Asymmetries between *because* and *for* reason clauses: Licensing speaker perspective

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Abstract

Although English *because* and *for* appear to be near-synonymous causal connectives, this paper shows that *for* has a distinct grammatical and semantic profile. When *for* introduces finite clauses, they are extraposed and inaccessible for syntactic processes. This contrasts with when *for* introduces non-finite gerundive adjuncts which behave like ordinary adjuncts; the interpretive range is narrower and less straightforwardly causal. I then identify an unexpected asymmetry in the scope of finite *for* and *because* clauses: *for* is often restricted to matrix clause interpretation, while *because* readily allows both matrix and embedded scope. I argue that finite *for* always licenses an explicit discourse-speaker point of view evaluation. Building on this, I propose an analysis in which *for* is semantically underspecified, assigns a generalized GROUND theta role (Talmy 1978; 2000) to a Discourse Speaker Point of View projection (Speas and Tenny 2003, Miyagawa 2012). In addition *for* possesses interpretable but unvalued features in the sense of Pesetsky and Torrego (2007) within its lexical specification. The interaction of theta-role assignment and feature checking derives the observed distributional and interpretive properties and suggests a unified lexical entry of *for* across its complementizer and prepositional uses.

1. Introduction

English has a variety of complementizers that introduce finite clauses denoting (loosely) causes, reasons, justifications, etc.

(1) The children didn't go to school on Monday...
   a. ...**as** they were sick that day.
   b. ...**since** they were sick that day.
   c. ...**owing to the fact that** they were sick that day.
   d. ...**'coz** they were sick that day.
   e. ...**because** they were sick that day.
   f. ...**for** they were sick that day.

In this paper, I will focus on the contrasts between *for* and *because*. These items are often treated as broadly synonymous, differing largely in register or discourse style. This view is reinforced by the fact that both may introduce clauses that are interpreted as causes, reasons, elaborations, or justifications. Although many of my informants suggested that *for* in this sense sounds old fashioned or high register, speakers retain intuitions about its distribution i.e. it is not necessarily a fossilized form – merely an uncommon form. The following corpus examples of contemporary usage illustrate that these forms are contemporary and very natural.[1]

(2) The Biden administration did not have the legal authority to fire him and that he would not resign **for** he is the head of an independent agency. (Kilgarriff et al. 2014:SketchEngine)

(3) His account of the DSK affair shows how thorough an investigator he is, **for** he not only managed to interview the man himself but watched hours of videotape from security cameras at the Sofitel hotel. (Kilgarriff et al. 2014:SketchEngine)

(4) We pay particular attention to exports **for** we aim to make Azerbaijan known in foreign countries by producing goods capable of being competitive... (Kilgarriff et al. 2014:SketchEngine)

[1] For this paper I used my own judgements as well as a number of consultants who were speakers of South African English.

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At the same time, the two connectives diverge sharply in their grammatical behaviour. Clauses introduced by *for* display a restricted distribution and resist a range of syntactic operations that are readily available to *because* clauses. The grammatical contrast is striking in light of the difficulty of constructing minimal semantic contrasts between them. The resulting tension is that how can two elements that appear to overlap so extensively in interpretation differ so systematically in their syntactic profile? This paper approaches that question by identifying a further asymmetry that emerges once scope is considered. While *because* clauses readily take scope within both matrix and embedded environments, *for* clauses show a strong preference for matrix-level interpretation. This restriction weakens in contexts involving explicit speaker evaluation. I take this pattern to indicate that *for* is systematically associated with the encoding of speaker perspective.

On this basis, I propose that *for* is semantically underspecified. Rather than encoding a specific causal relation, it introduces a general grounding relation between a proposition and a discourse-level point of view (Speas and Tenny 2003, Miyagawa 2012). More specific interpretations, including causal and justificatory readings, arise through interaction with the lexical semantics of the matrix predicate and the roles of discourse participants.

1.1. A note on terminology and structure of this paper

Because is a complementizer which introduces a finite clause. I will refer to these as *because* clauses: namely a clause dominated by a CP headed by *because*. Similarly, *for* has a complementizer usage where it may introduce a finite clause; I will refer to these as finite *for* clauses. In addition, *for* can introduce non-finite, gerundive adjuncts. This is a prepositional usage of *for*. I remain agnostic about whether to label *for* as a complementizer or a preposition because ultimately I argue that they have the same feature composition. Suffice it to say that *for* is a lexical item which has both a complementizer and a prepositional function. I will use the term "connective" as a neutral term.

The argument proceeds in three steps. In section 2, I show that finite clauses introduced by *for* are syntactically peripheral and behave as extraposed constituents, in contrast to the tighter integration of *because* clauses. In particular, I explore scope asymmetries between *for* and *because* (section 2.3).

I then turn to non-finite gerundive constructions with *for* (section 3), which display a different syntactic profile but provide a clearer window into its interpretive contribution. Taken together, these patterns support a unified treatment of *for* across its finite, non-finite, and prepositional uses. Finally, in section 4, I develop an analysis in which *for* participates in feature checking in the sense of Pesetsky and Torrego (2007) (section 4.1) and assigns a generalized grounding theta role (section 4.2) (Talmy 1978; 2000), thus deriving its distributional and interpretive properties.

2. Asymmetries between *for* and *because* finite clauses

There are a number of formal differences in distribution that suggest that *for* and *because* are very different from each other when they introduce finite clauses.

Because clauses can be co-ordinated whereas *for* clauses cannot (Quirk et al. 1985:923).

(5) a. He asked to be transferred because he was unhappy and because he saw no prospect of promotion. (Quirk et al. 1985)
b. *He asked to be transferred for he was unhappy and for he saw no prospect of promotion. (Quirk et al. 1985)

Because clauses can be topicalised but *for* clauses cannot.

(6) a. Because he was the bravest, Tigger was chosen to steal the honey.
b. *For he was the bravest, Tigger was chosen to steal the honey.

Because clauses can be focussed/stressed and *for* clauses cannot.

(7) The cake burned BECAUSE/*FOR the oven was too hot.

Because clauses may be preceded by a focus particle such as *precisely* or *exactly*; *for* clauses may not.

(8) a. My nose runs, precisely because/*for the room is too dusty.
b. The clock stopped, exactly because/*for Grandfather died.

Because clauses can be used as stand-alone utterances, whereas *for* clauses cannot.

(9) Why did the clock stop?
a. Because my grandfather died.
b. *For my grandfather died.

