

## Clitics, agreement and ellipsis in Dutch dialects\*

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This paper provides a new analysis for the absence of subject clitics and agreement endings on sluiced wh-phrases. The argument is based on two premises: 1. in sluiced IPs the subject remains in its VP-internal base position and only moves to specIP at LF, and 2. the occurrence of both subject clitics and agreement endings on C° is subject to very stringent locality requirements, which fail to be met when the subject is in specVP. Supporting evidence for this analysis comes from a previously undiscussed elliptical construction in Dutch dialects which involves the polarity elements 'yes' and 'no'.

### 1. Introduction

A number of Dutch dialects allows subject clitics and/or agreement endings to show up on finite complementizers in embedded clauses. As illustrated in (1), the dialect of Waregem is one of them.

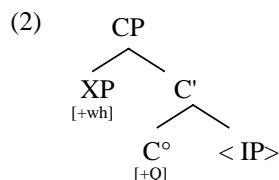
- (1) K peize da-n-ze                      gewonnen    èèn.  
I think that-PL-they-CLITIC won            have-PL  
'I think they've won.'

In this example the finite complementizer *da* 'that' agrees in number with the subject of the embedded clause. It is combined with the same plural agreement suffix that also shows up on the finite verb *èèn* 'have'. Moreover, the subject of this clause is the clitic pronoun *ze* 'they', which also attaches to the complementizer. In short, both subject clitics and agreement endings are clearly C°-related in the dialect of Waregem (and in Dutch dialects more generally, cf. Van Craenenbroeck & Van Koppen 2002a, 2002b, in press and references cited there for further discussion). This raises the hypothesis that these elements

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should be able to survive the ellipsis process involved in sluicing. Consider the schematic tree structure in (2) (Merchant 2001:3).



This structure represents the by now fairly standard analysis of a clause which has undergone sluicing. The sluiced wh-phrase (indicated here as XP) occupies the specifier position of a CP headed by an interrogative C°-head, while the whole of IP is left unpronounced (arguably as a result of PF-deletion, cf. Merchant 2001:39-83 for discussion and cf. also *infra*). The only CP-internal positions which are not contained in the ellipsis site are the specifier position of CP, which hosts the wh-phrase, and its head. Given that I have just shown that this is the position where complementizer agreement endings and subject clitics surface, the above reasoning seems to suggest that agreement endings and subject clitics should be able to show up to the right of sluiced wh-phrases. However, as was first observed by Lobeck (1995:58-60) and later also discussed by Merchant (2001:72-74), this hypothesis is not borne out. Consider the Waregem data in (3).

- (3)
- |      |      |         |           |       |     |                    |          |
|------|------|---------|-----------|-------|-----|--------------------|----------|
| Z'   | èèn  | iemand  | ezien ... |       |     |                    |          |
| they | have | someone | seen      |       |     |                    |          |
| a.   | ...  | maar    | k' en     | wee   | nie | wie.               |          |
|      |      | but     | I NEG     | know  | not | who                |          |
| b.   | *    | ...     | maar      | k' en | wee | nie                | wie-n-s. |
|      |      | but     | I NEG     | know  | not | who-PL-they-CLITIC |          |
- 'They saw someone but I don't know who'.

What these examples show, is that sluiced wh-phrases cannot be combined with subject clitics or with complementizer agreement, not even in those dialects which do allow these phenomena to show up in non-elliptical clauses.<sup>1</sup> The main aim of this paper is to provide an analysis for the ungrammaticality of examples such as the one in (3b). I want to argue that the deviance of such data is the logical conclusion of two premises. First of all, I will argue – following Merchant (2001:185-193) – that when an IP is sluiced, the subject of that IP remains in its VP-internal base position and only moves to specIP at LF. Secondly, I will show that the occurrence of subject clitics and complementizer

<sup>1</sup> Another difference between (3) and (1) concerns the fact that in the latter example the complementizer *da* 'that' is overtly present, while in the former it is not. Cf. Merchant (2001:74-82) for discussion of this. For evidence showing that it is not the absence of an overt complementizer which is responsible for the absence of agreement endings and subject clitics in sluicing contexts, cf. Merchant 2001:67.

agreement in Dutch dialects is subject to very stringent locality requirements. Specifically, these elements only show up when the subject occupies the highest structural position available. When taken together, these two claims provide an account for the absence of agreement endings and subject clitics on sluiced wh-phrases in Dutch dialects. Supporting evidence for this line of reasoning comes from another elliptical construction found in Dutch dialects, in which the (elided) subject occupies a high position, and in which subject clitics and agreement endings do show up.

The paper is organised as follows. The first two sections establish the two premises my argumentation is based on. Specifically, in section two I argue that subjects in sluiced IPs remain in specVP until after Spell-Out, while in section three I discuss the locality requirements on complementizer agreement and subject clitic placement in Dutch dialects. Section four contains an intermediate conclusion, in which I make explicit how the combination of the two premises leads to an account for the absence of subject clitics and agreement endings on sluiced wh-phrases in Dutch dialects. In section five I introduce and discuss short, elliptical replies to yes/no-questions as supporting evidence for my account, whereas section six briefly considers some previous analyses for the absence of subject clitics and agreement endings on sluiced wh-phrases. Section seven sums up and concludes.

