

The diachronic syntax of expletive creation

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Introduction*

Although it is not unusual to find studies about expletive subjects, to my knowledge, Faarlund's *Syntactic Change* (Faarlund 1990: 66) is the first one to mention the diachronic expletive sequence in (1), which he derives from historical properties of mainland Scandinavian languages. Jan Faarlund states that mainland Scandinavian languages have gone through three stages in historical times: Old Norse with no expletives, a stage with an expletive topic (Topic-Exp), and the present day situation with an expletive subject (Subject-Exp).

Expletive Sequence :

- (1) Ø-Exp > Topic-Exp > Subject-Exp (Mainland Scandinavian)
15th C. 19th C.

In order to explain the evolutive process of the Expletive Sequence, Faarlund claims that Topic-Exp's show up to occupy a position that obligatorily has to be filled by some lexical item —either an expletive, or some element which fits the required pragmatic properties. If the preverbal position cannot be filled by an element with the required pragmatic properties, then that position is filled by an expletive. In the context of Germanic languages, he introduces two constraints regulating the distribution of expletive topics and expletive subjects: the obligatory subject constraint and the verb-second constraint. According to this approach, expletive subjects are needed in order to fill an otherwise empty subject position in languages with an obligatory subject, whereas expletive topics are used to fill the preverbal position in V2 languages if nothing else already occupies that position.

We will show that the historical development in (1) also applies to a great

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variety of languages outside the mainland Scandinavian domain, both Germanic as well as non-Germanic languages. If our approach is on the right track, what this article shows is that there is a universal tendency for a language to evolve following the stages of the Expletive Sequence (1).

I propose, based on my research, that the schemata in (1) can be reduced to two parametric conditions, along with a supplementary (diachronic) switch control, that enrich the pro-drop parameter and take it to its limits:

I. Insufficiency condition: *EXPLETIVE CREATION*

If a language L is pro-drop

- A. it may have expletive topics or
- B. it may not develop expletive topics

II. Necessity Condition: *Pro-drop NEUTRALIZATION*

If a language L is pro-drop, it cannot have expletive subjects

- From Condition I to Condition II. A switch in diachronic parameter-setting follows in productive syntax:

Condition I-A \Rightarrow Condition II iff pro-drop $> \emptyset$

Condition I-B $\neq \triangleright$ Condition II

- If the property 'pro-drop' is "strong" enough, i.e. [+ α Agr], expletive Topics $> \emptyset$.

Non-Germanic geolinguistic extensions

The chronology and diachronic evolution in (1) is specifically exemplified with respect to the historical characteristics of Western Romance languages such as French, Northwestern Iberian Languages (NILs: Galician, Leonese, Portuguese and Spanish) and West Slavic languages (Czech, Sorbian) by showing the relevant similarities between them and the Germanic languages. Additionally, some differences between Germanic and Non-Germanic languages are discussed which, in the end, are shown to be derived from independent properties. Since there is little understanding of expletives among null subject languages, this article provides an important contribution towards understanding that phenomenon.

Among the consequences derived from this research, I highlight the following:

- The role of V2 in triggering the Expletive Sequence must be reduced since its diachronic evolution applies to: (a) non-V2 languages (Golden Age Spanish, i.e., 16th-17th C. Spanish, and Provençal, (b) languages with invariable 'apparent' V2 status in which the Expletive Sequence is not completely developed (Galician, Leonese and Portuguese), and (c) French. The loss of V2 in French in 14th-15th Centuries does not affect the subsequent creation of Expletive Subjects. In fact, in 15th C. texts, i.e., texts produced after the loss of verb second, null subjects are found not only in main clauses, but also, as an innovation, in subordinate clauses (Vance 1989).

- The role of pro-drop, i.e., the role of $+/-\theta$ null subject languages, must be taken into account to explain the facts.
- Languages that apparently do not follow (1) call for an explanation. English is a case in point since expletive subjects have been reported from its earliest times, in overt contradiction with our approach, as we predict that expletive subjects must be incompatible with productive null subjects, which is apparently false since null subjects are found in English as late as the 16th C. (Visser 1963).
- There is not a straightforward relationship between the Tobler-Mussaffia law—disallowing clitics from occupying first position—and the Expletive Sequence (1).

1. Three diachronic stages

This section recreates the three stages of the Expletive Sequence (1) with Norwegian as representative of the mainland Scandinavian languages. The first stage is illustrated with Old Norse, which is a pro-drop language. Both $+\theta$ and $-\theta$ null subjects (*pro*) are found in Old Norse, as shown in (2) and (3) respectively.