These properties demonstrate that finite clauses introduced by *because* are merged into the tree structure and to all intents and purposes act like other adjuncts. In contrast, finite clauses introduced by *for* are not able to participate in movement or syntactic operations as they are dislocated from the main sentence structure and behave like appositives (de Vries 2006, Ott and Onea 2015, Döring 2015, Griffiths 2015). Accordingly, they cannot be topicalized or coordinated. Also, on the assumption that focus must be licensed by either movement to or agreement with FocusP, it follows that a dislocated structure cannot bear stress or be modified by focus particles or function as a standalone response. In contrast, the fact that *because* clauses participate in these structures is evidence that *because* clauses are not similarly dislocated.

2.1. Where do because/for *clauses merge?*

Taken individually, both *because* and *for* modify propositions by specifying a reason/cause or initial state that resulted in the propositional truth value. Within a semantically driven approach to adjuncts such as that of Ernst (2002), causal/reason clauses must therefore adjoin to a propositional structure (e.g. EventP/vP) for the sake of semantic composability. This is supported by examples (10a) and (10b) which present coordinated vPs modified by causal clauses. Assuming that these constructions are not elliptical structures (with an elided subject in the second conjunct), this data shows that the causal adjuncts are merged with the coordinated constituents, namely vP.

(10) a. I [ate a sandwich because I was hungry] and [read a book because I was bored]
b. I [ate a sandwich for I was hungry] and [read a book for I was bored]

Binding tests also demonstrate that both *for* and *because* clauses are probably (initially) adjoined at vP level. Example (11) is degraded because the matrix subject c-commands the coindexed R-expression subject of the *because/for* clause yielding a Principle C violation. This shows that the *because/for* clause adjoins below SpecIP.

(11) Sandile$_i$ likes cake *because/*for Sandile$_i$ has a sweet tooth.

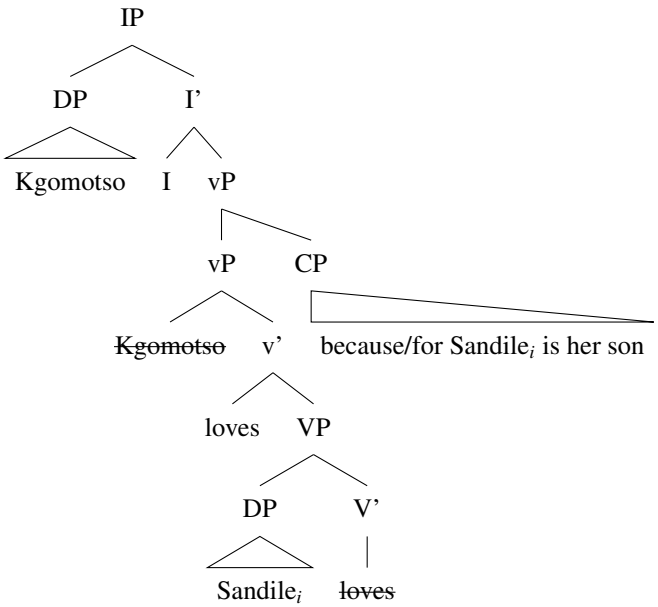
In contrast, an object R-expression (12) does not trigger a Principle C violation. This shows that *for* and *because* clauses are merged above the object position in SpecVP.

(12) Kgomotso loves Sandile$_i$ because/for Sandile$_i$ is her son.

The evidence from Principle C shows that *because* and *for* clauses are merged below the canonical subject position in SpecIP but above the object position for R-expressions. This is compatible with the claim that they are merged to the EventP/vP.[2]

[2]The judgments with respect to object pronouns are a little less clear. While example (i a) is grammatical, showing that a pronom-

(13)



In conclusion then, based on semantic, coordination and binding evidence, *because* and *for* clauses initially merge to a propositional level, most likely vP.

2.2. Causal readings

To a great extent, *because* and *for* introduce finite clauses with the same or similar causal meaning.[3] *Because* and *for* both encode loosely causal/reason readings; in most instances they appear to be completely interchangeable. The following examples indicate different kinds of situations which are lumped under "causation".

(14) The glass cracked for/because it cooled too quickly. [direct causation]

(15) If two angles of a triangle add up to 150 degrees, the other angle is 30 degrees for/because the internal angles of triangles always add up to 180 degrees. [non-temporal universal truth]

Example (14) shows strict causality where one event temporarily precedes and entails another. (15) shows that both *for* and *because* can encode an atemporal universal mathematical truth that is not causal/agentive in a strict sense. Importantly, neither of these examples requires an agentive subject in the causal clause, so

inal object does not trigger a principle C violation in *because* adjuncts, example (i b) is very slightly degraded. I acknowledge that speaker judgements vary on this, although the degree of ungrammaticality is not as strong compared to (12).

(i) a. Kgomotso loves him$_i$ because Sandile$_i$ is her son.
b. ?Kgomotso loves him$_i$ for Sandile$_i$ is her son.

I do not want to place too much emphasis on these examples until the data become clearer. However, taken at face value it might be evidence that *for* clauses adjoin slightly higher than in situ R-Expression objects but somewhat lower than the derived position of shifted objects higher in the structure. While this is consistent with my proposed analysis, nothing hinges on it: I leave this to future research.

[3]It has also been claimed that there are semantic differences between *because* and *for* clauses. *Because* seems to denote a more causal relation than does *for*. Quirk et al. (1985) suggest that *because* denotes a direct cause, whereas *for* is used for indirect causes. However, the effects are subtle and differences in judgement fall short of ungrammaticality; true minimal pairs seem hard to find in English. I am therefore sceptical that this characterization is the whole story.

causality in these situations is independent of agentivity.[4]

(16) She left the party early for/because her train was cancelled. (Reason)

(17) He knew his life was incomplete [because]/for he had yet to suffer! (Strawbs 1974[5])

Example (16) provides an agent-oriented reason that plays into the decision of an agent; an event is construed against the backdrop of another. A similar illustrative example is (17). The *because/for* clause denotes an irrealis state of affairs (i.e. lack of suffering). It is probably not the single, direct cause of his life being incomplete; rather it is more that the incompleteness of his life is interpreted by the agent against a backdrop of his lack of suffering.

(18) My number one cringer: Let her cry for/[because] she's a lady... let her dream, for[/because] she's a child! (Kilgarriff et al. 2014:SketchEngine)

Example (18) illustrates a justification: the reason provided is for the imperative. Leaving her to cry is interpreted as a justification by the speaker against the backdrop of her being a lady.

