

Expletives don't move

In this paper I provide empirical evidence that expletives do not undergo A-movement, contrary to what is standardly assumed. This conclusion is shown to have important consequences for the Extended Projection Principle and the analysis of expletive constructions in general.

My central argument that expletives do not undergo A-movement concerns locality restrictions on movement. Chomsky (1995) and McGinnis (1998) argue that French (1) is ruled out due to a violation of locality restrictions on movement. In short, A-movement across an A-specifier results in a relativized minimality violation. Significantly, (2), the expletive counterpart of (1), is acceptable. The acceptability of (2) provides evidence that, in contrast to (1), (2) does not involve A-movement across an A-specifier. In other words, the expletive is inserted directly into the matrix SpecIP. It does not get to this position by undergoing A-movement from a lower position, like the indefinite in (1).

More evidence for this conclusion is provided by the contrast in (4), noted by Bouvier (2000), with respect to raising in the French causative construction, illustrated in (3). (4a) is argued in the paper to involve a locality violation. More precisely, movement of the indefinite from the embedded clause is argued to result in a violation of locality restrictions on movement. The obvious conclusion then is that (4b) does not involve movement out of the infinitival, which means that the expletive is base-generated in its surface position.

Another argument to this effect concerns Pesetsky's (1992) generalization that agentive verbs in English cannot exceptionally Case-mark (ECM) lexical NPs, illustrated by Postal's (1993) (5a) and Pesetsky's (1992) (5b). Boskovic (1997), who argues for overt object shift (i.e. movement to SpecAgroP/SpecvP) in English, also assumed in this paper (see also Authier 1991, Johnson 1991, Koizumi 1995, Lasnik 1999, Runner 1998, Ura 1993, among others), gives a locality-based account of Pesetsky's generalization. The gist of Boskovic's analysis is that as a result of the presence of an additional agentive VP shell, movement of the embedded clause subject to the object shift position in the matrix clause results in a violation of locality restrictions on movement. Significantly, Postal's (1993) (6a) and Ura's (1993) (6b) show that expletive ECM constructions are acceptable with the verbs in question, which is readily accounted for if, in contrast to the embedded clause subject in (5), the expletive in (6) does not undergo movement-it is directly inserted into the matrix object shift position for Case reasons, as discussed below.

The persistent contrasts between expletive constructions and their non-expletive counterparts with respect to violations of locality restrictions on movement indicate that the relevant movement operation that takes place in non-expletive constructions does not take place in their expletive counterparts, which in turn indicates that expletives are not undergoing movement-they are base-generated in their surface A-positions. In the paper I provide three additional arguments to this effect that do not involve locality restrictions on movement, one concerning Icelandic multiple subject existential constructions and two concerning English existential constructions.

The conclusion that expletives do not move has important theoretical consequences. First, it provides evidence against analyses of expletive constructions that are crucially based on expletive movement, such as Moro (1997)-style predicate raising analyses, as well as Sabel's (2000) movement out of the associate analysis. Second, the conclusion provides evidence against the EPP. If the expletive is inserted directly into the matrix clause in (2,4b,6), there is nothing in the embedded clause SpecIP of these constructions. Based on this, following several recent works (Boeckx 2000, Epstein and Seely 1999, Grohmann et al 2000, Martin 1999) I argue that the EPP is to be eliminated from the grammar. Where the EPP does appear to hold, its effects follow from the requirement that the Case feature of traditional Case assigners be checked overtly (Inverse Case Filter in Boskovic's 1997 terms). This leads us to the Belletti (1988)/Lasnik (1999)-style analysis of expletive constructions, where the expletive bears Case and therefore can be inserted directly into a Case position in the matrix clause of (2,4b,6) for Case reasons (nominative in (2,4b) and accusative in (6)). The data in (1-6) together with (7a-b), which are readily ruled out by the Inverse Case Filter (the matrix I's nominative is not checked), provide strong evidence for the Inverse Case Filter view of the EPP effects. What (1-7) show is that Caseless SpecIP positions do not have to be present (see 2,4b,6), while Case SpecIP positions have to be (see 7), which immediately follows from the Inverse Case Filter view of the EPP.

Data

- (1) *Deux soldats semblent au général être arrivés en ville.
two soldiers seem to-the general to-be arrived in town
- (2) Il semble au général être arrivé deux soldats en ville.
there seems to-the general to-be arrived two soldiers to town
- (3) Marie a fait faire une jupe.
Mary has made to-make a skirt
'Mary had a skirt made.'
- (4) a. *Une jupe a été fait(e) faire (par Marie)
a skirt has been made to-make by Mary
'A skirt was caused to be made by Mary.'
b. Il a été fait faire une jupe (?par Marie).
there has been made to-make a skirt by Mary
'A skirt was caused to be made by Mary.'
- (5) a. *He alleged stolen documents to be in the drawer.
b. *John wagered Mary to have entered the room.
- (6) a. He alleged there to be stolen documents in the drawer.
b. John wagered there to have been two strangers in that haunted house.
- (7) a. *Semble que deux soldats arrivaient en ville.
seems that two soldiers arrived in town
b. *Is likely that Mary will leave.

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