- (2) a. Óð inn vissi um alt jarð fé, hvar *pro* fólgi var (Heimskringla)
 Odin knew about all treasure where hidden was
 ‘Odin knew about the whole treasure, where it was hidden’
- b. þú munt eigi segja hersogu, nem *pro* sonn sé (Jómsvíkinga saga)
 you shall not tell war-news unless true be
 ‘You shall not tell news from the war unless it is true’
- (3) a. þiegjar er *pro* l sti (Oláfs saga helga)
 then when brightened
 ‘As soon as it dawned’
- b. hér *pro* hefr upp sogu Heið recks konungs (Hervarar saga ok Heið recks)
 here lifts up saga-Ac. H.-Gen. king-Gen.
 ‘Here starts King Hidrek’s saga’

Additionally, the status of Old Norse as a non-V2 language is shown in (4), where the finite verb is found in both first and second positions:

- (4) a. Hálfðan hvítbein var konungr ríkr (Heimskringla, in Faarlund 1990)
 H. whiteleg was king powerful
 ‘Halfðan the Whiteleg was a powerful king’
- b. hafið flit verit hér um hríð með mér (Egils saga, In Faarlund 1990)
 have you been here for while with me
 ‘You have already stayed here with me for some time’

In the course of the 15th C., we find the first occurrences of Expletive Topics: *ther* / *der* ‘there’ or *det* ‘it’ (5), which illustrate the stage II of the Expletive Sequence (1). Examples (5a-b) are instances of Transitive Expletive Constructions (TECs). TECs are syntactic constructions that derive thematic subjects and (topic) expletives

together. A more advanced evolutionary stage is shown by modern Dano-Norwegian (6). The verb-expletive inversion seen in *kan-det*, which is not possible with expletive topics, shows that we are dealing with expletive subjects. Example (6b) is the modern version of the 19th century (5b), with no expletive at all. Both examples in (6) are the final stage of the expletive cycle in (1).

- (5) a. ther kom ey een tijl lande hiem (Dano-Norgwegian, *The Danish Chronicle* 1495)
 there came not one to country home
 'No one came back home to his country'
 b. det vil alle hava den beste (19th C., Norwegian, Aasen [1864]: 268)
 it will all have the best
 'Everybody wants the best one'
- (6) a. ellers kan det gis en viktig årsak ... (Modern Dano-Norwegian)
 otherwise can it be-given an important reason
 'Otherwise an important reason can be given why...'
 b. alle vil ha den beste (cf. 5b, its 19th. C. original)
 all will have the best

The expletive subject stage is also illustrated by verb-expletive inversion in Swedish: (7a) is an impersonal passive and (8a) is a weather verb construction. These structures contrast minimally with those of languages that have not reached the third stage of the Expletive Sequence yet: modern German, Faroese/Icelandic [in (7c) and (7b) respectively], and Icelandic [in (8b)]:

- (7) a. dansades det på skeppet? (Swedish, Haider 1991)
 was-danced there on the ship
 b. var *pro* dansað? (Icelandic/Faroese)
 was danced
 c. wurde *pro* getanzt? (German)
 was danced
- (8) a. regnade *(det) i går? (Swedish, Platzack 1987)
 b. rigndi (*flað) í gær? (Icelandic)
 rained it in yesterday
 'Did it rain yesterday?'

2. Germanic Languages

In order to explore the Expletive Sequence (1) outside the modern mainland Scandinavian languages, but still within the Germanic domain, I have contrasted the distribution of the TECs among them. TEC's are illustrated with examples in German (9a) and Icelandic (9b). The distribution of TEC's is summarized in (9'). Since TECs are derived with Expletive Topics, a lack of TECs correlates with a lack of Expletive Topics. All languages that allow TEC's are candidates for languages currently in the second stage of the Expletive Sequence.

- (12) a. so mochte water flei wepten flat *pro* made the forseyd lake
 so much water they wept that made the before-mentioned lake
 (Middle English, Platzack 1995)

3. Expletives in pro-drop languages. Romance languages

Since the study of overt expletive constructions is mostly confined to non-pro-drop languages, our first task is to show the existence of overt subject expletives among null-subject languages in order to incorporate null-subject languages into the Expletive Sequence (1). Our second task is to show that those subjects are not English/French-like expletive subjects; on the contrary, they behave like Topic-expletives.

Expletive constructions occur without any apparent restriction among pro-drop languages. NILs illustrate this phenomenon (Silva-Villar 1997, to appear): Sisternian (13a), a Leonese dialect, Galician (13b), 17th century Spanish (13c), Dominican Spanish (13d), and Portuguese (13d).

- (13) a. el cúmu te chamas? (Sisternian, Fernández 1960: 63)
 Exp how you call-2p.sg.
 'What is your name?'
 b. il viñeron teus pais (Galician, García de Diego 1978: 101)
 Exp came-3p.pl. your parents
 'Your parents came'
 c. ello has de casarte (17th. C. Sp., Zorrilla, in H. Ureña 1939)
 Exp have-2p.sg. to get married
 'You have to get married'
 d. ello hay arroz (Dominican Sp., Patín Maceo 1947: 76)
 Exp is-there rice
 'There is some rice'
 e. ele muitos estudantes vieram á festa (Port., Raposo 1995)
 Exp many students came-3p.pl. to the party
 'Many students came to the party'

Outside the Northwestern Iberian domain, expletive subjects are also found among other Romance pro-drop languages such as Old French¹ (14a), 16th century

(1) The fact that modern French has subject expletives is irrelevant for our description of the linguistic facts since Old French is a pro-drop language until the 16th century as shown in (i):

- (i) a. si retourne *pro* maintnant a l'abeie (OFrench, *Queste*, de Bakker 1995)
 so returns now to the abbey
 'So, she returns now to the abby'
 b. sire, noveless vos aport *pro* molt merueilleuses
 sire tidings you bring very wonderful
 'Sire, tidings I bring you, very wonderful ones'
 c. or *pro* revendrai al pedre ed a la medre
 now will-come-back to-the father and to the mother
 'Now I will return to the father and to the mother' (OFr., *La vie de St. Alexis*, 101)

Catalan (14b), Castellonese (14c) —a peninsular Catalan dialect—, Occitan (14d), and Basso Polesano (14e).

