

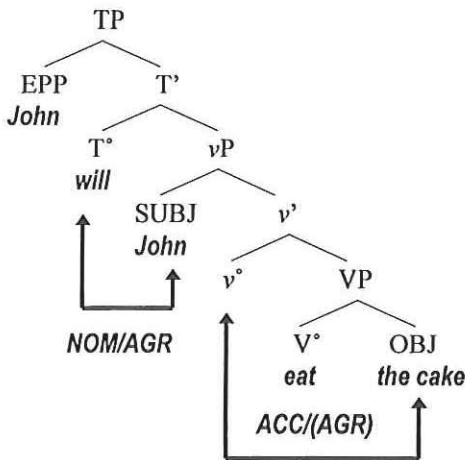
Agree: The Other VP-Internal Subject Hypothesis*

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1 Introduction

The main aim of this paper is to provide empirical evidence for the notion of AGREE (cf. Chomsky 1998, 2000)—i.e., an abstract feature matching relation between a functional head and a ‘goal’ in situ (the discussion here will be restricted to case and agreement licensing). In contrast to the view whereby case and agreement features are checked in a specifier-head configuration (which I will refer to as the MOVE approach), AGREE does not require (overt or covert) movement of a noun phrase to the specifier of the relevant functional head to check the case and agreement features. Rather, features are matched or licensed abstractly (or long-distance) without movement (cf. (1)).

(1) AGREE

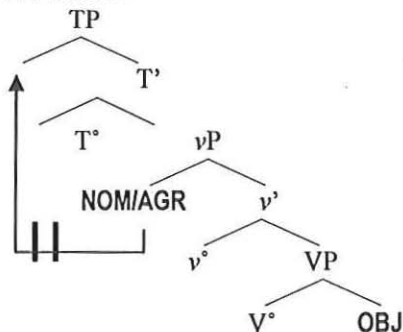


* The material presented here has benefited from presentation and discussion at the 24th GLOW Colloquium, the 25th Penn Linguistics Colloquium, WCCFL 20, as well as talks given at Harvard University and McGill University. I would like to thank in particular Jonathan Bobaljik, Norvin Richards, and Lisa Travis for helpful questions and comments. All errors are mine. [This paper will appear simultaneously in the proceedings of WCCFL 20.]

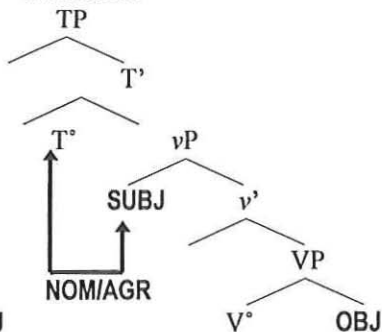
Note that under the AGREE approach, movement is not excluded, it is simply not required to check case and agreement features. Movement of for instance the subject in English can occur, however, the crucial claim of the AGREE approach is that it is not triggered by the need to check case and agreement features but rather by a feature such as the EPP.

In this paper, I will show that the MOVE and the AGREE approaches can be distinguished empirically and that certain constructions can only be accounted for under the AGREE approach. Note that the claim of this paper is not that AGREE should replace MOVE altogether; the argument to be provided will only show that certain contexts require AGREE. I show elsewhere that different contexts (in the same language) in fact provide evidence for MOVE and against AGREE (see Wurmbrand 2000, 2001a), thus arguing against a full reduction of MOVE to AGREE. The shape of the argument is summarized in 0. I will show that there are contexts in which i) an argument, in particular a nominative XP agreeing with the finite verb, is in a position lower than its case/agreement position (i.e., SpecTP) at PF and LF,¹ and ii) covert movement of that argument cannot apply. Since in such contexts, a specifier-head configuration between the subject and T cannot be established (neither overtly nor covertly), checking of the case and agreement features would be impossible under the MOVE approach, and hence a scenario such as the one in 0a would be predicted to be ungrammatical.²

(2) a. PF and LF



b. AGREE



¹ Throughout this paper, I assume that case and agreement are licensed by VP-external functional heads and cannot be licensed directly by the verb. See Wurmbrand (2001b, to appear) for arguments for this position.

