

Inflection and Movement in Old English¹

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Rich verbal inflection has been argued (a) to license pro-drop (e.g. Safir 1985); (b) to be connected to overt Verb-second (Platzack & Holmberg 1989; van Gelderen 1993; Roberts 1996); and (c) to activate the AGR(eement) and T(ense) positions (Bobaljik & Jonas 1996). The connections in (b) and (c) follow if one assumes that the relationship between morphology and syntax is a direct one: elements move because they need to 'pick up' inflection in higher functional categories (cf. Baker's 1988 Mirror Principle). There are problems with each of the claims of (a) - (c) and the issue is therefore relevant to the present collection. On the one hand, languages exist where inflection is rich but where the three phenomena do not (all) occur (German and French have rich inflection but no pro-drop); on the other hand, languages with weak inflection can, for instance, have Verb-second (Afrikaans and Yiddish).

In this paper, I focus on Old English verbal inflection in relation to (b) and (c) in *Beowulf*, *The Junius Manuscript* and *The Exeter Book*. Many of the arguments hold for other Germanic languages as well. I show that, even though the inflection is rich in Old English, the language has some reduced inflection when the verb is in second position. This is unexpected but in accordance with Chomsky (1995) who does not connect morphological strength with the feature strength that triggers movement. I argue this reduction indicates that, in the 'normal' Old English clause, agreement is checked inside VP but that if verbs move to second position, the checking may occur in C resulting in incomplete agreement. Following Kiparsky (1995), I claim that Old English has limited Verb-second because the C position is not generally available. In addition, there is no evidence for AGR and T positions and therefore, Old English is a problem for Bobaljik & Jonas (1996). I suggest that positional, rather than morphological, evidence triggers Functional Categories.

The outline is as follows. In 1, I provide some background on the impact of rich inflection in some languages. In 2, I show that there is no link between rich inflection on the one hand and movement and the presence of functional categories such as T and AGRs on the other in Old English. In 3, I discuss some later developments regarding the loss of inflection and the introduction of functional categories such as C, AGRs and T.

1 Rich Inflection

Verb-second is a main clause phenomenon in languages such as German and Dutch, i.e. does not occur when an overt complementizer is present. It has therefore been argued that the verb in a verb-second construction moves to C (cf. den Besten 1983). The reason behind this movement might be that certain features in C must be lexicalized. If this is correct, one might expect more morphology on verbs in C than on those not moved to second position. However, even though there is a difference in morphology in a number of cases, the morphology of verbs in C as in Dutch (1) is no richer than of those not in second position as in (2). Under certain circumstances, as in (3) it is even weaker, i.e. *geef* 'give' rather than the regular second person *geeft* 'give-2S' (cf. Abraham 1995 for similar evidence in German):

1. Vandaag geeft zij hem een boek

¹ Throughout this paper I use TACT and the computer readable versions of the Oxford Text Archive edition of *Beowulf*, Chaucer, several of Shakespeare's plays and the Virginia University editions of *The Junius Manuscript* and *The Exeter Book*. I would like to thank Teresa Wells for help with the retrieval of several of these texts.

- Today gives she him a book
2. dat zij hem vandaag een boek geeft
that she him today a book gives
 3. Waarom geef jij me altijd een boek?
Why give you me always a book

In languages such as Standard German and Swedish, when the verb moves, the inflection is not stronger either. In Old English, the reverse is even claimed to hold. Jespersen (1942) and Quirk & Wrenn (1955 [1977]) suggest that verbs that precede their subjects display less inflection than those that follow. This lack of inflection in sentences with Verb-movement is problematic for a theory that assumes strong inflection is the trigger for movement. In 2.2, I examine this phenomenon and conclude that it is partially true in *Beowulf*, *The Junius Manuscript* and *The Exeter Book* in those cases where Verb-movement occurs.

