: it, too, is licensed in place, by the locative P that selects it. If the preposition introducing the External Possessor is overt, (9) produces an impersonal passive; but in the absence of an overt P introducing the External Possessor in $SpecRP_2$, the External Possessor is promoted to structural subject, and thus controls φ-feature agreement with the finite auxiliary and gets structural nominative case, as in (3b).

(9) $[_{RP2} [_{PP} P\ DP_2] [_{R'} REL_2=V [_{RP1} [_{PP} P_{Loc} [_{DP} INALIENABLE\ POSS'UM]] [_{R'} REL_1\ DP_1]]]]]$

5   The near-minimal pair of experiencer constructions in (10) involves a complex change-of-location verb and a PP headed by *aan* containing an inalienable possessum (IAP) linked to the feminine pronoun. (10a) is a perfect specimen of (6). (10b) starts out from almost the same underlier, except for the fact that $P_{\varnothing}$, instead of introducing the External Possessor, is merged under $RELATOR_2$ and forms a complex head with the verb. In (10b) the External Possessor (DP_2) c-commands DP_1, and is raised to SpecTP; DP_1 stays put and gets dependent ACC case. With the positional verb 'sit', the structure for (10b) procures the syntax for the Indo-European verbs translating as 'to possess' (Dutch *be<u>zitten</u>*, German *be<u>sitzen</u>*, Latin *pos<u>sīdeō</u>*): see (11a). In the absence of a positional verb, the PF-product of $P+RELATOR_2$ is 'have'. The syntax of possessive 'have' in (11b) unites Benveniste's adage ('*avoir = être+à*') with the idea that 'have' is a transitive copula (Hoekstra 1994, Myler 2016).

(10)   a.   het {is/*heeft} haar aan den lijve overkomen   'it happened to her (body)'
                it   is/has   her on the body over.come
                $[_{RP2} [_{PP} P_{\varnothing} [_{DP2} haar] [_{R'} R_2=komen [_{RP1} [_{DP1} het] [_{R'} R_1=over [_{PP} aan [_{DP} IAP=den lijve]]]]]]]$
          b.   zij {*is/heeft} het aan den lijve ondergaan   'she has experienced it (personally)'
                she   is/has   it on the body under.gone
                $[_{RP2} [_{DP2} zij] [_{R'} P_{\varnothing}+R_2=gaan [_{RP1} [_{DP1} het] [_{R'} R_1=onder [_{PP} aan [_{DP} IAP=den lijve]]]]]]$

(11)   a.   zij bezit een hoed   'she owns/possesses a hat'
                she BE.sits a hat
                $[_{RP2} [_{DP2} zij] [_{R'} P=be-+R_2=zitten [_{RP1} [_{DP1} een hoed] [_{R'} R_1=\varnothing [_{PP} P_{\varnothing} [_{DP} IAP=\varnothing]]]]]]$
          b.   zij heeft een hoed (op (het hoofd))   'she has a hat (on (her head))'
                she has a hat   on the head
                $[_{RP2} [_{DP2} zij] [_{R'} P+R_2=hebben [_{RP1} [_{DP1} een hoed] [_{R'} R_1=\varnothing [_{PP} (op) [_{DP} IAP=\varnothing/het hoofd]]]]]]$

6   At the theoretical level, (6) shows that predication structures can be layered, confirms that simple verbs of (change-of-)location can be used as relators of predication relations, and elucidates the syntax of unaccusativity and transitivity and their hallmarks (auxiliary selection, case, passive).