(19) The Holocaust was unique among history's great cruelties for[/because] it was a 12-year international persecution and murder machine perpetrated in the glare of broad daylight. (Kilgarriff et al. 2014:SketchEngine)

(20) Destiny Dove is definitely not your usual heroine for[/because] she is a young teenager still trying to come to grips with the death of her parents and little brother. (Kilgarriff et al. 2014:SketchEngine)

The examples in (19) and (20) both illustrate a speaker-oriented, interpretive, elaboration surrounding the circumstances of the event. In both the *for/because* clause presents facts in support of why the speaker evaluates the Holocaust as unique (19) and that Destiny Dove as not a typical heroine (20).[6]

2.3. Epistemicity and an unexpected scope asymmetry in embedded clauses

The previous section shows that both *for* and *because* may introduce finite clauses which have similar semantics interpreted loosely as causes, reasons, elaborations or justifications from a speaker perspective. *For* and *because* seem to be interchangeable in these contexts and it is very difficult to provide clear minimal pairs. This raises the problem of how to explain the very different syntactic behaviour of these complementizers in the face of their semantic similarity. Nevertheless, an unexpected semantic asymmetry occurs with embedded clauses. I will demonstrate the asymmetry and the conditions under which it occurs and use it to suggest that *for* and *because* are sensitive to epistemicity. In some contexts, *because* clauses take

[4]For all examples derived from corpora or other sources, I include "because" to test the minimal pair, even though the original examples all used "for". The added option is included in square brackets to distinguish it from the original.

[5]Thank you to Sally Hunt for suggesting this one.

[6]Camil Staps (p.c.) suggests the following minimal pair, designed to identify whether the semantics of *because* can be described as introducing the reason of the subject/agent in the main clause whereas *for* can be described as introducing an explanation by the utterer of the main clause for the event/state of affairs described in it.

(i) a. The children were not allowed to go to school because/for they were sick – even though they thought they could have gone.

b. The children did not go to school for/because they were sick – even though they thought they could have gone.

Example (i a) presents being sick is a factor in an external decision-making process (a reason for the parents to keep them home, or because of a school policy); perhaps possible in a context where the children actually wanted to go to school and found the decision to keep them home overly cautious. (i b) Presents being sick as a factor in the child's own decision-making process; it suggests that the children were only mildly sick and using it as an excuse. The fact that, as far as I can ascertain, these examples are both grammatical demonstrates that there is no contrast between *because* and *for* in this respect. Both complementizers are able to support a wide variety of relationships between events. Nevertheless, as will become clear in this paper, I believe that this idea is on the right track.

scope over either matrix or embedded clauses whereas *for* clauses only take scope over the matrix clause. The following examples demonstrate that *because* has both a causal and an evaluative meaning, whereas *for* only has the evaluative component.

(21) a. I hope that Nicolás$_i$ was convicted because he$_i$ is a drug lord. (Dealing in drugs is a crime)
→ "I hope Nicolás was convicted of being a drug lord."
b. I hope that Nicolás$_i$ is convicted because he$_i$ is a drug lord. (They'll probably catch him with his tax returns though!)

Example (21a) demonstrates an embedded scope causal reading: his being a drug lord is the cause of his conviction on drug charges. It is presupposed that Nicolás was convicted. (21b) illustrates an evaluative meaning where it is the speaker's hope that a conviction is secured on any basis because the speaker asserts that Nicolás is a drug lord and therefore deserves to be in jail. This can be contrasted with the use of a *for* clause below.

(22) a. I hope that Nicolás$_i$ was convicted for he$_i$ is a drug lord.
"*I hope he is convicted of being a drug lord."
b. I hope that Nicolás$_i$ was convicted for he$_i$ is a drug lord. (They'll probably catch him with his tax returns though!)

The embedded reading where Nicolás is convicted on drug charges is absent (22a) and only the matrix reading is available (22b): the speaker evaluates him negatively – and thus hopes he will be convicted of something or other. However, the following examples seem to contradict the findings above. First consider the scope behaviour of *because* clauses. Example (23a) highlights the embedded reading of *because* and (23b) the matrix reading.[7]

(23) a. Donald Trump informed Congress that Nicolás$_i$ was a threat because he$_i$ was a drug lord.
b. Donald Trump$_i$ informed Congress that Nicolás was a threat because he$_i$ wanted a pretext for extradition.

Based on the previous discussion one would expect *for* to only have the matrix reading. However, interestingly both matrix and embedded scopes seem to be available (24). This suggests that the matrix/embedded asymmetry is a function of the proposition type and not strictly on whether it is embedded or not. It is notable, that in both these examples the statement "that Nicolás was a threat" is not a presupposed fact, but rather the reported content of a message that might be either true or untrue. In other words it is the FIGURE aginst which the asserted GROUND associated with the causal clause is evaluated.

(24) a. Donald Trump informed Congress that Nicolás$_i$ was a threat for he$_i$ was a drug lord.
b. Donald Trump$_i$ informed Congress that Nicolás was a threat for he$_i$ wanted a pretext for extradition.

We can test whether epistemicity may be playing a role by explicitly referencing a discourse speaker with the phrase "in my opinion". Thus embedded scope of *for* is unavailable (25a) while the matrix scope reemerges (25b). *For* introduces GROUND, functioning to add comment by a discourse speaker, and the scope effects appear to be contingent on that.

(25) a. *Donald Trump informed Congress that Nicolás$_i$ was a threat for in my opinion he$_i$ was a drug lord.
b. Donald Trump$_i$ informed Congress that Nicolás was a threat for in my opinion he$_i$ wanted a pretext for extradition.

Following Speas and Tenny (2003) and Miyagawa (2012), we can capture these effects by utilizing a

[7] Both readings are available in both examples – but the context makes the relevant reading more pragmatically salient.

Speaker Point-of-View Phrase (PovP) in the high left periphery. PovP contains a PRO argument which is explicitly linked to the speaker and to which *for* phrases are obligatorily linked. If embedded clauses only contain a subset of the left-peripheral CP layers then it follows that *for* clauses will not have embedded scope. This makes an interesting prediction. If PovP is only projected in clause types that encode speaker perspective, then quotatives are expected to contain it. This is because quotatives plausibly contain full clausal structures with a richly articulated left periphery, including PovP. If so, a finite *for* clause should be able to take relatively low scope inside a reported-speech domain. The relevant speaker-oriented projection would then be available within the quoted clause itself. This prediction appears to be borne out. In (26a), the *for* clause is naturally interpreted as anchored to the main clause. In (26b), the *for* clause scopes over Harry's actions. For contrast (26c) shows that *because* clauses can take both scopes.

(26) a. William$_i$ told Harry, "You are unwise", for he$_i$ was writing a book and didn't want to have to tell bad stories about Harry.
b. William told Harry$_i$, "You are a complete idiot", for he$_i$ was writing a book about William and Kate.
c. William$_i$ told Harry$_j$, "You are a complete idiot", because he$_{i/j}$ was writing a book.