- (14) a. *il entroit chevaliers en masse* (OFrench, *RHam*:269, in Gamillscheg 1957: 520)
 Exp enters knights in great numbers
 'There enters knights in great numbers' (sic)
- b. *el crema* (16th C., Catalan, Spitzer 1941: 242)
 Exp burns
 'It burns'
- c. *ell va ser com posar oli a un llum* (Castellonese, in Coromines 1982)
 Exp is.going to-be like to-put oil to a fire
 'It is going to be like adding fuel to the fire'
- d. *o pléut* (Occitan, Dauzat 1900, Ronjat 1937)
 Exp rains
 'It rains'
- e. *a pare que Nane vegna qua* (Basso Polesano, Poletto 1996)
 Exp seems that John comes here
 'It seems that John comes here'

In the domain of modern pro-drop languages, the role of the expletives in non-pro-drop languages is often assumed by *pro*, as illustrated by the Spanish examples in (15):

- (15) a. *pro relampaguea* (weather constructions)
 pro thunders
 'It is thundering'
- b. *pro es cierto que me voy* (impersonal const.)
 pro is true that me leave-1p.sg.
 'It is true that I am leaving'
- c. *pro hay muchos estudiantes en la fiesta* (existential const.)
 pro is-there many students in the party
 'There are many students in the party'

Other cases are comparable to certain instances of Free Inversion derivations (Burzio 1986, de Bakker 1995) or Extraposition structures.

- (16) a. *llegan muchos lingüistas*
 arrive-3p.pl. many linguists
 'There arrive many linguists'
- b. *es una vergüenza que Juan no pueda unirse a nosotros*
 is a pity that John not can join-SE to us
 'It is a disgrace that John can't join us'

4. Expletive Constructions. NILs

In this section, a variety of expletive constructions belonging to the domain of NILs is introduced. Due to their novelty and variety, it is necessary to single them out from a descriptive point of view. These derivations range from the most simple

expletive construction, the Single Expletive Construction (SEC), apparently showing properties of non-null-subject languages such as English or Modern French, to more complex ones which are virtually confined to the Northwestern area. We will show that all of these structures are compatible with the second step of the Expletive Sequence.

4.1. Single Expletive Construction

In this subsection, some basic properties of the first subject expletive construction under study are introduced. Although they share some apparent similarities with those in non-null-subject languages, an important number of dissimilarities will force us to seek another syntactic description for them. The examples in (17) show meteorological condition verbs from non-standard European Portuguese, Galician, Dominican Spanish, 19th C. Spanish and Leonese (here Asturian, collected in Candamo).²

- (17) a. *êle já orvalha* Port., Airão, in Leite de Vasconcelos 1928
 Exp already drizzle
 'It is already drizzling'
- b. *el chove* (Gal. in Álvarez & al., 1986)
 Exp rains
 'It is raining'
- c. *ello estaba lloviznando un poco* (Dom. Sp., Caamaño 1976)
 Exp was drizzling a little
 'It was drizzling a little'
- d. *ello lloverá sidra, cigarrillos, corbatas, un epatante solomillo*
 Exp rain-will cider, cigarettes, ties, a dazzling sirloin
 'it will rain cider, cigarettes, ties, a dazzling sirloin'
 (19th C. Sp., Pérez de Ayala, in H. Ureña 1939)
- e. *ello moja mucho* (Leonese, in Penny 1994)
 Exp soaks a lot
 'It is soaking wet'

In (18), impersonal constructions that in modern standard NILs use *pro* appear with these surprising pleonastic subjects. The same expletives are spelled out in existential constructions in (19). Again, the whole Northwestern area is quite homogeneous in distribution with respect to these constructions.

- (18) a. *êle é certo que muitos se envergonhan de ...* (Port., Bernardes, in Freire 1954)
 Exp is true that many SE-are-ashamed of
 'It is true that many people are ashamed of ...'
- b. *e el non era fermoso percorrer mundo?* (Gal., Álvarez & al. 1986)

(2) Expletive pronouns are present within NILs from the 16th C. onwards. Currently, some of these derivations are dialectal in Galician (Gal), European Portuguese (EP) and Leonese (Leon). A very restricted use is found in literary Spanish (Sp) although they are fairly productive in Dominican Spanish (DomSp), both as an archaism and in developing new usages.