## 2. First premise: subjects in sluiced IPs

As I already pointed out above, the idea that subjects in sluiced IPs remain in specVP until after the point of Spell-Out was first proposed and defended by Merchant (2001:185-193). He starts out from the observation (dating back to Ross 1969) that sluicing can rescue otherwise illicit instances of movement out of subject islands. Consider the data in (4) (Merchant 2001:185).

- (4) a. A biography of one of the Marx brothers will appear this year –  
guess which!
- b. \* Which Marx brother did she say that [a biography of *t*] will  
appear this year?

The example in (4b) shows that in English, subextracting a wh-phrase (in this case *which Marx brother*) out of a DP-subject results in ungrammaticality. In (4a), however, the same movement operation takes place, but the IP out of which the wh-phrase is extracted, is PF-deleted as a result of sluicing. Given that the resulting sentence is perfectly well-formed, it looks like sluicing (or more generally, ellipsis) can void a violation of the subject island constraint. Merchant argues that the reason why the example in (4a) is grammatical, is because the wh-phrase is extracted from the subject while the latter is still in its base position in specVP. That is, the structure of the ellipsis site in (4a) is not the one in (5a), but rather the one in (5b).

- (5) a. ... which<sub>k</sub> [<sub>IP</sub> [a biography of t<sub>k</sub>]<sub>i</sub> will [<sub>VP</sub> t<sub>i</sub> appear this year]]  
 b. ... which<sub>k</sub> [<sub>IP</sub> \_\_\_\_ will [<sub>VP</sub> [a biography of t<sub>k</sub>] appear this year]]

The subject island constraint is often analysed as a subcase of the ban on extraction from 'derived positions', i.e. it is not allowed to subextract from phrases which have been moved as well (cf. for example Stepanov 2001 for a recent account and references). This predicts that subextraction out of a subject should be allowed, provided the movement proceeds from the base position of this DP, i.e. specVP. This prediction is confirmed by data such as those in (6) and (7) (Merchant 2001:187). Moreover, as the examples in (8) illustrate, similar judgements hold for Dutch (and its dialects).

- (6) a. \* Which candidate were [posters of t] all over town?  
 b. Which candidate were there [posters of t] all over town?
- (7) a. \* Which candidate did they say that [to get t to agree to a debate] was hard?  
 b. Which candidate did they say that it was hard [to get t to agree to a debate]?
- (8) a. \* Wat waren [t voor mensen] op het feest?  
 what were for people at the party  
 b. Wat waren er [t voor mensen] op het feest?  
 what were there for people at the party  
 'What kind of people were there at the party?'

In the b-sentences of these examples, the insertion of an expletive in specIP allows the subject to stay in its base position in specVP. As the contrast between (6a-8a) and (6b-8b) shows, subextraction out of a subject-DP is prohibited from its derived position (specIP), but allowed from its base position (specVP). What Merchant suggests, then, is that the reason for the well-formedness of (4a) is essentially the same as that in (6b), (7b) and (8b). Specifically, extraction out of a subject elided by sluicing does not yield a violation of the subject island constraint, because the movement operation proceeds from the non-derived position of the subject.

An immediate question raised by this account is why the overt counterpart of the structure in (5b) is not grammatical. Consider the example in (9) (Merchant 2001:187).

- (9) \* (Guess) [which Marx brother]<sub>k</sub> [<sub>IP</sub> \_\_\_\_ will [<sub>VP</sub> [a biography of t<sub>k</sub>] appear this year]]?

The standard explanation for the ungrammaticality of the sentence in (9) is that the EPP has been violated. This principle states that the specifier position of IP has to be overtly realized (cf. Lasnik 2001a for discussion, cf. also Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou 1998 for argumentation that in some languages the EPP

can be satisfied by a fronted finite verb). It seems reasonable to assume that this is a requirement that is evaluated at the PF-interface, i.e. that it is essentially a PF-requirement (cf. for example Bobaljik 2002). If that is the case, however, then violations of this principle should be repairable at PF as well. Specifically, if an IP with an unchecked EPP-feature were to be deleted at PF, the resulting derivation should converge at this interface. Needless to say, this is precisely what happens in the example in (4a)/(5b). This means that sluicing does not repair subject island violations *per se*. Rather, it allows the subject to stay in its VP-internal base position by deleting the offending EPP-feature. Given that subextraction out of 'low' subjects is licit, it appears as if the subject condition is violated under sluicing.

Before turning over to the second premise for my argumentation, it is worth pointing out an important consequence of Merchant's analysis, as well as an objection raised against it by Lasnik & Park (2003). Specifically, the proposal that the subject of a sluiced IP remains in specVP, might lead one to expect that it obligatorily takes narrow scope. As illustrated by the data in (10) (Merchant 2001:189), this is not the case.

- (10) a. Five pictures of one of the victims weren't distributed to the press, but I can't remember which one<sub>i</sub> ~~t<sub>IP</sub> \_\_\_\_\_ weren't t<sub>VP</sub> distributed [ five pictures of t<sub>i</sub> ] to the press }~~  $(\exists > \neg, \neg > \exists)$
- b. [Every soldier from one of the airborne battalions]<sub>i</sub> seemed to his<sub>i</sub> commander to be sick, but I don't know (from) which (battalion)<sub>k</sub> ~~t<sub>IP</sub> \_\_\_\_\_ seemed to his<sub>j</sub> commander t<sub>IP</sub> \_\_\_\_\_ to be [ every soldier (from) t<sub>k</sub> ] sick }~~

In the example in (10a) the elided subject *five pictures of t<sub>i</sub>* can take scope either above or below negation. However, if this DP remained in specVP throughout the entire derivation, only the latter option should be available. A similar line of reasoning applies to the b-sentence. In order for the elided possessive pronoun *his<sub>j</sub>* to be interpreted as a bound variable, the embedded subject *every soldier (from) t<sub>k</sub>* has to raise to the subject position of the matrix verb *seemed*, from where it can c-command this pronoun. In light of these data, Merchant proposes that the subject of a sluiced IP undergoes covert phrasal A-movement at LF. That is, the ellipsis process which PF-deletes the IP, allows the subject to remain in its base position at Spell-Out. However, at LF, feature checking requirements force it to move to specIP.