² Chomsky (1998, 2000) suggests that English *there*-insertion contexts are an instance of the scenario in 0 and hence provide an argument for AGREE. However, since there is an alternative MOVE analysis (cf. Bobaljik 1994, 1995, 1999), *there*-insertion contexts only show that an AGREE analysis is possible but not necessary.

Under the AGREE approach, on the other hand, movement (or a specifier-head configuration) is not required to license case and agreement features, and hence the structure in 0 is (correctly) predicted to be possible.

2 Scope freezing

The first part of the argument for AGREE is to establish that an argument is in a position lower than its case position at LF and that it cannot undergo further covert movement. So-called *scope freezing* contexts, in particular constructions in which a quantifier cannot scope out of a constituent which has undergone movement (cf. Barss 1986, Sauerland 1997, 1998), will allow us to make the point. To illustrate, while (2)a is ambiguous between a wide and a narrow scope interpretation of the universal quantifier, the wide scope reading disappears when a constituent containing the universal quantifier is topicalized as in (2)b. I will not provide any explanation for this freezing effect but simply assume that fronted XPs are 'frozen' for scope in that movement out of a frozen XP and reconstruction into a frozen XP are prohibited. However, reconstruction of the whole frozen XP is possible. Thus, in (2)b, the topicalized XP can reconstruct but the universal quantifier can not undergo further movement (resulting in a narrow scope interpretation with respect to the existential quantifier).³

- (2) a. and a policeman stood in front of every bank that day $\exists \gg \forall / \forall \gg \exists$
 b. and [stand in front of every bank] a policeman did that day $*\forall \gg \exists$

The same effect is found (in certain constructions) in German. For reasons that will become clear as I proceed, the discussion will be restricted to unaccusative constructions involving an indirect dative object and a nominative argument which is the underlying direct object. As is shown in (3), these unaccusative constructions allow scope ambiguity between the two arguments, indicating that covert movement is in principle possible.⁴

- (3) a. weil mindestens einem Kritiker jeder Film gefallen sollte
 since at-least one critic-DAT every film-NOM please should

³ For the argument to be provided here it is crucial that scope freezing is seen as a restriction on movement (see Bruening to appear for an alternative account).

⁴ A well-known fact about German scope is that the inverted scope interpretation requires a special rise-fall intonation (cf. Frey 1989, 1993, Krifka 1998, Lechner 1998). While it is important for German speakers to keep this fact in mind, it has no bearing on the argument for AGREE.

- 'since at least one critic should like every movie' $\exists \gg \forall / ? \forall \gg \exists$
- b. weil mindestens einem Kind jede Übung gelungen ist
 since at-least one child-DAT every exercise-NOM managed AUX
 'since at least one child managed to do every exercise' $\exists \gg \forall / ? \forall \gg \exists$

If, on the other hand, the universal quantifier is part of a topicalized constituent as in (4), the ambiguity disappears and again only a narrow scope interpretation of the universal quantifier is possible.

- (4) a. ?[Jeder Film gefallen]_{XP} sollte mindestens einem Kritiker
 [Every film-NOM please]_{XP} should at-least one critic-DAT
 'At least one critic should like every movie' $\exists \gg \forall; * \forall \gg \exists$
- b. ?[Jede Übung gelungen]_{XP} ist mindestens einem Kind
 [Every exercise-NOM managed]_{XP} AUX at-least one child-DAT
 'At least one child (has) managed to do every exercise' $\exists \gg \forall; * \forall \gg \exists$

Before I turn to the structure of these examples and their relevance for the question of AGREE vs. MOVE, a few words about the underlying structure of (3)-(4) is in order. Comparing the variable binding properties in unaccusative nominative/dative constructions with those in transitive nominative/dative constructions (i.e., constructions with verbs like *help*), leads to the conclusion that the dative DP is generated in a position higher than the nominative DP in unaccusative constructions (whereas the nominative DP is the higher argument in transitive constructions). Relevant examples are given in (5). All examples involve a bound variable embedded in the first argument and a quantified DP as the second argument. In the first two examples, the nominative precedes the dative. As can be seen in (5)a vs. (5)b, a bound variable interpretation is only possible in this configuration when the verb is an unaccusative verb; the structure is ungrammatical when the verb is a transitive verb. In contrast, if the dative precedes the nominative as in (5)c,d, a bound variable interpretation is possible in the transitive construction and prohibited in the unaccusative construction. (All examples are grammatical when the pronouns are interpreted referentially).