3. Non-finite "causal" clauses

Now consider non-finite contexts in contrast to finite ones. Both *for* and *because* can also embed non-finite gerundive clauses (both deverbal and denominal). In non-finite contexts, *because* and *for* clauses exhibit distinctive behaviors, particularly in how they attach to their hosts. Consider the following examples:

(27) a. William was angry with Harry for his writing a book. [VP]
b. William was angry with Harry for the writing of a book. [NP]

(28) a. William was angry with Harry because of his writing a book. [VP]
b. William was angry with Harry because of the writing of a book. [NP]

In example (27a), *for*, in its prepositional usage, introduces a causal adjunct specifying the reason for William's anger. Here, *for* introduces a nominalized non-finite VP with a direct object. The implied embedded agent is clearly oriented toward the object, identifying Harry as the agent of the writing. Similarly, *because* can introduce deverbal and denominal gerunds (28) – the only difference being that *because* also requires an overt preposition to license case on the noun. This suggests that *for* licenses Case whereas *because* does not – a fact that will become important later.

3.1. An object requirement and object binding in non-finite for *clauses*

For non-finite gerunds appear to be object-oriented. The following examples all support readings where the object of the matrix clause binds the implicit PRO subject of the predicate in the *for* gerund. Thus (29) cannot mean that I had stolen money; in (30) it is not I who is a good boy; and in (31) it is not I who am sophisticated. Finally, (32) demonstrates that the grammatical subject cannot bind PRO.

(29) I worried about the accountant for stealing the money.

(30) I took the dog to the park for being a good boy .

(31) I admired the chair for being highly sophisticated.

(32) *I drank water for staying hydrated.

Similarly, where an object is present it must be a semantically plausible antecedent. In (33) and (34) water cannot be tired and doors cannot feel unsafe, thus making these objects unacceptable antecedents.

(33) *I drank water for being tired.

(34) *She locked the door for feeling unsafe.

To claim that an object always necessarily binds PRO is too strong. An anonymous reviewer points out that for the examples above, the object may not necessarily bind PRO, even though they are plausible antecedents.

(35) a. *I drank wine for being tasty.
b. *She locked the door for being unlocked.

So the generalizations appear to be that (a) subjects may not bind PRO and (b) that if PRO is bound then it must be an object that does so. The conditions under which objects may or may not bind PRO require further research.

Object orientation makes a prediction that intransitives ought to be ungrammatical with *for* non-finite complements. This prediction is born out by examples (36)–(40) which lack an object. Example (36) shows that a dummy object expletive also cannot bind PRO within the gerund.

(36) I sat *for being tired / because of my being tired.

(37) I collapsed *for being tired / because of my being tired.

(38) I was thirsty *for being tired / because of my being tired.

(39) I was anxious *for cheating at cards / because of my cheating at cards.

(40) I disliked it *for cheating at cards / *because of my cheating at cards.

The lack of an object to bind the implicit subject in the *for* clause prevents these sentences from being syntactically valid. They also demonstrate that a sentential subject is not a suitable antecedent for PRO within the object-oriented *for* clause. Interestingly, all these examples contrast with the equivalent use of a non-finite *because* clause; this emphasizes that *because* is not obligatorily object-oriented in the same way that *for* is. This pattern extends to cases involving reciprocals. In these examples, the implicit subject is bound by the reflexive object anaphor yielding grammaticality:

(41) William reassured/congratulated himself for writing a tell-all memoir.

(42) I disliked myself for cheating at cards.

In conclusion, the non-finite gerund introduced by *for* is object-oriented. This contrasts with finite clauses introduced by *for* which do not appear similarly object-oriented – because they do not contain PRO.

3.2. Non-finites and causality

The interaction of non-finite *for* clauses with their predicates showcases a range of interpretations that extend beyond pure causality.

(43) I took the dog to the park for being a good boy.

(44) I disliked myself for cheating at cards.

(45) The intellectual admired the argument for being highly sophisticated.

In (43) the dog's behavior justifies a reward, reflecting a justificational reading. However, this contrasts with (44) where cheating is personal evaluation: a reason for self-dislike, yet lacks any connotation of reward. Example (45) also illustrates an evaluative stance by the subject. In this case, the *for* clause denotes an inherent state and does entail causation in the normal sense. These examples indicate that non-finite *for*

clauses may be interpreted in non-causal ways, differing from their finite counterparts. The general semantic reading of these clauses aligns with "on account of" or "evaluated within the context of" interpretations.

My main point here is merely to demonstrate that non-finite *for* clauses are not strictly causal but involve a range of meanings. Later in this article I will argue that *for* introduces a generalized GROUND thematic role which interacts the presuppositional content of the predicate. Under this view, the *for* clause only contributes explanatory content with a weak, highly context-dependent relation (roughly 'on account of') where a FIGURE presented in the main clause is evaluated against the GROUND presented by the *for* clause. One diagnostic for context-dependant discursive interpretation status is cancellability.

(46) I took the dog to the park for being a good boy. Y'know, I'd have taken him even if he'd chewed the rug.

(47) I disliked myself for cheating at cards. But not because cheating is wrong. I just hated that I'd been careless and got caught.

(48) I laughed at myself for cheating at cards – but only when it was pointed out to me.

In (46), the initial *for* clause invites a reward-based causal inference: being a good boy is the GROUND against which the decision to grant a reward is assessed. The continuation cancels that causal inference. In (47), the *for* clause introduces card playing as GROUND against which a moral-evaluation is invited. It can be cancelled; it is getting caught that motivates the self-dislike, not the fact of cheating at cards. In this instance, the *for* clause does not introduce the cause at all. Similarly, in (48) cheating at cards is not the direct cause of laughter – it is the fact of being called out for cheating that precipitates laughter.

For present purposes, the non-finite pattern is valuable because it helps isolate the interpretive contribution of *for* in a domain where the semantics is easier to diagnose than that of their finite counterparts. Across predicates, the relation introduced by *for* is most naturally paraphrased in very general terms as 'on account of' which I frame as GROUND, with more specific inferences (e.g. reward, blame, self-evaluation, explanation) arising as pragmatic meanings conditioned by the lexical meaning of the matrix predicate and by the discourse roles of the participants.

4. Toward an analysis

I develop an analysis that exploits the interaction between valued vs. unvalued and interpretable vs. uninterpretable features (Pesetsky and Torrego 2007), together with the distribution of theta-role dependencies. The goal is not to provide a fully articulated analysis of *for* and *because*, but rather to indicate where a principled solution is likely to lie in a feature-based architecture of this kind. Even at this level of abstraction, however, my proposal captures the contrast between finite and non-finite *because* and *for* clauses and their associated differences in interpretation. Importantly, the analysis does not, in and of itself, require that finite *for* clauses be structurally dislocated from the clause that they modify. Although I briefly consider how a dislocation-style implementation might be developed in section 4.5, I treat this as an open problem and leave it for future work to specify more fully.