The idea that covert phrasal A-movement exists, is contested by Lasnik & Park (2003). Given that this leads them to conclude that subjects in sluiced IPs do not remain in specVP, but rather move to specIP before Spell-Out, it is important in light of the present discussion to tackle their objection. Consider the data in (11) (Lasnik & Park 2003:652) and (12) (Lasnik 2001b:112).

- (11) a. The DA made every defendant<sub>i</sub> out to be guilty during his<sub>i</sub> trial.  
 b. \* The DA made out every defendant<sub>i</sub> to be guilty during his<sub>i</sub> trial.

- (12) a. Mary made John out to be a fool.  
 b. Mary made out John to be a fool.

Lasnik & Park's argument goes as follows. Johnson (1991) and Lasnik (2001b) have shown that the word order exemplified in (11a), where the embedded subject *every defendant* surfaces to the left of the matrix particle *out*, is the result of overt object shift, i.e. A-movement of the embedded subject into the specifier position of the matrix Agr<sub>o</sub>P. That this DP indeed occupies a position in the matrix clause is corroborated by the fact that it can bind the pronoun *his* in the matrix VP-adjunct *during his trial*. The b-example on the other hand, shows that when the embedded subject occurs to the right of the particle *out*, it cannot bind into a matrix adjunct. This leads Lasnik (2001b) to conclude that although object shift is normally optional in English (cf. the pair in (12)), it is only from its shifted position that an embedded subject can take scope into the matrix clause. However, suppose that the DP *every defendant* in (11b) could also undergo covert phrasal A-movement. Then it should be able raise to the matrix specAgr<sub>o</sub>P at LF and the contrast between (11a) and (11b) should cease to exist. Given that this is not the case, Lasnik & Park (2003) conclude that there is no such thing as covert phrasal A-movement, and that subjects in sluiced IPs raise out of the VP into specIP, just like their non-elided counterparts do.

The key to reconciling the data in (11) and (12) with Merchant's account of subjects in sluiced IPs, is to consider the way in which Lasnik (2001b) analyses the optionality of English object shift. Reconsider the examples in (12). If the variability in word order in these sentences is indeed the result of object shift applying in (12a) but not in (12b), then it looks like this operation is optional. Given that the theoretical framework of the Minimalist Program does not allow for optionality, Lasnik suggests that the difference between (12a) and (12b) boils down to whether or not the matrix clause contains an Agr<sub>o</sub>P. In so doing, he follows up on a suggestion made by Chomsky (1995:350) that "[i]f Agr has no strong feature, then PF considerations, at least, give no reason for it to be present at all, and LF considerations do not seem relevant". Lasnik concludes, then, "that the optionality of raising is the optionality of Agr<sub>o</sub>" (Lasnik 2001b:119). However, this implies that for covert object shift to apply in an example like (11b) or (12b), an Agr<sub>o</sub><sup>°</sup>-head would have to be merged into the extended verbal projection of the matrix clause *after* the derivation has branched off to PF, i.e. in 'covert syntax'. Not only is such a merger in violation of the Strict Cycle Condition, it is also unclear why an Agr<sub>o</sub><sup>°</sup>-head – which has no relevance for LF, cf. Chomsky's quote above – would be merged in a part of the derivation leading exclusively to LF. The conclusion seems to be, then, that the reason why no covert phrasal A-movement takes place in the b-examples in (11)-(12) is because there is neither a trigger nor a landing site for such a

movement.<sup>2</sup> This means that the data in (11) are not to be taken as counterevidence against Merchant's account of subjects in sluiced IPs.

The first premise for my analysis of the absence of subject clitics and agreement endings on sluiced wh-phrases is now firmly in place. I have argued that when IP is sluiced, the subject remains in its VP-internal base position until after the point of Spell-Out. In the next section I show that both complementizer agreement and subject clitic placement are sensitive to the structural position occupied by the subject.

### 3. Second premise: locality restrictions on agreement and clitics

Before I proceed to discuss the locality restrictions on complementizer agreement and subject clitic placement, two rather important *caveats* are in order. First of all, I should point out that it is not my intention here to provide a syntactic analysis of these two phenomena. Given that such an account would be orthogonal to my main concerns, I will refrain from making any commitments, referring the reader instead to the relevant literature. The only point I am trying to establish in this section, is that both complementizer agreement and subject clitic placement are sensitive to the structural position occupied by the subject at Spell-Out. The second preliminary remark I want to make concerns the dialects that will feature in this section. For reasons independent of the present discussion, I cannot illustrate the locality restrictions on complementizer agreement and subject clitic placement on the basis of the dialect of Waregem, which featured in section one. Specifically, like most West-Flemish dialects, it disallows adverbs to occur in between the complementizer and the subject (cf. Haeberli 1999 for discussion and an account). Given that this configuration plays a crucial role in the argumentation that follows, I have to resort to other dialects to illustrate my point. I hope to return to this issue in future research, though.

