Levels and locality in phrase structure[1]

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Phrase structure theory in the principles-and-parameters (government and binding) framework has generally followed the program of Stowell (1981), attempting to find general principles to replace the category-based phrase structure rules of the earlier theories (e.g., Chomsky 1965). It is usually assumed that the only residue of such rules is the X′-schema (originally proposed by Chomsky 1970) exemplified in (1), which defines two levels of structure for each phrase:

(1) a. $X'' \rightarrow YP^*, X'$
     b. $X' \rightarrow X, ZP^*$

Other aspects of phrase structure, such as the categorial identity of complements and the linear order of YP and ZP nonheads, are assumed to be handled by independent mechanisms, often taken as a set of well-formedness conditions on phrase structure. Thus selectional information in each head's lexical entry is responsible for specifying the type of its complement (Stowell 1981; Pesetsky 1982); and linear order is taken to result largely from a language's parameter setting for head-directionality, or perhaps direction of theta (θ-) or Case assignment (Koopman 1983; Travis 1984). There remain many questions, but the outlines of this sort of theory are generally accepted in the framework of Chomsky (1981, 1986a).

Some writers, such as Stuurman (1985), Speas (1990a) and Hoekstra (1991) have proposed going further, deriving even the X′-schema from deeper principles and thus eliminating it as a primitive of the theory. In this paper I will agree that this can and should be done, but suggest that there is a better way to do it. The proposal given here not only derives the X′-schema but also explains certain