Pesetsky and Torrego (2007) develop a theory of features in which features are independently specified for (i) interpretability and (ii) valuation. Interpretability is a condition at the syntax–semantics interface: an interpretable feature contributes to LF in the category on which it appears. Valuation is a morphosyntactic property: valued features bear a specific value (e.g. T:PAST/PRES; Person:3; Number:PL; Case:ACC), whereas unvalued features require valuation via Agree. Uninterpretable features cannot be interpreted on their host category and must be eliminated (or rendered inert) prior to LF. The interaction of these two dimensions yields the typology in table 1.

Within this system, Pesetsky and Torrego (2007) argue that finite complementizers such as *that* bear a T feature that is valued but uninterpretable. This interacts with the T head of TP, which bears a T feature that is interpretable but unvalued. Under their account, the CP/TP configuration jointly supports the checking of an unvalued, uninterpretable T feature on D: the interpretable T feature in T participates in the valuation

	interpretable	**uninterpretable**
valued	+valued +interpretable	+valued –interpretable (e.g. Tense on C)
unvalued	–valued +interpretable (e.g. Tense on T)	–valued –interpretable (e.g. T on D)

Table 1: Pesetsky and Torrego (2007)

of uT on D, while the valued T feature on C supplies the value required to fix the T feature on D. In what follows, I adopt this framework as a way of making explicit hypotheses about the featural content of *for*.

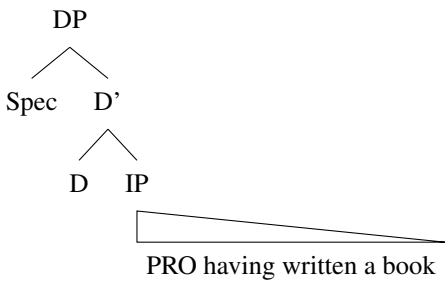
4.1. For *checks Case*

This section shows that prepositional *for* (but not *because*) functions as a case assigner. (49a) and (49b) are ungrammatical without the case-assigning preposition. When *because* embeds a non-finite nominal or gerundive structure, Case licensing becomes possible only if an overt Case-assigning preposition such as *of* is introduced. This demonstrates that *because*, as a complementizer, does not itself assign Case.

(49) a. I admired him because *(of) his having written a book.
b. I admired him because *(of) the writing of his book.

In addition example (49) shows that a case marker is required. This confirms that a deverbal gerund is headed by a DP dominating the verbal clausal structure (see also Abney 1987, Alexiadou 2001).

(50) [$_{DP}$ [D] [$_{IP}$ his having written a book]]



By contrast, in (51), *for* requires no additional preposition such as *of* to license case and thus *for* itself licenses case.

(51) a. I admired him for having written a book. [VP]
b. I admired him for the writing of his book. [DP]

I will take the more restrictive position, that the *for* preposition and *for* complementizer are featurally identical: that both check Case. To formalize this, I propose that the features of *for* include valued and uninterpretable features. This makes it identical to Pesetsky and Torrego (2007)'s characterization of C^0 – distinguished only by the feature in question.[8] By exploiting the parallelism with Pesetsky and Torrego

[8]Pesetsky and Torrego (2007) argue that Case is a realization of a complex checking relation involving T – they do not argue that Case is a primitive. I am treating Case as a primitive in my analysis purely as a placeholder. I make no commitments about the nature of the Case feature in this context. If I had to be pressed, I would suggest that "Case" is a stand-in for an epistemic feature such as [FACT] denoting the epistemic certainty of existence of an entity (if it is on a DP) or the certainty of truth value (if it is a predicate). But I don't want to get into the weeds of this.

(2007), I argue that *for* is featurally unable by itself to check all the uninterpretable and unvalued features of a DP. This will play an important role in my subsequent analysis.

(52) [FOR: [uninterpretable.case], [valued.case:ACC], . . .]

4.2. For *is semantically underspecified: It assigns a generalized theta role*

In previous sections I argued that (a) finite *for* clauses introduce (loosely) causal readings and that (b) non-finite *for* clauses exhibit a wider range of meanings which include but are not restricted to causal readings. I have also sought to show that the various readings of *for* clauses may be related to the presuppositional context interacting with the introduction of the Discourse Speaker's epistemic commitments.

If we step back momentarily from the complementizer function of *for*, we notice that ostensibly, *for* also appears to be a preposition in other English contexts albeit one with underspecified semantics. "The meaning of *for* seems abstract, manifold, and elusive" (Lindstromberg 1998:224). Examples (53) through (69) show that *for* is not thematically specific but can introduce a wide variety of DP complements including Beneficiaries, Directionals, Temporals, Instrumentals and – interestingly enough – Reasons/Causes (adapted from Lindstromberg (1998).

(53) I cooked the meal for my mother. [Beneficiary]

(54) This train is bound for Redding. [Telic Goal]

(55) You are invited to dinner; come at 7.30 for 8.00. [Telic temporal]

(56) I didn't eat aubergine for several years. [Atelic temporal]

(57) This gate is not to be used for a swing/swinging. [Instrumental]

(58) I didn't eat aubergine for several reasons. [Reason]

(59) München is famous for Glühwein. [Reason]

(60) They couldn't see the forest for the trees. [Cause – idiomatic]

(61) Adultery is grounds for divorce. [Cause]

(62) Sandile always played bridge for money. [Result]

(63) The house went for a song. [Result]

(64) The car is ready/prepared for a drive. [Availability/goal]

(65) The Falcon 9 is cleared for blast-off. [Availability/goal]

(66) Nobody takes Cyril for a fool. [Existence]

(67) There is no room for doubt. [Existence]

(68) Emigrating from my birth country was a big deal for me. [Experience]

(69) The news was shocking for the neighbours. [Experience]

In many of these examples, the contribution of prepositional *for* appears to be tightly integrated with the semantics of the predicate rather than introducing an independent lexical meaning of its own. The evidence above suggests that *for*, in its prepositional use, assigns Case and satisfies the selectional requirements of the predicate, yet does not itself introduce a richly specified thematic role. Instead, it supplies a generalized relational role, which I will characterize as GROUND (Talmy 1978; 2000). The DP introduced by *for* functions as the GROUND relative to which the main clause state or event is assessed (FIGURE). Returning to the complementizer function of *for*, the patterns reviewed earlier indicate that it behaves in parallel with prepositional *for* in lacking a determinate lexical semantics. On this basis, I adopt the more restrictive

hypothesis that complementizer *for* is semantically identical to prepositional *for*, and that both realize the same underspecified GROUND relation in the syntax as well as checking Case.