The claim that complementizer agreement is subject to some form of locality is not at all a new or controversial one. Specifically, several authors have recently shown that in order for an agreement ending to occur on a complementizer, it has to be very local to the embedded subject (cf. Ackema & Neeleman 2001; Van Craenenbroeck & Van Koppen 2002c, in press; Carstens 2003). Consider in this respect the data in (13) from the dialect of Hellendoorn (Van Craenenbroeck & Van Koppen in press:175).

- (13) a.     ... darr-e    wiej   allichte   de   wedstrijd   winne   zölt.  
           that-PL   we   probably   the   game   win   will  
       b.   \* ... darr-e    allichte   wiej   de   wedstrijd   winne   zölt.  
           that-PL   probably   we   the   game   win   will

<sup>2</sup> It is important to point out that this objection does not hold for Merchant's account of subjects in sluiced IPs as outlined above. Specifically, in that analysis, Agr<sub>s</sub><sup>o</sup> is endowed with the relevant features and present in the structure *before* Spell-Out.

- c. ... dat        allichte    wiej    de        wedstrijd    winne    zólt.  
           that        probably    we     the        game        win     will  
           '... that we will probably win the game.'

The example in (13a) shows that the dialect of Hellendoorn displays complementizer agreement when the subject is first person plural. In this clause, the complementizer does not occur in its bare, uninflected form (i.e. as *dat*) but rather with a plural agreement suffix *-e* attached to it. As illustrated in (13b), however, this ending is disallowed when an adverb intervenes between the complementizer and the subject. Instead, it is the bare form of the complementizer which is used in this case (cf. (13c)). Although the precise analysis of these data is still very much an open question (cf. the references mentioned above for various approaches), it is clear that complementizer agreement is subject to very stringent locality requirements, stricter even than those imposed on A-dependencies between a verb or an inflectional head and a DP-argument. In light of the examples in (13), Van Craenenbroeck & Van Koppen (2002c, in press) suggest that in order for an agreement ending to appear on a complementizer, the subject it is agreeing with has to occupy the specifier position of its complement.

The locality restrictions on subject clitic placement are less well-known and less obvious. Specifically, in order to demonstrate the importance of locality in this domain, I have to make an additional assumption. Consider the example in (14) (from the dialect of Wambeek).

- (14) Ik    paus    dat-n                    aai                    gui    kommen.  
       I    think    that-he-CLITIC    he-STRONG    goes    come  
       'I think that he will come.'

In this example, the third person singular masculine subject is spelled out twice: once as a clitic pronoun attached to the complementizer and once as a strong pronoun. Following Van Craenenbroeck & Van Koppen (2002b), I assume that the strong pronoun *aai* 'he' is the actual thematic subject of this clause. In other words, it is this DP which is merged in specVP and moved to specIP. The clitic pronoun *n* 'he' is but a secondary reflex of this subject (the precise analysis of which I will leave open here, but cf. Van Craenenbroeck & Van Koppen 2002a, 2002b; Zwart 1993, 1997; Haegeman 1992 for possible approaches).<sup>3</sup> Now consider from this perspective the data in (15) and (16).

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<sup>3</sup> Note that the line of reasoning advocated here implies that in an example such as the one in (i), the subject position is filled with a DP-*pro*. I assume that this null pronominal is licensed and identified by the clitic pronoun on C°. Cf. Bennis & Haegeman (1984) for discussion.

(i) Ik    paus    dat-n                    gui    kommen.  
       I    think    that-he-CLITIC    goes    come  
       'I think he will come.'

- (15) a. da zaailn gisteren nie wisten wa duun.  
 that they-STRONG yesterday not knew what do  
 b. da gisteren zaailn nie wisten wa duun.  
 that yesterday they-STRONG not knew what do  
 '... that they were bored yesterday.'
- (16) a. da-se zaailn gisteren nie wisten wa duun.  
 that-they-CLITIC they-STRONG yesterday not knew what do  
 b. \* da-se gisteren zaailn nie wisten wa duun.  
 that-they-CLITIC yesterday they-STRONG not knew what do  
 '... that they were bored yesterday.'

As the examples in (15) show, a strong subject pronoun such as *zaailn* 'they' can occur both before and after the adverb *gisteren* 'yesterday'. I assume that this variation in word order is due to the subject occupying different positions in each example. While in (15a) *zaailn* 'they' is situated in the highest subject position available, in (15b) it remains in a lower position. What the sentences in (16) illustrate, then, is that when a strong pronoun is clitic-doubled, it obligatorily occupies the highest subject position. The only difference between the examples in (15) and those in (16) is that in the latter the subject clitic *se* 'they' is attached to the complementizer. As a result of this, the strong subject pronoun *zaailn* 'they' can no longer occur to the right of the temporal adverb *gisteren* 'yesterday'. More abstractly, these data show that the occurrence of subject clitics in the dialects under consideration here is crucially dependent on the subject occupying the highest structural position available to it. In other words, subject clitic placement displays a locality restriction similar to the one described earlier for complementizer agreement. This means that I have now established the second premise on which my argumentation in the next section will be based.

