In this chapter we discuss the relation between the vocative phrase and the clause—the *external licensing* problem. The main question is: Considering that vocative phrases are VocPs, as argued in Chapter 3, how does VocP merge with the clause? This is rephrasing an old question, which divided the debate between those who deny that such a relation exists (e.g., Hjemslev 1935) and those who acknowledge it and attempt to account for its syntactic implementation (especially, formal approaches to language). Studies within the latter group provide varied explanations, where vocative phrases are characterized, among others, as adjuncts (Osenova & Simov 2003), appositions (Fink 1972), or independent predicates (Szabolcsi 1994). Unlike these previous studies, our working hypothesis is that Speech Acts are mapped to syntax as a field at the left periphery of the clause, and that SA selects a ForceP complement. VocPs are shown to be part of SAP, therefore VocP relates to ForceP by virtue of being both part of SAP. In other words, our analysis is fundamentally different from what has been proposed before insofar as we do not attempt to assign VocP a location within the space of ForceP, but outside ForceP, while still establishing a relation between the two elements within a wider configuration. Therefore, VocP is derived according to the general constraints for generating nominal phrases (as shown in Chapter 4) and merges in the clause structure at the left periphery, as we shall argue here.

This chapter will thus treat the vocative as part-and-parcel of the speech act configuration: VocP is related to pragmatic particles and to the sentence according to a principled and systematic pattern. Basically, the analysis is that VocP merges in SAhP in the same way any DP does in the vP domain. From this perspective, we point out that any attempt to explain the relation between vocative phrases and clauses will fail as long as the vocative is analyzed as “out of the ordinary”, instead of being recognized as an argument of some sort. We then explore the options for variation in linearization around VocPs, and revisit the cross-linguistic comparison with West Flemish.
1. A Main Clause Phenomenon

In Chapter 5, we have already hinted at the fact that SAPs cannot be embedded. In this section, we account for that restriction as follows: the SA heads do not map the clause typing feature but select a clause typing feature that is mapped to Force (i.e., a certain type of ForceP); thus, they compete with a matrix verb for the selection of a similar feature set. Thus, SA heads are interveners between V and ForceP (i.e., *V > SA > Force, versus ok V > Force or ok SA > Force).

In this respect, we start by showing that a particle merged in SAhº selects ForceP, that is, it has a selectional feature that can discriminate between the different ForceP types and opt only for a compatible one. Evidence in this respect is presented all throughout Chapter 5, but it is important that we resume the discussion of this property in light of discrepancies between the structure of sahP that we propose in (38), Chapter 5, and the structure of saP proposed in Speas & Tenny (2003). In particular, it is important that we argue for a complement position of ForceP in relation to the speech act particle (versus its merging in Spec, saP in Speas & Tenny 2003). The extra-evidence we bring in this respect comes from the spellout of Forceº in Romanian matrix clauses; and from restrictions on the type of ForceP the particle may combine with.

– Că ‘that’ in matrix clauses

A speech act particle allows for the spellout of Forceº as că ‘that’ in Romanian root clauses, as in (1a). Without a preceding speech act particle, că ‘that’ is ungrammatical in a root clause, as shown in (1b)—there is no spellout for Forceº in a declarative root clause.

(1) a. Hai că ne-a sosit scrisoarea.
   hai that to.us-has arrived letter.the
   ‘There you are, our letter has arrived.’

   b. (*Că) ne-a sosit scrisoarea.
      that to.us-has arrived letter.the
      ‘Our letter has arrived.’

The presence of că ‘that’ is possible only under selection. Under a speech act particle, că ‘that’ is optional, whereas in sentential complements it is obligatory, as shown in (2).

(2) a. Hai (că) ne-a sosit scrisoarea.
    hai that to.us-has arrived letter.the
    ‘There you are, our letter has arrived.’