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Icelandic Expletive Constructions and the Distribution of Subject Types

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1. Introduction

Icelandic expletive-associate¹ constructions show that the widespread view that the expletive enforces the so-called Definiteness Effect on the associate, or the ‘logical subject,’ cannot be correct. Uncontroversial data presented below tell us this, notably the fact that universally quantifying noun phrases are allowed as associates in Icelandic expletive constructions. The prime concern of this chapter will be to discuss this fact along with other issues pertaining to the distribution of subject types, as well as the role played by the expletive.

The organization of the chapter is as follows. In section 2 I present the fact that the associate of Icelandic expletive constructions may occur in two positions, either postverbally or in a position between the finite and the nonfinite verb (henceforth ‘the intermediate position’). In this respect Icelandic contrasts with Mainland Scandinavian, where the associate can occur in a postverbal position only (unless topicalized or *wh*-moved). Moreover, it seems quite reasonable that the existence of transitive expletive constructions (TECs) in Icelandic, but not in Mainland Scandinavian, is related to the general availability of the intermediate position for the associate, since the associate of a TEC is the external argument (i.e., the subject), and thus ‘needs’ a preverbal position.

In section 3 I show that the two positions differ with respect to what kind of noun phrases are allowed to occur: whereas noun phrases in the postverbal position are subject to a Definiteness Effect similar to that observed in English and Mainland Scandinavian, the intermediate position is less restrictive in that it allows both universally quantifying and partitive noun phrases in addition to ordinary indefinites. On the other hand, the intermediate position is more restrictive in that bare noun phrases are awkward there, whereas they are fine in the postverbal posi-

uon.

The evidence presented in section 3 clearly suggests that the fairly well-established idea that the Definiteness Effect is triggered by the presence of the expletive as such cannot be correct, and in section 4 I briefly consider two such expletive-based approaches, those of Milsark 1974, 1977 and Safir 1985, 1987, before I develop an alternative approach based on the Case theories of Belletti 1988 and de Hoop 1992.

Given that expletive-based accounts of the Definiteness Effect will be rejected, there are also reasons to believe that the idea of covert raising of the associate to the position of the expletive is on the wrong track. However, such raising has been motivated on the grounds of the existence of agreement between the verb and the associate, and in section 5.1 I therefore first present an approach to agreement which renders raising of the associate unnecessary. In section 5.2 I discuss the Extended Projection Principle, and by unifying certain ideas about subject-verb agreement in Alexiadou and Anagnostopoulou (1998) and Holmberg and Platzack (1995) I develop a theory of (Agr)SPin section 5.3 where (i) semantic relevance is attributed to that functional domain, (ii) the presence versus absence of expletives is attributed to the differing status of subject-verb agreement across languages, and (iii) the differing status of expletives across languages (notably in Icelandic versus Mainland Scandinavian) also pertains to issues concerning subject-verb agreement.

Section 6 concludes the paper.

2. Two positions for the associate in Icelandic

As can be seen in sentences with both a finite and a nonfinite verb (at the same clausal level), the associate in Icelandic expletive constructions may occur either in a position after the nonfinite verb (i.e., ‘postverbally’), or in a position between the finite and the nonfinite verb (i.e., ‘verb intermediately’). In the recent literature on Scandinavian syntax (e.g., Bobaljik and Jonas 1996, Holmberg and Platzack 1995, Jonas 1994, Koenenman 2000, Koenenman and Neeleman 1997, Vikner 1995), this fact has been given considerable attention since it is one of the properties that distinguishes Icelandic from the closely related Mainland Scandinavian languages: in the latter the associate of expletive constructions may normally occur only in a position after the nonfinite verb.² Compare the Icelandic sentence pair in (1) with the Norwegian one in (2).

- (1) a. Það hefur verið einhver köttur í eldhúsinu. *Icelandic*
EXPL has been some cat in kitchen.the
b. Það hefur einhver köttur verið í eldhúsinu.
Both: ‘There has been some cat in the kitchen’
- (2) a. Det har vore ein katt på kjøkenet. *Norwegian*
EXPL has been a cat on kitchen.the
‘There has been a cat in the kitchen’
b. * Det har ein katt vore på kjøkenet.