Ever since the introduction of AGRs and T by Pollock (1989) and Chomsky (1989), there has been a debate as to whether all languages have these functional categories (e.g. Cinque 1996) or whether a language learner needs explicit evidence to posit both (e.g. van Gelderen 1993; Thráinsson 1996). Chomsky does not assume a relationship between rich inflection and the presence of both AGRs and T. Bobaljik & Jonas (1996) assume such a relationship and argue that in Icelandic, verbs display independent tense and agreement morphology and that therefore both T and AGRs are activated. As independent evidence for the claim that two functional projections occur in Icelandic, they present expletive constructions such as (4), argued to have a structure as in (5), i.e. with two Specifier positions. Thus, *Pað* would be in Spec AGRsP whereas *margir strákar* would be in Spec TP:

4. Pað borðuðu margir strákar bjúgun ekki öll
there ate many boys the-sausages not all
'Many boys did not eat all of the sausages'.
(from Bobaljik & Jonas 1996: 214)
5. AGRsP [There V_{TP} [NP Object not VP]].

The same claim about the presence of AGRsP and TP would have to be made for French where both tense and phi-features are discernable on the verb, e.g. *arriv-er-a*, arrive-FUTURE-3S 'he will arrive', even though expletive constructions such as (4) do not occur (**Il est une femme arrivé(e)* 'there arrived a woman' is ungrammatical). In Dutch, the opposite is the case: expletives as in (4) occur but tense and phi-features are not both marked. Hence, French and Dutch are problematic for Bobaljik & Jonas.

In English, as Bobaljik & Jonas (1996) claim, tense and agreement cannot both be marked: past *-ed* and third person *-s* are in complementary distribution (hence the ungrammatical **she walk-ed-s* or **she walk-s-ed*). They argue that TP and AGRsP are both present if "tense and agreement morphemes cooccur at least somewhere in the paradigm of main verbs" (p. 230). That means that, in modern English, there is only one functional category, as also argued in van Gelderen (1993). As will be shown in 2.1 and 2.4, Old English verbs are specified for tense and for most phi-features. Yet, they do not display any of the characteristics of a language with even one functional category (i.e. I) such as modern English, let alone both AGRs and T. Even though it is hard to find evidence for this functional category, witness the debate whether the I position in Old English precedes the VP or follows it (cf. Roberts 1996), covert movement to such a position is assumed by many. In this paper, I oppose taking functional categories for granted and having covert movement to them. I assume that functional categories are only activated if there is direct evidence.

In this section, I have discussed the relationship assumed in some work between inflection and Verb-movement and the one between inflection and functional categories. So far, the data do not support these relationships. I will examine in more detail whether or not V-to-C results in less

agreement (but not less tense). I will also examine whether overt morphology for tense and agreement triggers AGRs and T in Old English.

2 Old English

I first describe Old English verbal inflection (2.1). Then, I examine the relationship that might exist between strong inflection on the one hand, and Verb-second (2.2) and the existence of functional categories (2.3) on the other. In 2.4, I discuss agreement in constructions without functional categories.

2.1 Old English Inflection

The present and past (preterite) tenses are distinguished in that, in the past tense, the weak verbs have a *-d-*, the strong verbs have a stem change and the irregular verbs have suppletive forms. For instance, a first person present is *ic lufie* 'I love' and a first person past is *ic lufode* 'I loved'. Thus, if overt tense marking on the verb implies that the language has a TP, Old English should have TP.

Person and number are distinguished for the singular present tense, for instance, *ic lufie* 'I love', *þu lufast* 'you love', *he/heo/hit lufað* 'he/she/it loves', but not for the plural: *we lufiað* 'we love', *ge lufiað* 'you-P love', *hi lufiað* 'they love' (cf. Quirk & Wrenn 1955 [1977]: 43). There are of course many variants and many different verb classes but they all make similar distinctions. For weak verbs in the past tense, the second person singular (*-est*) is different from the first and third persons singular (*-e*) and from the plural (*-on*). In the imperative and subjunctive moods, only singular and plural are distinguished. Thus, number is consistently distinguished but person is only sometimes. These features should suffice to trigger an AGRsP as well as a TP if Bobaljik and Jonas (1996) are correct since both tense and agreement are overt in e.g. *þu lufod-est*, you-S love-P-2S 'you loved'.

2.2 Inflection and the (lack of) movement to C

First, I focus on the relationship between overt first and second plural and second singular verbal inflection and overt movement of the verb.