QM Exp not was beautiful to-travel world
 'Wasn't it beautiful to wander the world?'

c. ello es necesario indagar qué vida lleva
 Exp is necessary find out what life leads/lives
 'It is necessary to find out the type of life s/he is living'
 (18th C. Sp., Moratín, in H. Ureña 1939)

d. ellu foi que nun chegarun a casasi (Leonese, Díaz González 1986)
 Exp was that not ended-3p.pl. up to get married-SE
 'It (just) happened that they never ended up getting married'

(19) a. pois êle haverá castelhanos honrados? (Port., Garret, in Jucá 1945)
 thus Exp there-will-be Castilians honest
 'Are there honest Castilians?'

b. il hai cecais outro problema (Gal., Carballo 1976)
 Exp there-is perhaps another problem
 'There is perhaps another problem'

c. ello hay por medio no sé qué papel de matrimonio
 Exp there-is in the middle not know-1p.sg. what documents of marriage
 'I don't know what kind of marriage document is involved therein'
 (18th C. Sp., Moratín, *La escuela de los maridos*, III, esc. 3)

d. ello hay mujeres bonitas (Dom., Sp. Patín Maceo 1947)
 Exp there-is pretty women
 'There are pretty women'

Free Inversion data are more scarce, but consistent enough to be added to this study:

(20) a. ello llegan guaguas hasta allí (Dom., Sp. Toribio 1993)
 Exp arrive-3p.pl. buses until there
 'Buses go all the way there'

b. el volveu a reina a Madrid? (19th C. Gal., Saco e Arce 1868)
 Exp came-3p.sg. back the queen to M.
 'Did the queen come back to Madrid?'

4.1.1. Expletive Properties

Some basic properties distinguish NIL expletive constructions from standard properties of non-null-subject languages such as English and French. First, Subject-Verb-inversion, which occurs in English and Modern French, is not attested in the literature and/or is rejected by Dominican native speakers and Portuguese speakers (Eduardo Raposo, p.c.) (21a,c). Additionally, we have positive evidence of questions with no subject-verb inversion (21b,d):

(21) a. *hay ello arroz? (Dom., Sp.)
 there-is Exp rice
 'Is there any rice?'

- b. ello hay arroz? (Dom., Sp. Patín Maceo 1947)
Exp there-is rice
- c. *choverá êl hoije? (Port., unattested)
will-rain Exp today
'Will it rain today?'
- d. el choverá hoije? (Port., Monteiro Soares de Azevedo 1929)
Exp will-rain today

Secondly, overt expletives cannot spell-out in embedded contexts.³ This type of asymmetry suggests an active role of the C-stage of the derivation.

- (22) a. *xa sei que el chove (unattested/rejected, Gal.)
of-course know-1p.sg. that Exp rains
- b. *foi que ellu non llegaran a casasi (Leonese)
happened that Exp not ended-3p.pl. -up to-get married

With respect to subject-verb agreement, third person singular agreement is the default agreement in most of the collected examples but some examples like (20) support a case-subject checking relation independent of the expletive itself.

Another important property of the SEC is the lack of non-finite derivations. They are excluded in general. This gap indicates that the regular conditions for the uninterpretable case assignment of D subjects and the EPP feature do not have compositional checking.

- (23) a. *pra el chover (Gal.)
for Exp to-rain
- b. *por ello haber tanto arroz (Dom. Sp.)
for Exp to-be so much rice

Another difference involving SECs in NILs is that they behave differently with respect to Raising and Control. Whereas Control is accepted, as shown in (24a), Raising is rejected (24b). In contrast, when the expletive is Strict Merge, that is, with no movement, as in (24c), the sentence is accepted by Cibaño speakers.

- (24) a. ello quiere llover (Dom. Sp., Toribio 1993)
Exp wants to-rain
- b. *ello parece no haber azucar
Exp seems not to-have <there to be> sugar
- c. ello parece que no hay azucar
Exp seems that not there-is sugar

The morphological case of the expletive subjects is Nominative (Carballo 1976), although vocative case and *Nominativus pendens* have also been proposed in the literature. The gender is unmistakably neuter. Originally from the Latin *illud*, the old *ello*, with geminate *l*, evolves into *el(e)* in both Galician and Portuguese. Thus,

(3) Also reported in Provençal by Ronjat (1937).

masculine singular and neuter are alike in these languages. The Spanish *ello*, and *ellu* in Leonese, evolved regularly into the palatal lateral.

Expletives have received a variety of interpretations in the literature. Among the possible and sometimes bizarre labels are the following: “masculine collectives” (Lenz 1940), “adverbs” (Bello 1847, Álvarez & al. 1986, Patín Maceo 1947), “pronominal adverbs” (Saco e Arce 1868), “absolute ablatives” (Gessner 1893), “subject reinforcements” (Verdelho 1982), “fossilized, emphatic, anticipatory pronouns, dummy heads of the sentence” (Carballo 1976, Freire 1954, Henríquez Ureña 1939, 1940, Jiménez 1975, Raposo 1995, Raposo & Uriagereka 1990, Toribio 1993, Uriagereka 1992, Verdelho 1982, among others). Expletives in NIL appear mainly in conversational style, direct speech, rhetorical speech when no interlocutor is present, dialogs in drama, etc. Expletives surface producing an effect linked to the speech moment by referring to the given point in space and time, in which case it is expected to have the feature [+specific] tying down the event itself.