The fact that Icelandic has so-called transitive expletive constructions (hence-

from TECs), whereas the Mainland Scandinavian languages do not, can be taken to follow from the availability of the intermediate position for the associate in Icelandic. Generally, in Mainland Scandinavian only unaccusative and passive verbs may occur in *there*-type expletive constructions. In Icelandic there is no general restriction on the type of verb that may occur, but if the verb is not unaccusative or passive, such as a transitive verb involving an agent subject and a theme object, the associate can occur only in the intermediate position. Consider (3). The Norwegian examples in (4) illustrate that TECs are not possible in Mainland Scandinavian.

- (3) a. Það hefur einhver köttur étið mýsna. Icelandic
EXPL has some cat eaten mice.the
 ‘Some cat has eaten the mice’
 b. * Það hefur étið einhver köttur mýsna.
- (4) a. * Det har ein katt ete mysene. Norwegian
EXPL has a cat eaten mice.the
 b. * Det har ete ein katt mysene.

Jonas (1994) and Bobaljik and Jonas (1996) propose that the intermediate position is SpecTP, and not SpecVP, which had been the general view earlier (cf., e.g., Holmberg and Platzack 1995; Sigurðsson 1989; Vikner 1995). Bobaljik and Jonas’s claim is based on certain facts about the placement of the associate relative to sentential adverbs and shifted objects. Consider first the following example where the pronominal object is intended to be coreferent with ‘school milk.’ (*Mjólk*, ‘milk,’ is a feminine noun in Icelandic.)³

- (5) ? Það drekka sennilega sumir krakkar hana aldrei.
EXPL drink probably some kids it.FEM never
 ‘Some kids probably never drink it’

The judgments vary considerably here, and most informants react to the sentence in (5), hence the question mark, but given a suitable context (e.g., ‘All school-children are given free milk every day, but...’), the sentence turns out as not all that bad, and importantly, certain other word order patterns, to be presented shortly, cannot be saved by such contextual construction. In the sentence in (5) the object occurs in a position preceding the adverb *aldrei* ‘never.’ Such object shift is generally possible if the object is definite and the main verb has raised to the functional domain of the sentence (V-to-I). If the main verb stays in VP, as it does when we have a complex verb form, object shift is not possible. Moreover, in such cases we see that the adverb *aldrei* must precede the main verb. Consider the examples in (6). (Again the question mark on (6a) should be taken to indicate the general dislike of the sentence.)

- (6) a. ? Það hafa sennilega sumir krakkar aldrei drukkið hana
EXPL have probably some kids never drunk it.FEM
 b. * Það hafa sennilega sumir krakkar hana aldrei drukkið.
EXPL have probably some kids it.FEM never drunk

- c. * Það nara sennilega sumir krakkar drukkio nana aldrei.
EXPL have probably some kids drunk it.FEM never

If *aldrei* is generated in the same position in (5) and (6a), it means that object shift is movement of the object to a preverbal position. This in turn makes it unlikely that the associate (*sumir krakkar*) is in SpecVP. The view that Bobaljik and Jonas would take, and which I will adhere to, is that *aldrei* is uniformly adjoined to VP and *sennilega* ‘probably’ is uniformly adjoined to TP. Hence, given the clause structure CP—AgrSP—TP—VP, the associate occurs in SpecTP, whereas the shifted object must occur in a projection dominating VP.

Bobaljik and Jonas (1996) claim that SpecTP is generally unavailable in Mainland Scandinavian, that is, also in nonexpletive constructions. However, Holmberg (1993) has argued convincingly that such a view is difficult to maintain, since subjects of nonexpletive constructions may both precede and follow sentence adverbs assumed to be adjoined to TP (see Svenonius, this volume, for examples and discussion). The question we thus need to ask with respect to the difference between Icelandic and Mainland Scandinavian is why SpecTP is available in Icelandic expletive constructions but not in Mainland Scandinavian ones.

Although the question is far from trivial, it will be given a fairly trivial answer in the present account. I will assume that the difference in availability of SpecTP stems from the assumption that the Mainland Scandinavian expletive carries Case whereas the Icelandic one does not. That in turn raises the question why the expletive should differ with respect to this property in the two language types; a tentative answer to that will be given in section 5.3.