(70) [[FOR: [uinterpretable.Case], [valued.case:ACC], [θ assigner:GROUND], . . .]]

4.3. Derivation of for *with non-finite gerunds*

Having established the feature make-up of *for* in the lexicon, this section describes the derivation of non-finite and finite clauses introduced by *for*.[9] For non-finite gerunds, the derivation proceeds as follows. Step 1: The non-finite predicate is merged and a PRO subject is projected in the clause-internal subject position, where it receives its theta role from the embedded predicate. A nominalizing D head is then merged, forming a DP-sized constituent on top of the non-finite predicate (Abney 1987, Alexiadou 2001, de Vries 2006). To keep the derivation maximally conservative, I follow Pesetsky and Torrego (2007) with D introducing an unvalued Case feature that is uninterpretable on D and must be valued in the course of the derivation.

(71) a. William was angry with Harry for writing a book. . .
b. [DP [D:[unvalued.case; uninterpretable.case; θ]] [IP PRO **writing a book**]]

Because the structure is non-finite, there is no clause-internal head capable of valuing Case on D, so D's Case requirement cannot be satisfied inside the non-finite domain. Step 2: The complementizer *for* is merged.

(72) [[**for** [uninterpretable.case], [valued.case:ACC], [θ assigner:GROUND]
[DP [D:[unvalued.case; uninterpretable.case; θ]] [IP PRO **writing a book**]]]]

For bears the relevant Case-licensing resources: Agree checks unvalued.case on D with valued.case on *for* providing a non-nominative value. At the same time, *for* assigns a GROUND theta role to the DP. The Theta Criterion is therefore satisfied by a configuration in which PRO is theta-marked by the embedded predicate, and the nominalizing D is theta-marked by *for*: PRO receives a thematic role in the embedded domain, and the DP introduced by D receives a thematic role from the selecting head.

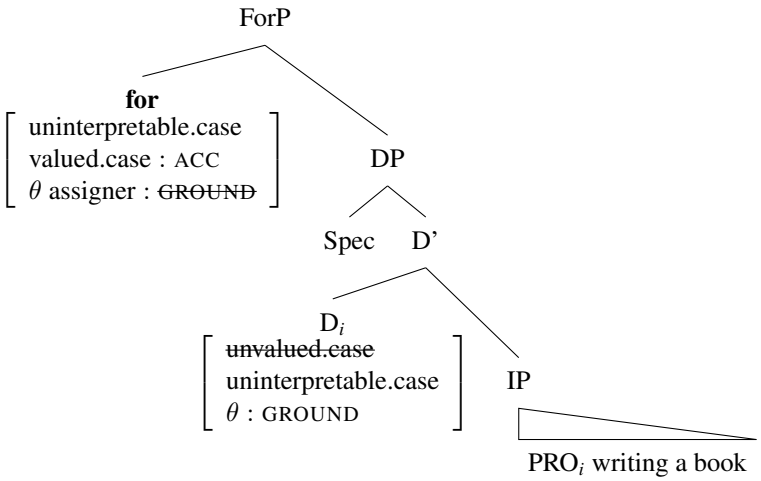
(73) After checking applies (only unchecked features shown here for convenience):
[[**for** [uninterpretable.case], [DP [D_i:[case:ACC; uninterpretable.case; θ:GROUND]] [IP PRO_i **writing a book**]]]]

The resulting structure is illustrated below in (74). Crucially, D and PRO are not independent thematic participants; D is interpreted as introducing (or at least being coindexed with) the same event participant PRO whose role is fixed clause-internally by the embedded predicate. Since conflicting thematic specifications would be illicit (or at minimum yield an interpretive crash), the role contributed by *for* must be a neutral, generalized role – something like GROUND – compatible with whatever more specific role is determined inside the embedded VP. This provides a direct explanation for why *for*, uniquely among English connectives, is able to head these nominalized non-finite clauses: it is specifically the combination of Case licensing plus a semantically underspecified theta contribution that allows the structure to converge.[10]

[9] Arguably, calling *for* a complementizer at this point is moot because it is identical in all featural respects to a preposition; *for* is a single lexical category which can take on a complementizer function as well as a prepositional function.

[10] The same point is shown by non-finite *because* adjuncts: Case and theta role are assigned by an apparently "empty" preposition *of*.

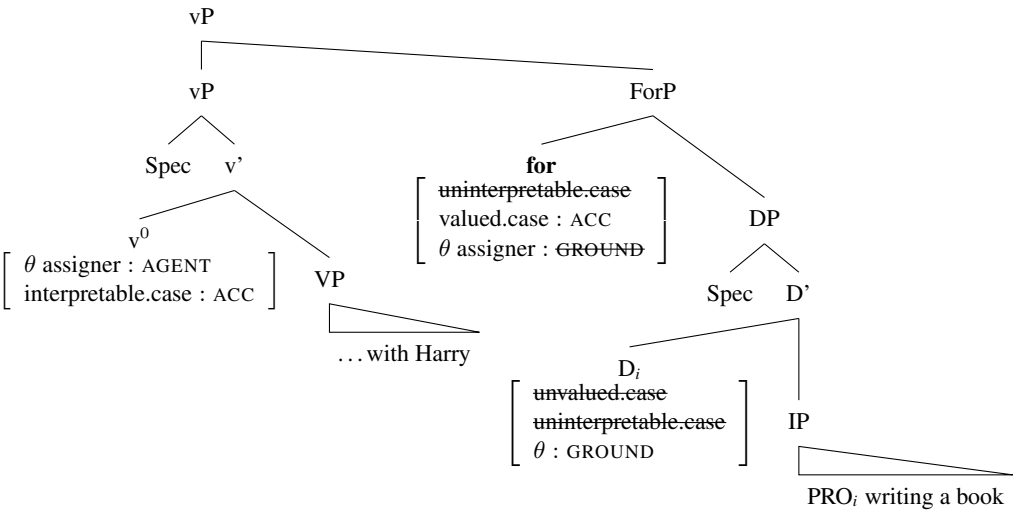
(74)



In this structure it can be clearly seen that there remain uninterpretable.case features on both *for* and the D. Consequently, when the *for* clause is merged adjoined to vP (as argued in section 2.1) within the verbal domain, *for*'s unvalued Case feature probes upward and Agrees with an interpretable Case source associated with the matrix predicate e.g. with little *v* which is a case assigner. It may also be possible that a prepositional case assigner could check uninterpretable.case. In this way, *for* is simultaneously (i) a local Case licenser for the nominalized gerund phrase (valuing D as non-nominative) and (ii) itself integrated into the matrix Case system by having its uninterpretable Case feature checked/valued in the vP domain. The consequence is that the non-finite *for* clause is derivationally complete without any need to treat it as dislocated or "peripheral": once its internal Case requirements are met and *for*'s own features are checked in vP, it can participate in the clausal syntax like other integrated adjuncts.

