The status of Burzio's Generalization in the New Passive and in Fate Accusatives

Introduction: Icelandic New Passives and Fate Accusatives surface with structural accusative (ACC) in apparent violation of Burzio's generalization (BG). I propose a view on BG that covers both, the standard cases and the above cases of unexpected structural ACC. BG neither reflects a dependency relation between an external theta role and structural ACC (Burzio 1986) nor a dependency relation between two structurally case marked DPs (Marantz 2000, Sigurðsson's 2003, 2006 *sibling correlation*). Instead, it reflects a dependency relation between two modes of argument encoding: agreement which is determined in syntax via AGREE, and ACC which is determined after syntax. This dependency is computed at the PF-interface on the basis of the φ-features on the phase-head (Voice) along the lines of (1):

(1) a. **Dependent case** (ACC): A DP is realized at PF with dependent case if it is not involved in the valuation of the local Voice-head via AGREE.
   b. **Default case** (NOM): A DP that is not realized with dependent case appears with default case. (Inherent/lexical case takes precedence over default/dependent case.)

(1a-b) follow Sigurðsson's (2000, 2003, 2009) observation that structural case is computed inside the verbal phrase. For simplicity, I assume the structure in (2) (e.g. Collins 2005, Sigurðsson 2011 or Bruening 2012) where a Voice-head (active, passive or unaccusative) dominates v and determines whether v introduces an overt, an implicit or no external argument at all. Canonical Voice-heads come with a set of unvalued φ-features to be valued by the closest DP. At PF, this DP will get NOM due to (1b). If the structure involves a further DP (an object) this will get ACC due to (1a). This system derives the standard cases of BG.

(2) \[ \text{Voice}_\text{P} \rightarrow \text{Voice}_\text{P} \downarrow \{u_P, u_N, u_G\} \rightarrow [vP \rightarrow \text{DP}_\{P, N, G\} \rightarrow [vP \rightarrow \text{DP}_\{P, N, G\}]] \]

New Passives: In canonical passives, absorption of the external argument triggers ACC-to-NOM conversion on the object DP which, furthermore, triggers agreement on the auxiliary and the participle (3b). DP_NOM can A-move out of vP or, if indefinite, stay inside vP (4a, b).

(3) a. Einhver landi stúlkuna.  
   b. Stúlkari var lamin
   someone beat girl.the.ACC girl.the.NOM was beaten.FEM.SG

(4) a. *Pað var lamin stúlka.  
   b. *Pað var lamin stúlka.  
   it was beaten.FEM.SG girl.NOM it was beaten.FEM.SG girl.the.NOM

The New Passive (which is accepted only by some speakers, therefore the %-sign in (5a, b)) uses the same auxiliary and participle as the canonical passive and involves absorption of the external argument (e.g. Thráinsson 2007, Eythórsson 2008, Jónsson 2009, Sigurðsson 2011; pace Maling & Sigurjónsdóttir 2002). But three properties set it apart from standard passives: i) there is no ACC-to-NOM conversion and, in turn, the auxiliary and the participle show default morphology (5a, b). ii) A-movement of the internal argument out of the vP is impossible (6a, b). iii) There is no definiteness effect (5b) (Maling & Sigurjónsdóttir 2002 a.o.). Since iii) is arguably a direct consequence of ii), I will concentrate on i) and ii) below.

(5) a. *Pað var lamið stúlku.  
   b. *Pað var lamið stúlku.
   it was beaten.N.SG girl.ACC it was beaten.N.SG girl.the.ACC

(6) a. *Pað var stúlku lamið.  
   b. *Pað var stúlkuna lamið.
   it was ACC beaten.N.SG it was girl.the.ACC beaten.N.SG

As Sigurðsson (2011) points out, i-iii are not general properties of the New Passive variety but must be related to properties of this specific Voice (Voice_NewP). To derive ii) he proposes that Voice_NewP carries a set of *valued* φ-features, which intervene between Tense and the internal argument, thereby blocking A-movement of the latter. For i) he suggests that Voice_NewP has the idiosyncratic property to trigger ACC (in technical terms: not to trigger *-deletion). A problem with this proposal is that it dissociates the explanation for i) from that for ii). This leaves it as a coincidence that the speakers of the New Passive variety introduced...
the properties i) and ii) into their grammar in the context of the very same construction/Voice. Note, on the other hand, that the case algorithm in (1) allows us to relate i) and ii): If Voice_{NewP} comes with valued φ-features, which block A-movement, then (1a) predicts that a DP inside VoiceP will be marked with ACC (modulo inherent/lexical case). While it seems to be a welcome result that i-iii can be related to one underlying factor (valued φ-features on Voice_{NewP}), Fate (as well as Psych) Accusatives seem to pose a problem.