- (5) a. weil seine_i Enkelinnen jedem Grossvater_i gefallen
 since his_i granddaughters-NOM every grandfather_i-DAT please-3PL
 'since every grandfather likes his granddaughters'
- b. ?*weil seine_i Eltern jedem Sohn_i vertrauen/helfen
 since his_i parents-NOM every son_i-DAT trust/help
 'since his parents help/trust every son'
- c. ?*weil ihrem_i Grossvater jede Enkelin_i gefällt

- since her_i grandfather-DAT every granddaughter_i-NOM pleases
 'since her grandfather likes every granddaughter'
 d. weil seinem_i Sohn jeder_i Vater vertraut/hilft
 since his son_i-DAT every father-NOM trusts/helps
 'since every father trust/helps his son'

A standard account of asymmetries of this sort is that in the orders that allow a bound variable interpretation, the arguments embedding the bound pronouns do not occur in their base positions but have been moved to their surface position from a position lower than the quantified arguments (cf. (6)a,d). Assuming that the nominative DP in (6)a and the dative DP in (6)d reconstruct to their base positions at LF, they end up in positions where they are c-commanded by the quantifiers, and hence bound variable interpretations are licensed in (6)a,d. In (6)b,c, on the other hand, the arguments appear in their base positions, and hence no reconstruction sites are available for the DPs embedding the pronouns. Since the pronouns are not in the scope of a quantifier (neither in their surface positions nor at LF), bound variable interpretations are impossible in (6)b,c.

- (6) a. *his*_i NOM *every*_i DAT t_{NOM} unaccusative V (*like, manage*)
 b. **his*_i NOM *every*_i DAT transitive V (*help, trust*)
 c. **his*_i DAT *every*_i NOM unaccusative V (*like, manage*)
 d. *his*_i DAT *every*_i NOM t_{DAT} transitive V (*help, trust*)

While this account is somewhat superficial,⁵ it allows us to draw certain conclusions about the basic order of arguments. In particular the grammaticality of (5)a/(6)a and the ungrammaticality of (5)c/(6)c suggest that in this type of unaccusative construction, the base position of the dative argument is higher than the base position of the nominative argument.

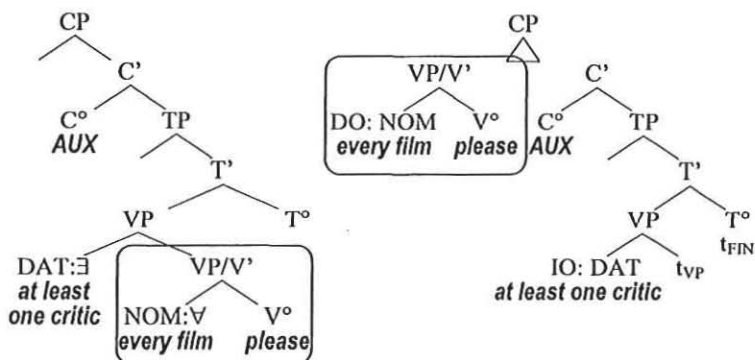
Returning to the scope freezing examples in (4), I assume the structures in (7) on the next page—i.e., the nominative DP which is the lower argument forms a constituent with the verb and this constituent undergoes fronting. For the discussion here it will not matter whether the fronted constituent is a Larsonian VP-layer, a remnant VP which includes the trace of the indirect object, or simply the V' level (assuming a *Bare Phrase Structure* notation, V' categories are maximal projections at some point in the derivation, and hence

⁵ For instance, I cannot engage here in the question of why covert movement of the quantifiers is impossible in (6)b,c. An obvious answer would be to assume that covert movement causes a *Weak Cross-Over* violation. However, this solution then raises the question of why no such violation arises for overt movement in (5)/(6)a,d.

nothing seems to exclude them from operations such as topicalization which target non-minimal categories). To account for the scope properties of (4), I assume again that the fronted VP/V' can reconstruct at LF, however, further movement of the universal quantifier out of the boxed constituent in (7) is prohibited.