As mentioned, Jespersen (1942: 15) writes "[i]n OE a difference is made in the plural, according as the verb precedes *we* or *ge* or not" and Quirk & Wrenn (1955 [1977]: 42) remark that "[t]here are alternative 1 and 2 p.pl. forms of all tenses and moods in *-e* when the pronouns [...] immediately follow" the verb. To put these observations in terms of Verb-movement, it appears that, when the verb moves to C as in (6), there is less inflection (*-e*) than when it does not move as in (7) (*-ap*) (the verb endings are in bold):

6. *Beowulf*, 2529
Gebide ge on beorge
`Wait (you) on the hill'.
7. *Beowulf*, 1340
ge feor hafað fæhðe gestæled
you far have a feud inflicted
`You have gone far to inflict a feud'.

The data in (6) and (7) are unexpected in a system where overt inflection is linked to overt movement. In checking verb forms with *we* and *ge* in *Beowulf*, *The Junius Manuscript* and *The Exeter Book*, I find some evidence of an alternative, less inflected, form in *Beowulf*, even though the

full inflection predominates, but no evidence in *Junius* and *Exeter* as I will now show.

In *Beowulf*, there are 17 instances of *ge* 'you-P' as in (8). In 2 of these, (9) and (6), the verb precedes the subject. One of the two, namely (9), has full inflection for plural² but the other one, namely (6) above, has reduced inflection. First person *we* occurs 25 times but in the two instances where the verb precedes *we*, the inflection is full as in (10):

8. *Beowulf*, 245-6
ne ge leafnesword guðfremmendra gearwe ne wisson
not you password warriors completely not know
9. *Beowulf*, 237
Hwæt syndon ge searohæbbendra
'What are you warriors'.
10. *Beowulf*, 270
Habbap we to þæm mæran micel ærende
'We have for the celebrated a great message'.

In *Junius*, 75 instances of *we* occur of which 9 are 'inverted' with the inflected verb. In one of these, namely (11), the inflection is *-an* rather than *-on*, but whether that is reduced, a sound change, or scribal error is unclear. There are 19 *ge* forms of which 2 are inverted without loss of inflection. In *Exeter*, of the 124 instances of *we*, 10 follow the verb and, again, the only 'reduction' is a change from *-on* to *-un* and *-an* (e.g. in l. 1895). This 'reduction' also occurs when the verb follows the subject (e.g. in ll. 1834 and 2086) and seems therefore a regular sound change. There are 91 *ge* pronouns with 8 inverted. None of these have reduced inflection:

11. *Junius, Christ and Satan* 298
Demān we on earðan
'Judge we on earth'.

Regarding the second person singular, there are 69 instances in *Beowulf* and even though 11 of these are 'inverted', the inflection is not reduced as, for instance, (12) shows:

12. *Beowulf*, 1221
Hafast þu gefered þæt ...
'You have achieved that'.

In *Junius*, there are 201 instances of the second person singular and some of the 'inverted' ones have less inflection as in (13), i.e. *-es* rather than *-st*. In *Exeter*, which is a later text, there are 318 second person singular pronouns. Many are inverted and some are reduced for agreement, as in (14) to (16):

13. *Junius, Christ and Satan* 59
Wendes ðu ðurh wuldor ðæt þu woruld ahtest
Believe you through splendor that you the world own
14. *Exeter, Juliana* 87
Dem þu hi to deaþe
'Judge you them to death'.
15. *Exeter, Christ* 1487

² With most verbs, the *-on* ending is a preterite. In the case of verbs such as *witan* 'know', *sculan* 'have to' and *cunnon* 'know', *-on* indicates a present indicative plural.

For hwon ahenge þu mec

`Why hang you me'.

16. *Exeter, Resignation* 59

Forstond þu mec ond gestyr him

`Defend (you) me and restrain them'.

Thus, the inflection on a second person singular verb is gradually lost.

So far, I have examined the relationship between inflection and movement and have concluded that agreement occurs somewhat less often when the verb is in C. This presents problems for an approach that links rich morphology and overt movement. That link must therefore be questioned. It raises the problem, however, how to account for the lack of inflection in C in a checking system (or any other) as well. I come back to that in 2.4.

2.3 The trigger for C, AGRs and T

I have assumed the verb that moves is in C. In this section, I follow Kiparsky (1995) in arguing that in Old English C is only present if triggered. In addition, I suggest there is little evidence for the presence of I, or of splitting I into AGRs and T.