#### 4. Intermediate conclusion: combining the two premises

The logic of the argument should be clear by now. In section three I have shown that complementizer agreement and subject clitic placement are phenomena which only show up when the subject of the clause they are associated with, occupies the highest structural position available to it. In section two I have argued that in sluiced IPs the subject remains in its base position and hence does not occupy the highest structural position available. The conclusion, then, is that complementizer agreement and subject clitic placement cannot occur in sluicing contexts, *quod erat demonstrandum*. Applied to the example in (3) (repeated below as (17)), this means that the elided structure is not the one in (18a), but rather the one in (18b). As indicated by the double arrow, in this structure, the complementizer and the subject are not local enough for the occurrence of either complementizer agreement or subject clitics to be triggered.

- (17) Z' èèn iemand ezien ...  
 they have someone seen  
 a. ... maar k' en wee nie wie.  
     but I NEG know not who  
 b. \* ... maar k' en wee nie wie-n-s.  
     but I NEG know not who-PL-they-CLITIC  
 'They saw someone but I don't know who'.

- (18) a. \* ... [CP *who* C° [EP ~~they~~ [VP ~~t<sub>they</sub>~~ [V ~~t<sub>who</sub>~~ ~~seen~~] ~~have~~ ]]]  
           ↑          ↑  
           LOCAL
- b. ... [CP *who* C° [EP \_\_\_\_\_ [VP ~~they~~ [V ~~t<sub>who</sub>~~ ~~seen~~] ~~have~~ ]]]  
           ↑                          ↑  
           NOT LOCAL

This concludes the main argument of this paper. In the next section I turn to some supporting evidence for my account.

### 5. Supporting evidence: conjugated instances of 'yes' and 'no'

In the analysis presented in the preceding sections, the relation between ellipsis on the one hand and the absence of agreement suffixes and subject clitics on the other, is an indirect one. Specifically, there is no inherent property of elliptical constructions which prohibits clitics or agreement endings from occurring at their edge. Rather, in sluicing contexts, the ellipsis operation allows the subject to remain in its base position, which in turn disrupts the local complementizer/subject-relation necessary for complementizer agreement or subject clitic placement. This means that there might be elliptical constructions which *can* combine with subject clitics or complementizer agreement endings, provided the (elided) subject occupies the highest structural position available. In this section I argue that the construction exemplified by B's reply in the Waregem Dutch dialogue in (19), represents precisely such a construction.

- (19) A: Èèn ze gewonnen?  
       have they won  
       B: Ja-n-s.  
       yes-PL-they-CLITIC  
       'A: Have Pete and John won? B: Yes, they have.'

In this dialogue, speaker B replies to A's yes/no-question by means of a short reply consisting not just of the affirmative particle *ja* 'yes', but rather of a combination of this particle, the plural suffix *n* and the third person plural clitic pronoun *s* 'they'. This pattern is fully productive (i.e. it occurs with all person/number-combinations) and it applies both to *ja* 'yes' and to *nee* 'no' (cf.

Van Craenenbroeck to appear for more examples). I will henceforth refer to this construction as conjugated instances of 'yes' and 'no'.

The fact that subject clitics and agreement endings can occur to the right of *ja* 'yes' in (19B) suggests that B's reply is an elliptical construction. Specifically, under the (uncontroversial) assumption that neither subject clitics nor agreement endings can occur in the absence of an appropriate agreement configuration, the construction in (19B) should contain – at some level of representation – at least an IP-domain. The null hypothesis then seems to be that the elided structure is identical to (the declarative counterpart of) A's original question. That is, B's reply would be the elliptical version of *Yes, they have won*.<sup>4</sup> As I will demonstrate below, however, there are good reasons to assume that this hypothesis is false. In particular, I will present evidence suggesting that part of the elided structure in (19B) has been pronominalized and hence no longer contains any internal structure. As a consequence of this, the subject will be base-generated directly in specIP, which in turn implies that it will be local enough to C° for the occurrence of complementizer agreement and subject clitics to be triggered.

There are various ways to detect the presence of (unpronounced) syntactic structure internal to an ellipsis site. One of them can be illustrated on the basis of the examples in (20).

- (20) a. I didn't think there were going to be many people at the party, but there were [*e*].  
 b. I didn't think there was going to be a famous linguist at the party, but there was [*e*].

These examples show that the subject position of a clause which has undergone VP-ellipsis (i.e. the *but*-clause in both examples) can be filled by a *there*-expletive. Moreover, the auxiliary of such a clause agrees with the unpronounced associate DP. In particular, in (20a) the verb *were* is plural because so is the DP *many people*, while in (20b) the verb *was* is singular in accordance with *a famous linguist*. As such, these data provide strong evidence in favour of the assumption that the ellipsis site in these sentences (indicated here as [*e*]) contains internal structure and hence should not be represented as a null, structureless proform (*pace* López 1995; Lobeck 1995, among others). A similar line of reasoning – though with a different outcome – can now be applied to the construction under discussion in this section. Consider the Waregem data in (21) and (22).

- (21) Kpeize da-n ter twee venten in den hof staa-n.  
 I.think that-PL there two men in the garden stand-PL  
 'I think that there are two men standing in the garden.'

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<sup>4</sup> This is the hypothesis entertained by Postma & Van der Wurff (to appear), the only generative account to date of this construction. Cf. Van Craenenbroeck (to appear) for a critical evaluation of their analysis.