Assuming that (7) is the correct structure for examples such as (4) (I will consider and reject an alternative below), we see that the underlying direct object which obligatorily bears nominative case and agrees with the finite auxiliary is embedded in the VP at PF and LF (i.e., it is in a projection which is lower than its case/agreement position SpecTP). Thus, (7) constitutes a scenario for AGREE: the nominative DP is in its base position at PF and LF, and, importantly, it cannot undergo further covert movement due to the fact that it is embedded in a frozen complement. Since in this scenario, case/agreement features cannot be checked in a specifier-head configuration, but the structures are nevertheless well-formed, it can be concluded that feature checking via AGREE (i.e., without covert movement) must be possible.

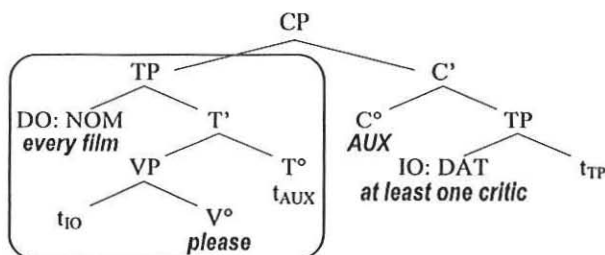
(7) a. Base structure/LF b. VP/V'-fronting = (4)a



Before concluding that the examples in (4) can only be derived via AGREE, a potential alternative structure which would allow feature checking in a specifier-head configuration has to be discussed. As is illustrated in (8), a structure in which the topicalized constituent is the TP would be consistent with the MOVE approach since the nominative argument could have moved to SpecTP overtly (the indirect dative object would have to be scrambled and adjoined to TP). Assuming as above that fronted constituents are frozen for scope, neither movement of the universal quantifier out of the fronted TP nor reconstruction of the existential dative argument into the TP would be possi-

ble. Furthermore, under the assumption that traces do not count for scope (i.e., that c-commanding the trace of the dative quantifier is not sufficient for the nominative quantifier to take scope over the dative), the scope freezing effect can also be accounted for under the structure in (8).

(8)



Thus, if the examples in (4) can be represented by the structure in (8), they could not be taken as evidence for the necessity of AGREE. In the next section, however, I will show that there is independent motivation for the claim that TP fronting is impossible in German. Hence, I will conclude that (7) is the only possible structure for (4) and that AGREE is therefore required to properly account for the scope and case/agreement facts in these examples.

3 Against TP-fronting

3.1 A restriction on topicalization

Let me start with a short summary of the properties of fronted constituents including nominative arguments. As has been pointed out by Haider (1990), derived and underlying subjects can be part of a fronted constituent in German. In the passive construction in (9)a and the unaccusative construction in (9)b, the nominative argument included in the fronted constituent is the underlying direct object (the label of the fronted XP will be discussed below). In (9)c and (9)d, the nominative argument is the underlying external argument of an unergative or a transitive verb. If used in an appropriate context and discourse situation, all examples in (9), while perhaps somewhat complex, are nevertheless grammatical.

- (9) a. [Ein Orden verliehen]_{XP} wurde ihr erst gestern
 [A medal-NOM awarded]_{XP} AUX her-DAT just yesterday
 'It just happened yesterday that she was awarded a medal'

- b. [Ein Fehler unterlaufen]_{XP} ist ihrem Mann noch nie
 [A mistake-NOM happened]_{XP} is her husband-DAT never
 'It never happened that her husband made a mistake'
- c. [Außenseiter gewonnen]_{XP} haben/hat hier noch nie
 [outsiders won]_{XP} have/has here never
 'It never happened before that outsiders won here'
- d. ?[Ein Millionär einem Studenten einen Wagen geschenkt]_{XP}
 [A millionaire-NOM a student-DAT a car-ACC given]_{XP}
 hat hier noch nie
 has here never
 'It has never happened here that a millionaire gave a student a car'

Examples such as the ones in (9), however, are subject to the following definiteness restriction. While indefinite or quantified nominative arguments can be part of a fronted constituent, definite nominative DPs and proper names are prohibited (cf. Kratzer 1984, Haider 1990). As can be seen in (10), replacing the indefinite nominative arguments in (9) with definite nominatives leads to ungrammaticality. Note that the definiteness restriction does not extend to strong quantifiers; i.e., the examples in (9)/(10) are possible (provided an appropriate context is supplied) when the nominative arguments involve a (weak or strong) quantifier (as for instance in (4) above; likewise, all examples in (9)/(10) are acceptable when the nominative DPs are changed to "every XPs").