Since most of the basic properties presented above are not shared by expletive subject languages such as modern English and modern French, we can partially conclude that we are dealing with different types of phenomena. Specifically, the fact that the expletive consistently occupies the left-most part of the derivation must be associated with the surface role it bears.

4.2. Multiple Expletive Constructions

Two additional expletive structures are presented in this section to complete the picture of possible expletive constructions in the history of NILs: the Multiple Subject Construction (MSC) (Leite de Vasconcelos 1928, Henríquez Ureña 1939, 1940, Silva-Villar 1996, Uriagereka 1996) and the Interrogative Expletive Construction (IEC) (Álvarez & al. 1986, Carballo 1976, 1985, Saco e Arce 1868, Silva-Villar 1996). In spite of the diversity of these structures, they will be unified with the SEC because all of them minimally fit the second step of the Expletive Sequence.

4.2.1. Multiple Subject Construction

MSCs have the distinctive property that expletive pronouns and overt (or covert) thematic subjects can surface together. In (25a), *ele* and the thematic subject *os lobos* in Portuguese as well as *ello* and *yo* in Golden Age Spanish co-spell out. These constructions are not unknown either among other pro-drop Romance languages such as OFrench (26a) and 16th C. Catalan (26b). In the French example (26a) *il* and the coordination *li quens...et ses oncles...* illustrate this construction. In the 16th C. Catalan example (26b), the expletive is *ell* and the thematic subject, *el rey*.

- (25) a. *ele os lobos andan com fame* (Port. Leite de Vasconcelos 1928)
 Exp the wolves go-3p.pl. with hunger
 ‘Wolves are hungry’
 b. *ello yo no sé por qué mi padre no me chamou la torda o la papagaya*
 Exp I not know why my father not me called-3p.sg. the thrush or the parrot
 ‘I don’t know why I was not called either a thrush or a parrot by my father’
 (17th C. Sp., López de Úbeda, *la pícaro Justina*, in H. Ureña 1939)

- (26) a. *il i fu li qens de Pontiu et ses oncles li qens de St. Pol*
 Exp there was the count of Pontiu and his uncle the count of St. Pol
 'There there was the count of P. and his uncle the count of St. Pol' (sic)
 (OFrench, *Pontbieu*: 8, de Bakker 1995)
- b. *ell el rey s'en hagué de tornar* (16th C. Catalan, Spitzer 1941)
 Exp the king SE-of-it had-3p.sg. of come-back
 'The king had to come back'

The MSC has been described in the literature in different ways: "It is usual to add *ele* (expletive) to a phrase to announce what is going to be said" (Leite de Vasconcelos 1928: 222). Verdelho (1982: 72), claims that "*ele* occurs to reinforce the subject of some propositions, to anticipate it, whether it is singular and masculine, whether it is plural, even feminine (sic)".

Among Germanic languages multiple subject constructions are widely attested, as is well known. The 19th C. Norwegian in (5) and the Icelandic and German examples in (9), repeated here as (27c) and (27a-b) respectively, are representative of them. This idiosyncratic piece of Germanic syntax is labeled in the literature as the Transitive Expletive Construction (TEC).

- (27) a. *það hafa margir jólasveinar borðað búað ing*
 (Icelandic, Bobaljik & Jonas 1996)
 Exp have-3p.pl. many Christmas.trolls eaten pudding
 'Many Christmas trolls have eaten pudding'
- b. *es essen einige Mäuse Käse in der Küche* (German, B. & J. 1996)
 Exp eat some mice cheese in the kitchen
 'There are some mice eating cheese in the kitchen'
- c. *det vil alle hava den beste* (19th C., Norwegian, Aasen [1864])
 it will all have the best
 'Everybody wants the best one'

Besides the fact that MSCs and TECs do not match with respect to a variety of properties, they overlap in their basic properties, which are the lack of subject-verb inversion and the co-appearance of spell-out of subject expletives and thematic subjects. From a descriptive point of view the most important differences are the following:

- The MSC do not have any definiteness restriction. Thematic subjects can be [+definite] (28).
- The word order Expletive-Subject is widely attested (see (28) and (30) below).

- (28) a. *ele o mundo sempre é grande* (Port., Verdelho 1982)
 Exp the world always is great
- b. *ele os papeis tambem nunca mais virão*
 Exp the papers also never more will-come-3p.pl.
- c. *ele aqueles campos estão bem cultivados* (Port., Leite de Vasconcelos 1928)
 Exp those lands are well farmed

d. *ele aquela mulher é muito bondosa*
Exp that woman is very kind

The lack of definiteness restrictions extend to cases in which the thematic subject is referential *pro* since independently of any distribution of *pro*, the expletives fail to match the ϕ -features of the verb and the verb fails to agree with any other overt element (29). In the Galician example (29a), the expletive *el* does not match the second person plural features of *pro*.⁴ Similarly, the first person plural in (29b) *pro* cannot match the pleonastic *ello* in the 18th-19th C. example.