(75) After checking applies (only unchecked features shown here for convenience):
[vP [v [interpretable.case]] [PP **with Harry**$_i$] [[**for** [uninterpretable.case], [DP [D$_i$:[case:ACC; uninterpretable.case; θ:GROUND]] [Non-Finite PRO$_i$ **writing a book**]]]]

(76)



An interesting outcome of this analysis is that it predicts that when there is no interpretable.case feature within a vP (e.g. no case-assigning little *v* or no case-marked object), then the derivation ought not to converge. This may go some way toward explaining the ungrammaticality of *for* with intransitives (examples

(36) to (40)).[11]

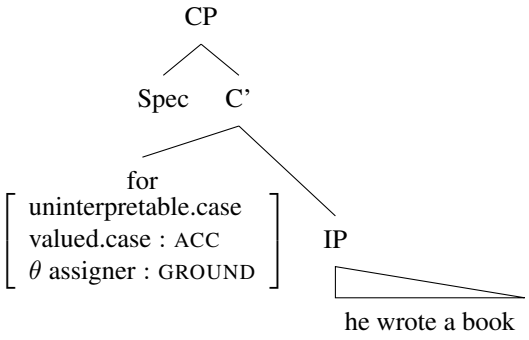
4.4. Derivations of finite for *adjuncts*

I now turn to finite causal clauses introduced by *for* in its complementizer function.

Step 1: A finite clause is merged with CP is merged headed by *for*. On standard assumptions, the IP is internally well-formed in the sense that its unvalued and uninterpretable features are discharged within the finite clause. In particular, nothing inside the IP is available to value the uninterpretable Case dependency on *for*, and the CP itself is not an appropriate target for theta-role assignment. The result is that *for*'s remaining requirements must be satisfied within the derivation of the matrix clause: its uninterpretable.case must be checked by an interpretable.case source external to the CP, and its theta role must be discharged outside the *for* clause. In this respect, finite *for* clauses contrast sharply with the non-finite nominalized structures discussed above, where *for* can license Case directly on a nominalizing D inside its complement.

(77) a. William was angry with Harry for he wrote a book.
b. [**for** [uninterpretable.case], [valued.case:ACC], [θ assigner:GROUND] [CP **he wrote a book**]]

(78)



Step 2: Merge the *for* clause with vP. *for*'s uninterpretable.case is valued upon Merge as soon as an appropriate interpretable.case feature is encountered in the vP shell.

(79) After checking applies (only unchecked features shown here for convenience):
[vP [v [interpretable.case]] [PP **with Harry**$_i$] [**for** [valued.case:ACC], [θ assigner:GROUND] [CP **he wrote a book**]]]

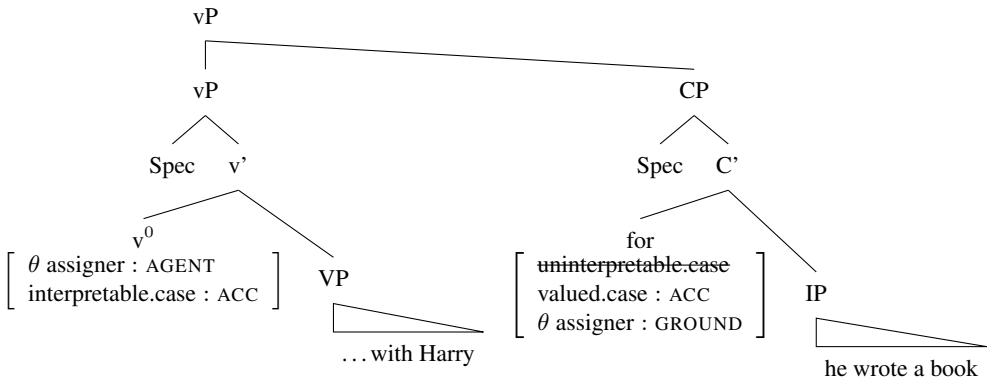
[11] In the spirit of intellectual honesty, it also makes a prediction which is not borne out by the facts, namely that passives with *for* gerunds ought to be ungrammatical since passive little *v* does not assign accusative case. In fact, such passives are grammatical and appear to be genuine instances where a subject can control PRO.

(i) a. She hates the car for using too much fuel.
b. The car was hated for using too much fuel.

(ii) a. The reviewer praised the article for offering a fresh perspective.
b. The article was praised for offering a fresh perspective.

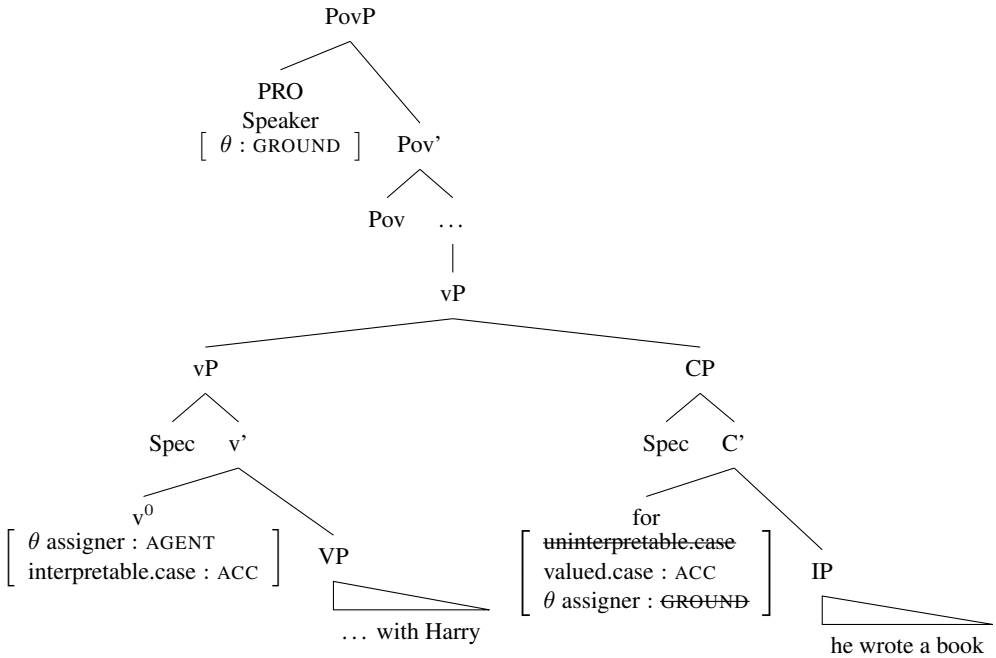
This is also an exception which proves the rule insofar as passive grammatical subjects are semantic objects. I shall leave this to future research.