- (22) A:   Staan    ter    twee   venten   in   den   hof?  
          stand-PL there two men    in the garden
- B:   a.    Ja-t.  
               yes-it
- b.    \* Ja-r.  
               yes-there
- c.    \* Ja-n.  
               yes-PL
- d.    \* Ja-n-t.  
               yes-PL- it
- e.    \* Ja-n-r.  
               yes-PL-there
- f.    \* Ja-n-s.  
               yes-PL-they

'A: Are there two men standing in the garden? B: Yes, there are.'

The example in (21) shows that in the dialect of Waregem the inflected form of the complementizer also shows up in *there*-expletive constructions. In this sentence the complementizer *dan* 'that-PL' agrees – arguably through the intermediation of the expletive pronoun – with the associate DP *twee venten* 'two men'. This observation raises two specific predictions for conjugated instances of 'yes' and 'no'. Consider the dialogue in (22). If the elided structure of B's reply were identical to the declarative counterpart of A's original question, then the plural suffix *n* should be able to show up next to the polarity element *ja* 'yes', parallel to its occurrence in (21). Furthermore, B's reply might also feature a clitic counterpart of the expletive pronoun *er* 'there'. As illustrated in (22), however, neither of these predictions is borne out. Specifically, the only clitic pronoun that can occur to the right of *ja* 'yes' in this dialogue is the third person singular neuter pronoun *t* 'it' (cp. (22Ba) with (22Bb)). Moreover, the plural agreement suffix *-n* is categorically excluded, regardless of whether it occurs on its own (22Bc) or whether it is followed by *t* 'it' (22Bd), by *r* 'there' (22Be) or even by *s* 'they' (22Bf).<sup>5</sup> I take these data as an indication that the ellipsis site in conjugated instances of 'yes' and 'no' contains less internal structure than, for example, the VP-ellipsis examples in (20). Specifically, it seems that the VP-internal structure – which would normally host the associate DP of a *there*-expletive construction – is unavailable. As will

<sup>5</sup> A small *caveat* on the judgement of (22Bd) is in order. It turns out that not all my informants find this example equally deviant. I suspect this is due to the fact for some speakers the morphological make-up of the form *jaant* 'yes.PL.it-CLITIC' is becoming non-transparent and that as a result it is being used as a variant of *jaat* 'yes.it-CLITIC'. For example, as De Vogelaer 2004 points out, in the dialect of Lokeren, the form *jaant* 'yes.PL.it-CLITIC' can be used in reply to *Is da huis al verkocht?* 'Has that house been sold already?' (lit. is that house already sold). Given that in this example the subject is singular, it is clear that the original meaning of the plural *n*-suffix has been lost. The judgements reported in the main text are also found – though less explicitly – in Smessaert (1995:48-49).

be clear later on, I will assume that this part of the clausal structure has been pronominalized by a clausal proform.

A second test that can be used in order to determine the amount of structure contained in an ellipsis site concerns the presence of movement dependencies. Consider the example in (23).

(23) I know which chisels Ed likes and which ones he doesn't [e].

The second conjunct clause in this example is interpreted as *which ones he doesn't like t*. In other words, the base position of the moved wh-phrase *which ones* is contained in the ellipsis site. In order for this movement dependency to be licit, the VP-ellipsis site (indicated as [e]) has to contain enough internal structure to host the trace of the movement operation. This once again implies that it should not be represented as a null, structureless proform. The same line of reasoning also applies to conjugated instances of 'yes' and 'no', albeit with a different type of movement operation. In particular, it is clear that replies to yes/no-questions cannot be combined with wh-movement, regardless of how much unpronounced structure they contain. However, there is another movement operation which should in principle be allowed. Van Craenenbroeck & Van Koppen (2002b) argue that in the dialects under consideration here, object clitics move – prior to Spell-Out – to a functional head position c-commanding the canonical subject position. As a result they surface right-adjacent to the complementizer (or to the subject clitic if there is one). Given that subject clitics are allowed to surface to the right of polarity markers such as 'yes' and 'no', then, one might *a priori* expect object clitics to do the same. As indicated by the example in (24), however, this is not the case.

(24) A: Èèn ze t ezien?  
           have they it seen  
       B: a. \* Ja-n-s-t.  
               yes-PL-they-CLITIC-it-CLITIC  
           b. Ja-n-s.  
               yes-PL-they-CLITIC  
       'A: Have they seen it? B: Yes, they have.'

As indicated by the ungrammaticality of (24Ba), object clitics are disallowed in conjugated instances of 'yes' and 'no'. Given that subject clitics *can* occur in this position, there does not seem to be an inherent incompatibility between this construction and clitic movement. Rather, what I want to suggest is that because part of the elided structure of B's reply has been pronominalized, there is not enough structure to host the trace of the object clitic's movement chain. In other words, object clitics are disallowed in conjugated instances of 'yes' and 'no' because their base-generated position is unavailable in this construction.