Because Verb-movement is blocked when an overt complementizer appears in subordinate clauses, it is often assumed (e.g. van Kemenade 1987; Roberts 1993; Platzack 1995) that Old English has V-to-C movement in main clauses. Around 1400, this rule is said to be lost. Kiparsky (1995) argues against assuming a C-position in all Old English constructions. He shows that V-to-C movement only occurs in cases where elements such as a question (cf. (13) and (14) above) or a *hw*-element (cf. (15)) trigger a CP and a C. Kiparsky claims that `older' languages such as Vedic Sanskrit, Hittite and Homeric Greek do not have a Complementizer³ and consequently have no Verb-second. These languages lack embedded structures and instead make use of adjunction of main clauses to other main clauses. As embedding becomes possible, C is introduced. As C is introduced, so is V-to-C and Kiparsky argues that the system of `residual' Verb-second (i.e. only in certain contexts) is actually the ancestor of full Verb-second rather than the other way round. Thus, Modern English "is syntactically the most conservative of all the modern Germanic languages" (1995: 162). Checking Verb-second with the subject pronouns discussed above in *Beowulf*, the inversion is indeed found mainly in cases such as (9) and (12) above, not in (17) and (18). In *Junius*, all instances of main clause *hw*-words trigger Verb-second as in (19) and (20), as do cases of initial negation (assumed to be in Spec CP). In cases such as (21), without the need for a CP, Verb-second does not occur:

17. *Beowulf*, 351-4

Ic þæs wine Deniga ... frinan wille ... ymb þinne sið

I that friend of the Danes ask want about your conduct

`I want to ask that friend of the Danes about your conduct'.

18. *Beowulf*, 427-8

Ic `e nu ða brego beorht Dena biddan wille þæt ...

I you now then prince noble Dane ask want that

`I want to ask you now, noble prince of the Danes'.

³ Cf. Lenerz (!1985) for the claim that Old High German lacks a C as well as V-to-C movement and Abraham (!1993) who argues that languages that show paratactic structures lack a CP.

19. *Junius, Genesis 278*
 "Hwæt sceal ic winnan?" cwæð he.
 `What shall I gain, said he'.
20. *Junius, Genesis 888*
 Hwæt druge þu, dohtor
 `What avails you, daughter'?
21. *Junius, Genesis 2013-4*
 We þæt soð magon secgan furður
 `We may say that truth further'.

In *Exeter*, as in (14) to (16), Verb-movement is also triggered by questions or *hw*-elements. In all these texts, the inflection is sometimes reduced after Verb-movement.

So far, I have followed Kiparsky and argued that movement to C occurs only if C is present and then it may bring about a reduction of agreement. I now turn to the possible existence of AGRs and T, i.e. an expanded I position.

As shown in 2.1, number and tense are unambiguous and, even if not all persons are distinguished, they are in some tenses and, according to Bobaljik & Jonas (1996), this should trigger both T and AGRs. Moreover, the evidence for these positions is hard to come by as the traditional tests are not applicable. For instance, there are no expletive constructions (they are not introduced until the latter half of the fourteenth century), let alone constructions such as (4), that show that both Spec AGRsP and Spec TP are used. There are no double auxiliary constructions either and, as is well-known, modals are still main verbs as in (22):

22. *Junius, Genesis 1006*
 Ne can ic Abeles
 `I do not know A'.

Perfective *have* does not occur and the first instance of `dummy' *do* occurs in the late fourteenth century. These auxiliary elements are all seen as occupying a functional category in Modern English whereas the Old English data indicate that modals and *do* occupy a position in the VP and not in the functional domain. Infinitival *to* is not separate as in modern English and again provides no evidence for a T or AGRs (for more reasons, cf. van Gelderen 1993). Thus, none of the constructions that prompt Akmajian, Steele & Wasow (1979) to introduce an AUX position in Modern English, i.e. T or AGRs, are met with in Old English.

Concluding this subsection, I have argued that even though agreement and tense are morphologically evident, there is no other evidence for functional categories. Therefore, rather than assuming the trigger for functional categories to be morphological evidence as suggested in Bobaljik & Jonas, I suggest that structural evidence such as overt auxiliary modals and `dummy' *do* in Modern English trigger functional categories.

2.4 Agreement without functional categories

In discussing the relationship between inflection and movement in 2.2, a problem came up with how a verb checks Case in a system without functional categories. I now speculate on a possible account but point out the difficulties arising from it.