(80)



Step 3: *for* still has a GROUND thematic role to assign. The Theta Criterion requires that thematic roles be exhaustively assigned, but all DPs introduced within the vP shell have already received theta roles from the selecting predicate(s), and the finite CP itself cannot bear the relevant participant role. The derivation therefore crashes unless *for* can assign a generalized GROUND role to another DP in the derivation. Given the semantics of *for* clauses encoding a speaker perspective, it is reasonable that these clauses may also interact with a phrase encoding Discourse Speaker Point of View in the left periphery: PovP (Speas and Tenny 2003, Miyagawa 2012). This phrase relates the proposition to the speaker as a discourse participant. On this view, *for* assigns its generalized GROUND theta role to the PRO Speaker argument of PovP, thereby explicitly encoding the *for* clause as a GROUND speaker-perspective.

(81)



4.5. SpellOut and why finite for *clauses are structurally dissociated*

The proposal, as developed so far, captures a cluster of properties: *for* patterns like a preposition-like complementizer with respect to feature valuation, but it also assigns a generalized GROUND theta role. In non-finite contexts, that theta role is discharged to the DP complement of the preposition. In finite

environments that theta role must be discharged in a speaker-oriented phrase within the high left periphery. What does not straightforwardly follow from the analysis is the fact that finite *for* clauses are structurally dislocated from the host clause. Being explicit about the limits of my analysis, I therefore offer the following as a partial analysis of the dislocation effect.

Notably, the dislocation effect appears restricted to finite *for* clauses. Therefore, within my analysis it is necessarily tied to the one major factor that differentiates finite and non-finite *for* constructions in the present system, namely the assignment of the GROUND thematic role by *for* to a PRO argument of PovP. One possible implementation is the following. In English, high-peripheral projections are not overtly realized. On this view, SpellOut applies before PovP is merged. When SpellOut occurs (after C and T instantiate a phase), all formal uninterpretable and unvalued features have already been checked and resolved. However, the finite *for* clause cannot yet be fully licensed in its merged position, because *for* has not discharged its GROUND theta role. This presents a paradox: if all formal features which might cause a crash at an interface are checked, then nothing actually prevents the *for* clause from being spelled out. On the other hand, its theta role has not yet been assigned so the derivation will crash at CI/LF. Accordingly I hypothesize that the finite *for* clause is spelled out in its merged position (because it meets the interface requirements) but the theta role is assigned covertly, post SpellOut. Since the *for* clause has already been spelled out in an earlier phase, the only way for *for* to discharge its theta role to the PRO argument of PovP is for the clause to be moved to a position in the high left periphery where it can enter into a local relationship with PRO. However, as it has already been spelled out in an earlier phase to do so, it must be 'ripped' from its original spelled out position, thus breaking the syntactic relations that link it to vP. This may result in a dislocation effect.

5. Conclusion

I have argued that treating *for* and *because* as near equivalents in causal clauses obscures a systematic asymmetry between them. Diagnostics involving coordination, fronting, focus, and fragment answers show that finite *for* clauses pattern differently from *because* clauses despite having very similar semantics. The investigation of non-finite *for* clauses distinguishes the semantic contributions of *because* and *for* more clearly, showing that their distribution is tightly constrained by argument structure and the epistemic orientation of the speaker.

On this basis, I reject analyses in which *for* itself encodes causation. Instead, I argue that *for* in both its prepositional and its complementizer functions is semantically underspecified: it checks Case and satisfies selectional requirements, but contributes only a highly general GROUND role to an argument relative to which the matrix proposition is assessed. This notion draws on Talmy's (1978, 2000) figure–ground organization, but generalizes it beyond spatial relations: the DP or IP introduced by *for* functions as a reference point against which an event or state is construed.

Building on this, I develop a derivational analysis in which *for* consistently introduces this GROUND relation across both finite and non-finite environments. Surface differences between them follow from independent structural factors. In non-finite adjuncts, *for* is able to discharge all its features and its theta roles within the vP shell. In finite contexts, by contrast, *for* can discharge its formal features within the vP shell but crucially cannot assign the GROUND theta role until after SpellOut when it assigns this role to the argument of PovP, explicitly encoding the epistemic point of view of the speaker into the argument structure of the clause. This placement explains both the distinctive syntax of finite *for* clauses and their stronger causal profile.

Acknowledgements

This paper feels, in some sense, like a return to my Linguistics roots and the completion of a cycle. It started in 2001, as a novice AIO under the supervision of Prof. Johan Rooryck at Leiden University, I wrote a short

descriptive squib comparing *for* and *because*. I set it aside and, for 25 years waited for it to germinate, not knowing what to do with it. The invitation to contribute to this volume provided an occasion to revisit that early work. What has emerged is quite different from what I first imagined. The argument developed in directions that were not apparent to me at the time. I like to think that my linguistic thinking and practice has developed and matured over the course of this cycle. For the opportunity and encouragement to spend my life contributing to the development of the world of ideas, my deepest thanks go to Johan.

I completed my PhD under his promotorship between 2001 and 2005. He insisted on a respect for the data, clarity in analysis, on understanding precisely how a mechanism works and what follows from it. That insistence on precision shaped how I think about syntax and about ideas in general. Our discussions at the time pushed me further than I imagined possible. At the same time, he created a space that was welcoming and deeply human. He welcomed us into his home, hosted us for meals, and showed a genuine interest. At the same time, I recognized in him a deeply ethical man – who cared deeply about the Discipline and about how we conduct ourselves as intellectuals; his subsequent work in Open Access amply demonstrates this.

Thank you, Johan for changing my life and providing such a spectacular example to me. Your legacy lives on in your advice to me which I pass on to my own students: how to write a good abstract and a comment you once made that when giving a conference presentation: one may be excused for a boring analysis, but one cannot be excused for failing to put on a good show.

Finally, I would like to thank Giselle de Vos and Sally Hunt and Camil Staps for interesting conversations about the data and the meanings of *for*. I am also sincerely grateful to two anonymous reviewers whose careful comments and suggestions strengthened the argument dramatically. Finally, I'd like to thank Anikó Lipták who provided feedback on the very first version 25 years ago.

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