Summing up, the data I have reviewed in the preceding paragraphs suggest that the ellipsis site in conjugated instances of 'yes' and 'no' does not contain a fully-fledged clausal structure. Rather, I want to propose that part of this

structure has been pronominalized by a clausal proform. More specifically, I want to propose that it is the schematic structure in (25) which underlies conjugated instances of 'yes' and 'no'.<sup>6,7</sup>

(25) [<sub>CP</sub> YES/NO [<sub>C'</sub> C<sup>o</sup>+AGR+SUBJECT CLITIC [<sub>IP</sub>-SUBJECT [<sub>VP</sub>-*pro*<sub>VP</sub>-I<sup>o</sup>]]]]

In this structure, the elided VP has been replaced by a null, structureless proform, which is provided an appropriate antecedent at LF. That explains why conjugated instances of 'yes' and 'no' are incompatible with *there*-expletive constructions. Given that *pro*<sub>VP</sub> contains no internal structure, it cannot host an associate DP. Moreover, the absence of object clitic movement also follows from the postulation of this proform: there is no room to host the trace of this movement operation, so it cannot occur. On the other hand, however, the fact that C<sup>o</sup> displays agreement suffixes and subject clitics suggest that the subject *is* syntactically represented in the elided structure. Put differently, the IP-level is not part of the structure which has been pronominalized. At PF, though, this IP is left unpronounced (cf. Van Craenenbroeck to appear for discussion of the trigger of this ellipsis operation). That concludes the derivation of conjugated instances of 'yes' and 'no'.

The relevance of conjugated instances of 'yes' and 'no' for the main topic of this paper should now be clear. I have argued that it is an elliptical construction in which part of the elided structure has been pronominalized and hence is unavailable to the syntactic derivation. This has consequences for the role played by the subject in this derivation. Specifically, since *pro*<sub>VP</sub> contains no internal structure, the subject cannot be merged in its usual, VP-internal base position and then move to specIP. Rather, it has to be merged directly in specIP. That in turn implies that it will be in a local relation with C<sup>o</sup>, even if the IP it is contained in, is deleted at PF. Given that the occurrence of both complementizer agreement endings and subject clitics are sensitive to this type of locality (cf. *supra*, section three), their presence in this construction follows naturally. More generally, the difference between sluicing and conjugated instances of 'yes' and 'no' when it comes to the absence or presence of agreement endings and subject clitics boils down to the structural position occupied by the subject in the elided IP.

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<sup>6</sup> In this structure I assume that polarity elements such as 'yes' and 'no' occupy specCP. Cf. Van Craenenbroeck (to appear) for discussion.

<sup>7</sup> Although I will not go further into this issue here, it is possible to pinpoint even more precisely the syntactic structure which underlies conjugated instances of 'yes' and 'no'. Cf. Van Craenenbroeck (to appear) for extensive discussion and argumentation. There I also argue that it is TP, rather than VP, which is pronominalized in this construction. As this refinement would lead me too far afield here, I leave it undiscussed.

## 6. Previous analyses

In this section I briefly introduce and critically evaluate the analyses offered by Lobeck (1995) and Merchant (2001) for the absence of subject clitics and agreement endings on sluiced wh-phrases.

## 6.1. Lobeck (1995)

Consider again the example in (3) (repeated here as (26)).

- (26) Z' èèn iemand ezien ...  
 they have someone seen  
 a. ... maar k' en wee nie wie.  
       but I NEG know not who  
 b. \* ... maar k' en wee nie wie-n-s.  
       but I NEG know not who-PL-they-CLITIC  
 'They saw someone but I don't know who'.

Lobeck (1995:58-60) presents examples comparable to this one as prime evidence that the ellipsis site in sluicing constructions contains a null structureless IP-proform rather than a fully-merged but PF-deleted syntactic structure. Her reasoning goes as follows. Complementizer agreement is the overt reflex of an agreement relation between  $C^\circ$  and  $I^\circ$ . Given that  $pro_{IP}$  contains no internal structure, there is no  $I^\circ$ -head present in sluicing examples like the one in (26). *Ergo* complementizer agreement cannot show up on sluiced wh-phrases.

At first sight, Lobeck's argumentation appears to provide a satisfactory explanation for the ungrammaticality of examples such as the one in (26b). Moreover, it also seems to be able to account for the different behaviour of sluicing and conjugated instances of 'yes' and 'no'. Under the assumption that in the former case it is IP which is pronominalized, while in the latter it is VP, the limited distribution of subject clitics and agreement endings follows naturally. However, on closer inspection there is a more general problem with Lobeck's approach. In particular, as discussed at length by Merchant (2001), there is substantial empirical evidence – independent of the issues discussed here – suggesting that sluicing is the result of PF-deleting IP, rather than merging a null IP-proform (cf. also Van Craenenbroeck to appear for additional discussion). In the same vein, Merchant (2001) presents a series of arguments directed specifically against Lobeck's (1995) account for the ungrammaticality of data such as those in (26b) (cf. Merchant 2001:69-72 for details). This means that the explanation for these facts has to be sought elsewhere.

## 6.2. Merchant (2001)

Merchant (2001:72-74) suggests such an alternative approach. Under a PF-deletion analysis of sluicing, the absence of IP-related material (such as clitics and agreement) on sluiced wh-phrases might be the result of the ordering of the operations involved. Specifically, assume that both clitic placement and complementizer agreement are the result of a reordering process roughly described as I°-to-C°-movement. If this movement operation were to take place at a point in the derivation *later* than the one at which the PF-deletion of IP occurs, then it would be bled by it. Put differently, at the point in the derivation at which the clitic or the agreement ending is supposed to move to C°, the IP has already been deleted and as a result, the movement can no longer take place.