- (29) a. *el () sabedes () cando chegaran* (Gal., Álvarez & al. 1986)
Exp know-2p.pl. when will-arrived-3p.pl.
b. *ello () vamos () a gastar () ... veintisiete reales*
Exp go-1p.pl. to-spend twenty-seven *reales* (quarters of *peseta*)
(18th-19th C. Sp., Pereda, in H. Ureña)

The word order expletive-subject seen in (28) is widely attested among NILs in contrast with Germanic languages, which fit the reverse order (30). The implication of this difference among NILs, on the one hand, and Germanic languages, on the other, merits independent work but it does not seem to challenge the linear distribution of the Expletive Sequence posited in (1).

- (30) a *EXP [SU [T^{0max} XP]] (Icelandic, TEC, Chomsky 1995)
b EXP T^{0max} SU XP

4.2.2. Interrogative Expletive Construction

Some authors, including García de Diego (1978: 101) and Carballo (1976: 288-9), point out a different use of the expletive *el*: "in interrogatives at their beginning, to call the attention to the question" (García de Diego). Fernández (1960: 63) points out that "it is used without an accent to introduce a question, known in Asturian and Mirandese" (i.e., Leonese). For Álvarez & al. (1986: 169), it is an interrogative marker: "... it is placed at the beginning of the intonational contour, as an indication for the hearer". Patín Maceo (1947) points out that "in the Cibaño (Dom. Sp.) areas (*ello*) is used as an interrogative". The oldest mention is probably Saco e Arce (1868: 193):

In interrogative sentences, it is common to place the particle *el* or *il* before the verbs, which is not other than the third person pronoun, used adverbially, and it is often used at the beginning of *every* question.

Saco's citation suggests that in 1868 the structure was widely used by Galician speakers. This structure is labelled as the Interrogative Expletive Construction (IEC). The examples in (31) illustrate yes/no questions and those in (32) *Wh* questions:

- (31) a. *el sabedes cando chegaran?* (Gal., Álvarez 1986)
Exp know-2p.pl. when will-arrive-3p.pl.
'Do you know when they will arrive?'

(4) Parentheses mark possible slots for the distribution of *pro*. The point illustrated with the examples in (29) is independent of their position in the derivation.

- b. el gustati? (Leonese, Fernández 1960)
 Exp like-3p.sg.-you
 'Do you like it'
- c. ello hay dulce? (Dom. Sp., Patín Maceo 1947)
 Exp there-is candy
 'Is there any candy?'
- (32) a. el qué vos dixeron da xuntanza? (Gal., Álvarez & al. 1986)
 Exp what to-you said-3p.pl. about-(of)-the meeting
 b. i el ónde hei ter eu as maus?
 (Gal., Leiras Pulpeiro, in Carballo 1976)
 () Exp where have-1p.sg. (to) have I the hands
- c. ele cuántos estudantes vieram à festa? (Port., Raposo 1995)
 Exp how-many students came to the party

(32) shows that the A/A-bar status of the traces of the *Wh*-phrase makes no difference in selection: the *Wh*-phrase is a direct object in (32a), an adjunct in (32b), and a subject in (32c).

The IEC and the MSC, not surprisingly, share their basic properties with the SEC (see section 4.1.1 above). Therefore, we will use this state of affairs to unify the whole array of expletive constructions.

4.3. The Complementizer Expletive Construction (CEC). Non V2 derivations

The explanations given in the literature for the appearance of pleonastic topics are based on a combination of V2 effects and other properties of V-movement for Icelandic (and Germanic languages in general) (Chomsky 1995, Bobaljik & Jonas 1996, Faarlund 1990, Holmberg 1994, Jonas & Bobaljik 1993, Platzack 1983, 1987, Thráinsson 1979, Vikner 1995, inter alia) and V2 and Free Inversion for Old French (Adams 1987, de Bakker 1995, Platzack 1995, Vance 1995). These explanations are not easy to adapt to NILs. First, as already pointed out, they showed up no earlier than the 16th C., and nobody has claimed, to my knowledge, that Golden Age Spanish is a V2 language. Secondly, if we want to maintain that Portuguese, is a V2 language, as suggested in the literature (Beninca 1995, Manzini 1994, Ribeiro 1995), we need to explain why expletives come out and become obsolete during that very hypothetical V2 period. This fact points out the independency of both syntactic phenomena. In order to understand the facts, we start by contrasting NILs with Germanic V2 languages. It has been suggested that expletives in particular languages may or must be generated in [Spec-CP] rather than in [Spec-TP] (Vikner 1995 and references therein). We will show that the parallelism between these two groups of languages with respect to the generation of expletives is not necessarily alike.

The parallelism seems justified if we compare (33) and (34). Consider the situation with the expletive in [Spec, CP]. Here there are no superficial differences between German (33a), Yiddish (33b), and Icelandic (33c), on the one hand, and the other Germanic languages, represented by Danish in (33d), on the other. Galician is the NIL representative illustrating the apparent parallelism with the former group

of languages. The Galician verb *veu* is placed in the position of the auxiliary for two reasons. First, in Galician, inflected verbs move to the same position as the auxiliary. This is so because Galician verbal morphology inherits the lack of compound tenses from Latin. Second, movement of the Galician lexical verb to COMP is supported by the reciprocal exclusion of derivations with lexical verbs and expletives in embedded contexts.