In Chomsky (1995), agreement (phi-) features are not present in functional heads. Functional

Heads such as C and I have categorial features and may have Case features, and provide the environment where phi-features can be checked. Since only categorial features can be strong and trigger overt movement in Chomsky (1995), the C position in Old English, once introduced, carries strong categorial features that trigger overt Verb-movement. This verb checks its phi-features either while inside VP (as it does when the verb does not move) or while in C. Since subjects do not frequently move to Spec CP, the verb in, for instance, (13) above may not check its agreement features in a Spec-Head relationship with the subject and may wait till LF when the features of the subject are 'attracted' to check the Case of C. For reasons I will not go into here (but see Koopman & Sportiche 1991; and van Gelderen to appear), it is known from other languages, e.g. Dutch, that in non-Spec-Head constructions, agreement is sometimes 'flawed'. Hence, when the verb checks its phi-features in C, it may have been selected from the lexicon and have optional features added that do not conform to those of the subject.

In cases such as (8) above, agreement is checked without overt movement to C (or to any other Functional Category) and, if the conclusions of 2.3 are correct, the Functional Categories are not even present. One might assume a process similar to inherent Case to be at work (cf. Abraham 1996, and this volume; Kiparsky 1994; van Gelderen 1996) to check agreement. In certain languages, the Case an element bears does not depend on position but on a theta-relationship to the verb. For instance, a Goal in Old English gets dative. One could argue the same for agreement. In languages such as Diné, Hopi and O'odham, agreement is occasionally checked inherently, i.e. not using Functional Heads. Thus, in Diné (23), the verb displays double agreement: the dual on the verb stem (completely different than for plural and singular) and the singular prefix *-sh-*. The verb inherently checks itself with all the arguments in the clause (gets dual number that way) and then with the 'real' subject in the Functional Projection (gets singular that way):

23. Kinlánígóó nil deesh'áázh,
 Flagstaff-to 2SG-with F-1SG-go.DUAL
 'I will go to Flagstaff with you'.

In Old English, however, if agreement can in fact take place inside VP, there is no special evidence for this. One must argue that a verb in a Spec-Head relationship with its subject in VP is can check its phi-features in this configuration (as against Chomsky 1995). When a C is present, the verb moves to C and can check its features alternatively in VP or in C. Thus, the Old English main clause possibilities are: (a) only a VP as in (8) with subjects moving for reasons of topic/focus; (b) a CP and a VP where the verb can either check its phi-features inside the VP or against C. C is not the 'perfect' checker and reduced features on the verb therefore do not result in ungrammaticality.

In section 2, I argue that there is no relationship between overt inflection and Verb-movement or between overt inflection and functional categories such as AGRs and T. The structural presence of *wh*-elements triggers C and, as will be discussed in the next section, in Middle English, the presence of such elements as modal auxiliaries and periphrastic *do* triggers I.

3 Changes

Through time, inflections are lost and functional categories are introduced. For instance, between the two versions of Layamon's *Brut*, the second person *-est* ending is used less and especially not in inverted position. In the early thirteenth century Caligula version, there is a ratio of 110 : 40 of non-inverted *-est* to inverted *-est* (2.75 : 1); in the mid thirteenth century Otho version, the ratio is 85 : 24 (5.54 : 1), i.e. fewer full inflections when the verb is in C. There are many instances such as (24) and (25), but even Caligula has instances such as (26). The situation in Otho is reminiscent of the Old English situation:

24. Caligula 9368

þenne mihtest þu þinne iwille
`Then you can have what you want'.

25. Otho 9368

þanne mihtes þou sone habbe.

26. Caligula 1578

Worðschepe haue þu
`Honor may you have'.

Verb-movement remains stable between the two versions. For instance, checking Verb-second after *þus*, there is roughly the same kind of Verb-movement. Even though the same is not true with *þenne/þanne* `then', the differences are interesting because `then'-forms in Caligula become relatives in Otho, as from (27) to (28). This indicates that the `then'-form is already in Spec CP but not quite subordinate:

27. Caligula 1194

þenne seide he to Wendoleine⁴,
`then said he to W'.

28. Otho idem

Wane to Trinouant wende,
`when he turned to T'.