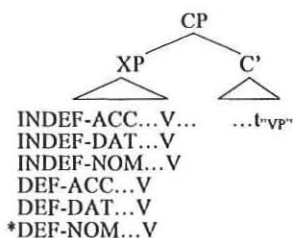
- (10) a. *[Der Orden verliehen]_{XP} wurde ihr erst gestern
 [The medal-NOM awarded]_{XP} AUX her-DAT just yesterday
 'It just happened yesterday that she was awarded the medal'
- b. *[Dieser Fehler unterlaufen]_{XP} ist ihrem Mann noch nie
 [This mistake-NOM happened]_{XP} is her husband-DAT never
 'It never happened that her husband made this mistake'
- c. *[Die Außenseiter gewonnen]_{XP} haben/*hat hier noch nie
 [The outsiders won]_{XP} have/*has here never
 'It never happened before that the outsiders won here'
- d. *[Der Millionär einem Studenten einen Wagen geschenkt]_{XP}
 [The millionaire-NOM a student-DAT a car-ACC given]_{XP}
 hat hier noch nie
 has here never
 'It never happened here that the millionaire gave a student a car'

Importantly, this definiteness restriction does not hold for non-nominative arguments. As is shown in (11), definite accusative or dative arguments are perfectly grammatical as part of fronted constituents.

- (11) a. [Den Peter besucht]_{XP} hat wieder einmal nur die Maria
 [The Peter-ACC visited]_{XP} has again once only the Mary
 'It was again only Mary who visited Peter'
- b. [Den Wagen repariert]_{XP} hat man mir gestern
 [The car-ACC repaired]_{XP} has one me-DAT yesterday
 'Yesterday, they repaired the car for me'
- c. ?[Ein Millionär dem Studenten einen Wagen geschenkt]_{XP}
 [A millionaire-NOM the student-DAT a car-ACC given]_{XP}
 hat hier noch nie
 has here never
 'It never happened here that a millionaire gave the student a car'

The diagram in (12) summarizes the properties of German fronting configurations discussed in this section. Note that the distribution in (12) casts some doubt on a purely semantic or pragmatic treatment of the definiteness effect, since it would not be obvious how the distinction between definite nominatives, on the one hand, and definite accusatives or datives, on the other hand, could be captured under such an account. Rather, an account is required that ties the definite/indefinite property to the case properties of the arguments involved. In the next section, I will suggest such an account, which will also bring us back to the original issue of this paper, namely the comparison between the MOVE and the AGREE approach and the question of whether TPs can topicalize in German.

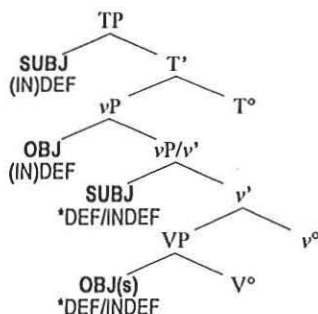
(12) Definiteness restriction



3.2 Towards an account

To account for the distribution in (12), I will assume following Diesing (1990, 1996, 1997), that definite DPs cannot be interpreted in their base positions but have to move to a higher position (however, quantifiers can stay inside the VP; cf. Diesing 1997). As can be seen in (13) on the next page, the result of this assumption is that external arguments have to leave their base position in SpecvP and move to the higher TP (at least at LF). Likewise, definite objects have to leave the VP and move to the higher vP (or higher) in transitive constructions, or the TP in unaccusative constructions.⁶ If we now look back at (12), what we see is that the fronted constituent can correspond to any projection in (13) except TP. Thus, I conclude that TP fronting is not possible in German (some speculations on the reason for this constraint will be provided in section 3.3). Combining the definiteness restriction with the assumption that TPs cannot be fronted in German, thus allows us to account for the distribution of definite arguments in fronted constituents. Below, I will illustrate the relevant cases in more detail.