(33) a.	Ge.	es	ist		ein	Junge	gekomen
	b.	Yi.	es	iz	gekumen	a	yingl
	c.	Ic.	það	hefur	komið		stákur
	d.	Da.	der	er	kommet	en	dreng
	e.	Gal.	el	veu		un	rapaz
			there	is	(come)	a	boy (come)

The first difference appears when [Spec, CP] contains a Wh-phrase. A crucial split surfaces when [Spec, CP] is occupied by a Wh-phrase. Under this new configuration, languages illustrating the facts in (33) are split in two groups. On the one hand, those in which the expletive cannot show up, that is, Galician, German, Yiddish and Icelandic; on the other hand, Danish, which still needs to realize the topic overtly.

(34) a.	Ge.	warum	ist	*es/ <i>pro</i>		ein	Junge	gekomen?
	b.	Yi.	far vos	iz	*es/ <i>pro</i>	gekumen	a	yingl ?
	c.	Ic.	af hverju	hefur	*það / <i>pro</i>	korni		strákur ?
	d.	Da.	hvorfor	er	der/* <i>pro</i>	kommet	en	dreng ?
	e.	Gal.	por qué	veu	*el/ <i>pro</i>	(veu)	un	rapaz ?
			why	is	there	(come)	a	boy (come)

Although the similarities between Galician, on the one hand, and Germanic V2 pro-drop languages such as German, Yiddish and Icelandic on the other is remarkable, the picture in (34) is an incomplete picture as (35) shows. Since the Galician IEC (35a) has no counterpart among any Germanic language, the different approaches taken to explain these derivations in Germanic languages, namely, the [Spec, CP] approach and the [Spec, IP] approach cannot be applied to the relevant NILs. We cannot invoke any kind of chain formation forcing all A-specifiers to be associated, as proposed in Vikner (1995: 186) to unify both approaches, since the C-stage of the derivation can intervene in the chain expletive-associate.

(35) a.	Gal.	(el)	por qué	veu	*el/ <i>pro</i>	(veu)	unrapaz?
	b.	Yi.	(*es)	far vos	iz	*es/ <i>pro</i>	gekumen ayingl?
			there	for what	is	there	come aboy

A conclusive piece of evidence of the asymmetry between NILs and Germanic V2 pro-drop languages comes from embedded contexts. It has been claimed in the literature that Galician and Portuguese are symmetric V2 languages. If this is true, it is not easy to explain why expletives can appear in embedded contexts in Icelandic (36b) and Yiddish (36a) —which are symmetric V2 languages—, but are unattested/rejected, among NILs, as illustrated in the Galician example (36c).

- (36) a. Yi. ikh veys az es/ **pro* iz gekumen a yingl
 b. Ic. ég veit að það / **pro* hefur komið strakur
 c. Gal. eu sei que **el/ pro* veu un rapaz
 I know that there is/has come a boy

Before going to a different linguistic area, the Slavic one, it is necessary to discard multiple kinds of expletives. If we were dealing with unrelated expletives or particle-like elements, constructions with multiple expletives (37) would be expected, but those constructions have never been reported and are not attested in the literature. All expletives are incompatible with each other, whatever label is applied to them. Assuming that the best analysis of NILs expletive constructions must cover all of them, which is supported by the similarity of their properties, all expletive constructions in NILs can be unified under the single label of Complementizer Expletive Constructions (CECs), as the role of C is the agglutinate for all of them.

- (37) a. **el el é certo que...*? b. **el el chove?* (Gal.)
 Exp Exp is true that Exp Exp rains
 c. **el el o mundo é... ?*
 Exp Exp the world is

5. West Slavic languages: Czech and Sorbian

The relevance of V2 as a condition of expletive (topic) creation within the history of Germanic languages is further weakened by the fact that non-V2 languages, as Slavic languages are, spell-out very similar expletive topics in some of their varieties.

Although all West Slavic languages omit unstressed pronominal subjects, and thus qualify as canonical null subject languages, the colloquial languages since 16th C. have innovative interesting properties. For example, colloquial Czech allows optional overt expletive subjects. In (38), the expletive *ono* is spelled out in weather derivations (38a-b) and impersonal constructions (38c).

- (38) a. *ono je chladno* b. *ono prší* c. *ono je možno, že...*
 Exp is cold Exp rains Exp is possible that
 'It is cold' 'it is raining' 'It is possible that...'

Additionally, expletive *ono* in Czech can co-occur with referential NP subjects as (39) shows:

- (39) a. *oni si Polaci volili krále* b. *ono tam bylo moc lidí*
 Exp the Poles elected a king Exp many people were there
 'The Poles elected a king' 'Many people were there'

Among other properties reported in Lindseth 1994, we enumerate the following: expletives in Czech lack referentiality, expletives bear nominative case, and they are used for emotive emphasis. From a descriptive point of view, the expletive *ono* comes from the interjection *ano / ono*, the original translation of Latin *ecce* (Trávníček 1962), which had sentential value on its own as shown by the 16th C. Old Czech (40):

- (40) a. *ono, klíč v zámce zkřechta*
 'Lo, the key clanked in the door'

Literary Upper Sorbian, which is a null-subject language (Lindseth 1994) is another Slavic variety that shows expletive subjects (41). Depending on the dialect zone, one finds *wono*, *wone*, and *wón*. In contrast to Czech, no emotive component is associated with the use of these expletives (41).