This stability in Verb-second is note-worthy in the light of the discussion about Old English above. Thus, there is no relationship in *Brut* between poor inflection and loss of movement. In fact, there is less inflection when the verbs moves to C in, for instance, (25). With respect to functional categories, nothing changes. Modals are main verbs, *do* is not used as a `dummy' and Accusative-with-Infinitive constructions with *to* in a functional category are not present. In the Otho version, the C position is used differently, as in (29) where *for to* in C introduces an infinitival complement. This sentence corresponds to (30) in Caligula with a verb in C:

29. Otho 8570

for to worck makie
`to make work'.

30. Caligula Idem

þe cunne wærc makien
`who can make work'.

In Chaucer (late fourteenth century), after the 41 occurrences of *then*, the verb immediately follows *then* in half of the sentences but follows the subject in the other half. In the *Astrolabe*, there are three instances of *then* and two are [*then* S V] as in (31) and one is [*then* V S] as in (32):

⁴ These cases are also note-worthy in that a lot of the pronouns follow the verb (does not fit with van Kemenade 1987). Verb-second has been argued to have been analyzed as SVO if one analyzes the clitics as regular NPs. Chaucer's English is a problem since it has regular Verb-second as late as the 1380s. Checking the instances of Verb-second after *thus* in Chaucer, non-inverted constructions with a full subject occur such as *Right thus the Apostel tolde it* and *And thus algates housbondes han* (both from the *Wife of Bath's Prologue*) and non-inverted pronominal subjects (four instances after *thus* in *The Knight's Tale* of *Thus may we seyen alle*). They present a problem if one argues that SVO came into existence through the reanalysis of subject clitics in Verb-second as independent pronouns in SV.

31. *Treatise on the Astrolabe* II, 12

And then ageyn the 8 is to Saturne, the 9 is to Jupiter, ...

32. *Idem*, II, 42

And then is 10 feet the altitude of the tour.

The second person singular ending *-es(t)* is quite strong and so is the plural *-eth*. Whether or not the verb moves to C seems to make no difference for agreement. There is, in Chaucer, evidence for a functional category in addition to C (cf. van Gelderen 1993). For instance, *do* is used in a few cases and so are Accusative-with-Infinitive constructions. But this presence cannot be linked to agreement either.

Shakespeare has Verb-second as in (33), uses periphrastic *do* as in (34) and (35) and has a special modal category, indicating that I is present. This stage is interesting in that there is main verb movement to both C as in (33) and (34) and to I as in (35) and (36), but not in (37), i.e., the functional categories are not always present, or Verb-movement is optional. The verb endings, for instance second person singular as in (33), are very much present:

33. *1 Henry IV*, I, ii

What say'st thou to a Hare?

34. *1 Henry IV*, II, i

Sirra Carrier, what time **do** you mean to come to London?

35. *1 Henry IV*, I, iii

if I **do** not ioyne with him.

36. *1 Henry IV*, I, iii

I speake not this in estimation.

37. *2 Henry 4*, IV, i

Yet for your part, it not appears to me.

Lightfoot (1995) presents an interesting argument, based on Visser's (1963-1973: 1532ff) construction *He not spoke* as in (37), that provides evidence for the lack of V-to-I movement. This construction occurs in early sixteenth century English but is in fact quite rare in Shakespeare. I checked the 259 instances of *not* in the First Folio Edition of *1 Henry IV* (1623): most are preceded by an auxiliary; 27 are preceded by 'dummy' *do*; 35 or so by main verbs as in (36); and none are like *He not spoke*. Visser cites two instances of *not* preceding a main verb in *2 Henry IV*, but checking the First Folio Edition, I find Visser's examples are the only two in that play out of 230 occurrences of *not*. There are 23 instances of *do*, 52 of a main verb preceding *not* and the remainder an auxiliary preceding *not*. Hence, if the position of *not* indicates that V is in I, I must be optional or have weak categorial features so that overt Verb-movement does not take place.

4 Conclusion

I have argued there is no relationship between overt verbal inflection and movement in Old English. On the contrary, Verb-movement to C often results in reduced inflection. I point out a possible analysis for this loss of agreement in 2.4 having to do with phi-features checking in C. I have also shown that even though Old English has independent tense and agreement morphology, there is no evidence (from modals and *do*) that T and AGRs are present. Rather than the presence of agreement, I argue it is structural evidence such as in (35) that triggers the presence of functional categories.

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