(13) Definiteness restriction (LF)



Fronting of a definite transitive or unergative subject as in (14)a (=10)c) is impossible since it will always violate one of the two constraints suggested here. If the subject stays in its base position (i.e., in SpecvP as shown in 0a),

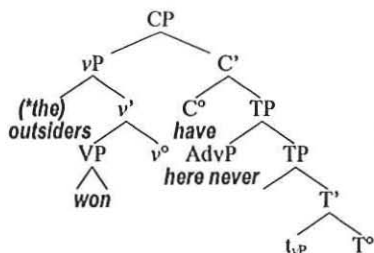
⁶ I assume for simplicity that unaccusative constructions lack a vP altogether, hence the next projection available for the object is the TP. Alternatively, one could assume that unaccusatives project a vP or at least a v', however, that this v' cannot assign structural case, and hence does not constitute a potential landing site for the object. Assuming that object movement can only target potential landing sites, it will follow again that definite objects move to TP in unaccusative constructions.

fronting could apply to the *vP* (satisfying the “No-TP-Fronting” constraint), however, the subject would then fail the definiteness restriction. Since movement out of frozen constituents (such as fronted XPs) is impossible, the subject cannot escape from its base position at LF and hence could not be interpreted properly. If the subject moves to SpecTP overtly as in 0b, the definiteness restriction would be satisfied, however, fronting would then have to apply to the TP, which is excluded by the “No-TP-Fronting” constraint. Indefinite external arguments as in (14)b (=9)c), on the other hand, can stay in their base position since the definiteness restriction does not apply and hence fronting of the *vP* is possible.

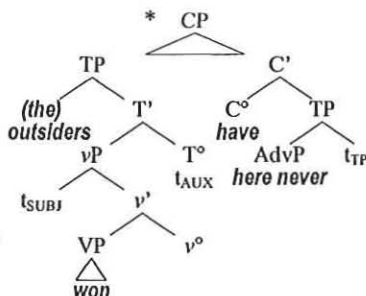
- (14)a. *[Die Außenseiter gewonnen]_{XP} haben/hat hier noch nie
 [The outsiders won]_{XP} have/has here never
 ‘It never happened before that the outsiders won here’
- b. [Außenseiter gewonnen]_{vP} haben/*hat hier noch nie
 [outsiders won]_{vP} have/*has here never
 ‘It never happened before that outsiders won here’

Note that (14)b (as depicted in 0a), constitutes again a scenario for AGREE. Since the subject is in its base position at PF and LF, and scope freezing prevents further covert movement, at no point can the subject establish a specifier-head configuration with the licensing head T, and hence the only way the case and agreement features of the subject can be licensed in 0a is by abstract AGREE. Thus, the contrast between (14)a and (14)b now allows us to exclude the derivation in (8) suggested as an option for (4)—i.e., a structure such as 0b involving overt movement of the subject to SpecTP and subsequent fronting of the TP. Assuming such a derivation was possible, the account for the ungrammaticality of (14)a, and more generally, the impossibility of definite nominative arguments as part of fronted constituents would be lost.

(16)a. vP-fronting



b. *TP-fronting



Finally, the two constraints I have suggested correctly predict that definite (underlying) objects are possible as part of a fronted constituent in transitive constructions (cf. (15)a, = (11)a), but not in unaccusative constructions (cf. (15)b, = (10)b). Like definite subjects, definite objects have to leave their base position inside the VP. Since transitive objects check case in SpecvP, but this position is not available in unaccusative constructions (see fn. 6), movement to SpecvP is only possible in the former. Hence, in (15)a, vP-fronting can apply in accordance with both the definiteness restriction and the “No-TP-Fronting” constraint. In unaccusative constructions, on the other hand, no structure exists that would satisfy both constraints. If the VP is fronted, the definite underlying object would fail the definiteness restriction (recall that covert movement is prohibited due to the scope freezing nature of these constructions); if the object moves to SpecTP overtly and the TP is fronted, the definiteness restriction would be satisfied, however, fronting would then violate the “No-TP-Fronting” constraint.