- (41) a. *wone/wón hrina* (Lusethian) b. *wone/wón so deščuje*
 Exp thunders Exp is raining
 'It is thundering' 'It is raining'

The independence of syntactic functions between thematic subjects and expletives is supported by the lack of agreement between expletive and verb in the arbitrary third plural construction (42). This fact supports the view that syntactic functions such as subject and nominative case can be checked independently.

- (42) *wón su jow wele pójdali, zo...* (Mje šic dialect, Fabke & Michal-k (1989))
 Exp aux here often said that
 'One used to say here often, that...'

A relevant property for this study is that Upper Sorbian has rich agreement comparable to other West Slavic languages and Iberian languages. These similarities between Slavic and Iberian languages make it unnecessary to resort to the influence of German non-argumental *es* to explain the creation of expletives within Slavic languages—which is the traditional approach—and support a consistent role of rich agreement in the discussion of the evolution of the Expletive Sequence.

6. Putting some pieces together. Discussion of English facts

This section sums up the main facts and discusses how well the different groups of languages match the Expletive Sequence (1).

I. Germanic languages (GLs):

- No Germanic language has developed expletive topics from a stage with expletive subjects.
- The TEC splits Germanic languages into two basic groups: expletive topic Germanic Languages and postexpletive topic Germanic Languages.
- All GLs come (directly or indirectly) from pro-drop varieties.
- GLs come from non V2 varieties.
- Impoverishment of agreement conditions the evolution taken by expletive topic GLs in their way to reach their expletive subject stage.
- Pro-drop and expletive subjects overlap in the history of English.

As a partial conclusion, we can state that all Germanic languages but English fit the Expletive Sequence:

pro-drop > Topic-Exp

pro-drop > Topic-Exp > Subject-Exp
 pro-drop > Subject-Exp (English)

However, the English Expletive Sequence has to be much closer to the rest of the Germanic languages as the mere existence of sentences such as (43) shows. In Old English (43), the expletive *it* co-occurred with the (available) logical subject *nothing*, which seems to support the independent contribution of expletive and subject at that time.

(43) It nothing pleased his master (OE., modern spelling)

The special case of English could be explained positing the coexistence (or overlapping) of different stages of the Expletive Sequence but more research is needed on this specific point. Thus, the following possible sequences arise:

pro-drop > Topic-Exp/ Subject-Exp(English)
 pro-drop/ Topic-Exp > Subject-Exp
 pro-drop/ Topic-Exp/ Subject-Exp

II. Northwestern Iberian Languages:

- NILs with expletives are not necessarily verb second.
- NILs do not have Expletive Subjects.
- NILs have strong/rich agreement systems.
- NILs have always been pro-drop.
- Expletive Topics show up from the 16th C. onwards.
- NILs have had productive Multiple Subject Constructions.

NILs have evolved following the sequence with the modifications already introduced in the first part of this study:

pro-drop > Topic-Exp > Non Topic-Exp (or archaic)

III. French

- French matches the Expletive Sequence thoroughly.
- Agreement has been eroding over the years.
- French has evolved following the sequence in (1) regardless of the V2 shift, even in contradiction with it:
 pro-drop > Topic-Exp > Subject-Exp

IV. West Slavic

- Expletive Topics show up from the 16th C. onwards.
- Colloquial Czech and Sorbian have rich agreement systems.
- Colloquial Czech and Sorbian match the Expletive Sequence (1):
 pro-drop > Topic-Exp

7. Conclusions

All in all, we can schematically sum up our conclusions:

- The historical sequence pro-drop > Topic-Exp > Subject-Exp exceeds the mainland Scandinavian domain.
- French, Germanic Languages (in general), NILs and Slavic (Czech and Sorbian) illustrate specific stages of the expletive/pro-drop historical sequence (1) Ø-Exp > Topic-Exp > Subject-Exp.
- No language has developed expletive topics from expl. subjects: *Subject-Exp > Topic-Exp
- Two conditions —EXPLETIVE CREATION and Pro-drop NEUTRALIZATION— derive Faarlund's generalization by taking topicality and pro-drop as primitives.
- Verb second is not as relevant as presented thus far in the literature since the diachronic evolution shown in (1) applies to both non-V2 languages and languages in which the sequence in (1) is broken (or frozen) with no implication for their 'apparent' V2 status. Additionally, the loss of V2 in French in 14th-15th centuries does not affect the creation of Expletive Subjects as an innovation within embedded contexts.
- The pro-drop status, regardless of whether it is an Iberian-like, a Germanic-like or a Slavic-like pro-drop is relevant when ascribing languages to one stage or another of the historical evolution in (1).
- Rich agreement systems have prevented NILs and Slavic languages from developing expletive subjects.
- English must have had expletive topics in its diachronic evolution since null subjects are found as late as the 16th C. (Visser 1963). However, although the coexistence of the three stages presented in (1) is well motivated, further studies must prove it to be satisfactory.

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