Fate Accusatives (FAs) (e.g. Haider 2001, Svenonius 2002, 2006, Platzack 2006, Sigurðsson 2005, 2011): These verbs (seem to) undergo the causative alternation, but the sole DP in the anticausative keeps structural ACC (7b). However, since DP_{ACC} in FAs can A-move out of vP, one might conclude that the above account which correlates i) and ii) cannot be upheld.


the.storm.NOM drove the.boat.ACC on land the.boat.ACC drove on land

I assume that FAs are transitives with a pro in Spec,vP (Haider 2001, Platzack 2006). One argument for the transitivity of FAs is that German has a parallel construction with the pronoun es (it) in Spec,vP, another comes from the observation that FAs differ from real anticausatives under modification with af sjálfum sér (by itself) (8a vs. b; Schäfer 2008).

(8) a. Dynnar openðust af sjálfum sér b. Stormípp bléss af húsinu (*af sjálfum sér)

the.door.NOM opened by itself the.chimney.ACC blew from house by itself

Finally, the FATE-semantics of FAs follows, if these involve a covert and referentially underspecified subject (Schäfer 2008). More concretely, the pro-subject in FAs is the same as the one, which arguably shows up in Icelandic weather verbs (9) (Sigurðsson 1989). (Again, one argument for a pro-subject comes from languages such as German where weather verbs surface with the (semi-jargumental pronouns es (Rizzi 1989, Vikner 1995)).

(9) Rigndi pro_{weather} mikið í gær?

rained it much yesterday

If FAs involve a pro-subject, ACC in (7b/8b) follows from (1a), because the φ-features of pro value Voice. But then why does pro in Spec,vP not block A-movement of the accusative DP? This question becomes even more urgent because in another Icelandic construction involving a pro-subject, the impersonal modal construction in (10), pro does in fact block A-movement of the accusative DP (Svenonius 2002, Sigurðsson & Egerland 2009).

(10) Hér má (*bókina) ekki auglýsa (bókina).

here may book.the.ACC not advertise book.the.ACC

The answer to this question is related to the feature-specification of the pro-subjects in the two constructions: pro is fully specified in the context of the impersonal construction, but not in the case of FAs. Note that in the modal construction, the pro-subject refers to a human entity similar to English 'one', German 'man' or French 'on' (Sigurðsson & Egerland 2009), suggesting that this pro is fully specified for φ-features. The pro-subject of weather verbs, and by hypothesis also of FAs, on the other hand, is referentially extremely reduced. (For example, it cannot be asked for.) I propose, therefore, that weather-pro(noun)s only have a reduced set of φ-features (see also Szucsich 2007, Schäfer 2008); specifically, they only involve a number-feature but no person- or gender-feature. Furthermore, I propose that the amount/type of feature specification on pro determines whether it acts as an intervener for A-movement or not. If it is fully specified, it intervenes, if it is only partly specified, it does not. However, even a partly specified pro triggers ACC on the internal argument along the lines of (1a). This proposal makes the prediction that - just as the (hypothetical) subject in FAs - the subject of weather verbs should not intervene for A-movement. While weather verbs are normally intransitive, it is possible to combine them with (dative) internal arguments as in (11). The example shows that the prediction is confirmed, i.e. the internal argument of weather verbs leaves the vP if definite (p.c. Halldor Sigurðsson).

(11) þá mundi spurningunum rigna (*spurningunum) yfir okkur.

then would questions.the.DAT rain questions.the.DAT over us

'Then it would rain these questions on us. (We would have to face these questions.)'