- (15)a. [Den Peter besucht]_{vP} hat wieder einmalnur die Maria
 [The Peter-ACC visited]_{vP} has again once only the Mary
 ‘It was again only Mary who visited Peter’
- b. *[Dieser Fehler unterlaufen]_{XP} ist ihrem Mann noch nie
 [This mistake-NOM happened]_{XP} is her husband-DAT never
 ‘It never happened that her husband made this mistake’

To conclude, the distribution of definite arguments embedded in fronted constituents (cf. (9) through (11)) provides indirect evidence for the assumption that TPs cannot be topicalized in German. In the next section, I will sketch how this assumption can be motivated and further supported. Assuming that the analysis suggested here is on the right track and TP-fronting is prohibited

in German, topicalization structures (in particular, scope freezing configurations) constitute scenarios in which case and agreement cannot be licensed via MOVE but only via AGREE.

3.3 Speculations on the "No-TP-fronting" constraint

Although a full derivation of the "No-TP-fronting" constraint cannot be provided here, I would like to point out how this constraint can be derived from restrictions that have been suggested independently for topicalization constructions in the syntactic and pragmatic literature on the topic.

First, as has been pointed out by Davis & Prince (1986), auxiliaries cannot be fronted in Yiddish, which Davis & Prince propose follows from the discourse or pragmatic properties of auxiliaries. In particular, these authors suggest that auxiliaries are too vacuous and not rich enough semantically to allow topicalization. Assuming that topicalization has to be licensed pragmatically (which seems to be widely accepted), the impossibility of TP-fronting in German could thus be accounted for along the same lines as the impossibility of fronting of auxiliaries in Yiddish.

Second, it has been noted for instance by Haider (1990, 1993), that fronting of headless constituents is prohibited in German. An instantiation of this constraint is found in particle-verb constructions such as (16). (16)a illustrates that particles are stranded inside the VP when the verb moves to C. As shown in (16)b vs. (16)c, fronting of a "VP" which includes the object and a particle is possible, however, only when the "VP" also contains the verb. When the verb has left the VP as in (16)c, the constituent including the object and the particle cannot be fronted.⁷

- (16)a. Gestern rief der Hans seinen Bruder an t_v
 Yesterday called the John-NOM his brother-ACC up t_v
 'John phoned his brother yesterday'
- b. [Seinen Bruder anrufen]_{VP} hat nur der Hans t_{VP}
 [His brother-ACC up-called]_{VP} has only the John t_{VP}
 'Only John called his brother'
- c. *[Seinen Bruder an t_v]_{VP} rief Hans gestern t_{VP}
 [His brother-ACC up t_v]_{VP} called John yesterday t_{VP}
 'It was yesterday that John phoned his brother'

⁷ As expected, this restriction is not found in particle constructions in which the particle and the object form a small clause—i.e., a constituent excluding the verb (see Wurmbrand 1999 for discussion of the two types of particle constructions).

I will not go into detail about what exactly causes violations such as the one in (16)c (options that come to mind are the *Head Movement Constraint* or the *Proper Binding Condition*). However, I would like to point out that TP-fronting as in (8) or 0b also involves fronting of a headless constituent. Since the finite auxiliary in the examples under consideration moves to C as part of the verb second phenomenon, the head of the TP includes a trace and is hence 'headless' in the same way as (16)c is. Hence the impossibility of TP-fronting could be excluded along the same lines as (16)c is ruled out.⁸

4 Conclusion

In this paper, I have argued for the existence of AGREE as an abstract feature licensing mechanism. The argument was based on German topicalization constructions in which the subject (i.e., a nominative XP agreeing with the finite verb) is in a position lower than its case/agreement position (i.e., SpecTP) at PF, and importantly, is trapped in this position at LF. Since in these contexts, movement to the specifier position of the licensing head cannot occur (neither overtly nor covertly), the grammaticality of these constructions suggests that case and agreement licensing does not require a specifier-head configuration, which is compatible with the AGREE approach to feature licensing, but incompatible with the MOVE approach.

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⁸ Under this account, an additional constraint is required to block long distance TP-fronting —i.e., when the auxiliary does not raise to C. A possible direction is to assume an obligatory T-to-C operation at LF (cf. Pesetsky & Torrego 2001).

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