While this account is intuitively appealing, it faces two substantial problems. First of all, it is unclear how Merchant's analysis can provide an explanation for the different behaviour of sluicing and conjugated instances of 'yes' and 'no' when it comes to the absence or presence of subject clitics and agreement endings. Given that the relation between ellipsis and the absence of clitics/agreement is a fairly direct one in his account (ellipsis bleeding I°-to-C°-movement), it remains to be determined in what way the ellipsis operation involved in sluicing differs from the one present in conjugated instances of 'yes' and 'no'. Given that in both cases it is the IP which is elided, the null hypothesis seems to be that it is the same – or a highly similar – operation which is at stake.

The second point I want to raise concerns the assumption that complementizer agreement is the result of I°-to-C°-movement. This is an claim which is contested by many recent analyses of this phenomenon (cf. for example Ackema & Neeleman 2001; Van Craenenbroeck & Van Koppen 2002c; Carstens 2003; Van Koppen 2003). Instead, the consensus nowadays seems to be that complementizer agreement results from an Agree-relation between (the phi-features of) C° and (those of) the subject. A strong indication that this is on the right track is provided by data such as those in (27) (Van Koppen 2003:4).<sup>8</sup>

- (27) Ich dink de-s [doow en ich] ôs t beste ...  
 I think that-2SG you and I ourselves the best  
 ... veur de kerk kenn-e treffe.  
 in.front.of the church can-PL meet  
 'I think you and I should meet in front of the church.'

As was first observed by Van Koppen (2003, forthcoming), the finite complementizer in a complementizer agreement dialect can agree with the first

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<sup>8</sup> This example is from the dialect of Tegelen, a village in the Dutch province of Limburg. Again, there are independent reasons why this generalization cannot be demonstrated for the West-Flemish dialects. Cf. Van Koppen forthcoming for extensive discussion.

conjunct of a coordinated subject. This shows that the ending which occurs on the complementizer is a reflex of a relation between  $C^\circ$  and the subject (or a proper subpart thereof), rather than between  $C^\circ$  and  $I^\circ$ . Note that in the example in (27), the finite verb agrees with the entire coordinated subject (as does the anaphor *ô's* 'ourselves'). Given that the agreement suffix on the verb is generally assumed to be a reflection of the value of  $I^\circ$ , the second person singular *s*-ending on the complementizer cannot be due to a relation between  $C^\circ$  and  $I^\circ$ . On the other hand, the sentence in (27) also suggests that complementizer agreement is not the result of (feature-)movement. If the phi-features of the first conjunct of the subject were to move to  $C^\circ$ , they would violate both the coordinate structure constraint and the subject island constraint. Since this example is perfectly grammatical, it seems unlikely that this hypothetical movement operation has taken place. One is led to conclude, then, that complementizer agreement is the result of an Agree-relation between  $C^\circ$  and (part of) the embedded subject. When combined with Merchant's account for the absence of complementizer agreement on sluiced wh-phrases, this conclusion creates a problem. Specifically, while it might well be the case that the (im)possibility of a certain movement operation is influenced by the fact that (part of) its movement chain is left unpronounced (cf. also Van Craenenbroeck to appear for discussion), it is unlikely that the same applies to Agree-relations. Consider in this respect the VP-ellipsis example in (28).

- (28) I thought there would be many people at the party and there were ~~many people at the party~~.

In this example, the finite verb *were* in the second conjunct agrees in phi-features with the elided associate DP *many people*. The fact that this DP is left unpronounced does not block the Agree-relation. As a result, it is unlikely that the fact that IP is PF-deleted in sluicing constructions should prevent (the phi-features of)  $C^\circ$  from Agree-ing with the (unpronounced) subject. In other words, under the assumption that complementizer agreement is the result of an Agree-relation between  $C^\circ$  and the subject, the absence of this phenomenon on sluiced wh-phrases remains mysterious under Merchant's account.

Summing up, in this section I have shown that neither Lobeck's (1995) nor Merchant's (2001) analysis for the absence of subject clitics and agreement endings on sluiced wh-phrases, is able to provide a satisfactory account of all the data. I conclude, then, that the analysis proposed in the present paper is to be preferred.

### 7. Conclusion

In this paper I have provided a new analysis for the absence of subject clitics and agreement endings on sluiced wh-phrases in Dutch dialects.<sup>9</sup> I have argued that this generalization follows as the natural conclusion of two independently established premises. On the one hand I have followed Merchant (2001) in his argumentation that subjects in sluiced IPs remain in their VP-internal base position until after Spell-Out, while on the other hand I have shown that both subject clitic placement and complementizer agreement are sensitive to precisely this type of locality. Supporting evidence for this approach came from elliptical replies to yes/no-questions, where the elided subject is base-generated in specIP and accordingly, subject clitics and agreement endings can show up. Finally, I have shown that the two previous accounts for the absence of subject clitics and agreement endings on sluiced wh-phrases face substantial problems which can be avoided in the present account.

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<sup>9</sup> As discussed by Merchant (2001), this generalization also holds for the so-called Wackernagel-clitics found in languages such as Slovene, Bulgarian, Serbo-Croatian or Macedonian (cf. Merchant 2001:65-66 for data and references). At this point, it is unclear whether my account can be extended to incorporate these languages as well. Note, though, that this potential lack of generality is not necessarily a drawback for my proposal. Specifically, it is well-known that clitics in Dutch dialects differ substantially from South-Slavic ones in their distribution, syntax and syntactic category. As a result, one might wonder whether these facts should be given a unified account to begin with.

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