Let us next consider the types of noun phrases that may occur in the postverbal and intermediate positions in Icelandic.

3. The distribution of noun phrase types in the two positions

3.1. The postverbal position

Icelandic associates in the postverbal position are subject to the Definiteness Effect more or less in the same way as associates are in English and Mainland Scandinavian expletive constructions.⁴ The examples in (7) show that definite descriptions (boldface),⁵ universally quantifying noun phrases (italicized), and partitive noun phrases (underlined) are not allowed in the postverbal position of Icelandic expletive constructions.

- (/)
- a. **Það** nerur verið ***kötturinn**/***Pétur** í eldhúsinu.
EXPL has been cat.the / Peter in kitchen.the
 - b. **Það** hefur verið ***þessi köttur**/***köttur Péturs** í eldhúsinu.
EXPL has been this cat / cat Peter's in kitchen.the
 - c. **Það** hefur verið ***sérhver köttur** /***einn af köttunum** í eldhúsinu.
EXPL has been each cat / one of cats.the in kitchen.the
 - d. **Það** hafa verið ***allir kettirnir**/***báðir kettirnir** í eldhúsinu.
EXPL have been all cats.the / both cats.the in kitchen.the
 - e. **Það** hafa verið nokkrir kettir/***sumir** kettir í eldhúsinu.
EXPL have been some cats / some.of.the cats in kitchen.the

It is worth noticing that this restriction can also be observed when no overt expletive is present. A property distinguishing the Icelandic expletive from its Mainland Scandinavian counterpart is that it occurs only sentence initially. Still, if the single argument noun phrase of an intransitive sentence occurs postverbally and there is a nonexpletive constituent in sentence-initial position, it cannot be a definite description, a universally quantifying noun phrase, or a partitive. Consider the examples in (8).

- (8)
- a. Í dag hefur (***það**) verið ***kötturinn**/***Pétur** í eldhúsinu.
today has EXPL been cat.the / Peter in kitchen.the
 - b. Í dag hefur (***það**) verið ***þessi köttur**/***köttur Péturs** í eldhúsinu.
today has EXPL been this cat / cat Peter's in kitchen.the
 - c. Í dag hefur (***það**) verið ***sérhver köttur** /***einn af köttunum** í eldhúsinu.
today has EXPL been each cat / one of cats.the in kitchen.the
 - d. Í dag hafa (***það**) verið ***allir kettirnir**/***báðir kettirnir** í eldhúsinu.
today have EXPL been all cats.the/ both cats.the in kitchen.the
 - e. Í dag hafa (***það**) verið nokkrir kettir/***sumir** kettir í eldhúsinu.
today have EXPL been some cats / some.of.the cats in kitchen.the

The fact that the expletive cannot occur overtly in a noninitial position has been taken as evidence for claiming that the Icelandic (*there*-type) expletive actually never occurs in SpecAgrSP, but rather in SpecCP only (cf. Christensen 1991, Svenonius, this volume). However, there is one instance where the expletive can be claimed to surface in a position to the right of C, namely in embedded clauses following *wh*-type complementizers. Consider the following examples.

- (9) *Proffessorinn langaði að vita...*
 professor.the wanted to know
- a. ...hvort **það** hefði einhver lokið *ritgerðinni* í gær.
 if EXPL had someone finished thesis.the yesterday
- b. * ...hvort í gær hefði einhver lokið *ritgerðinni*.
 if yesterday had someone finished thesis.the
- c. * ...hvort í gær hefði **það** einhver lokið *ritgerðinni*.
 if yesterday had EXPL someone finished thesis.the
- (10) *Prófessorinn sagði...*
 professor.the said
- a. ...að **það** hefði einhver lokið *ritgerðinni* í gær.
 that EXPL had someone finished thesis.the yesterday
- b. ...að í gær hefði einhver lokið *ritgerðinni*.
 that yesterday had someone finished thesis.the
- c. * ...að í gær hefði **það** einhver lokið *ritgerðinni*.
 that yesterday had EXPL someone finished thesis.the

In embedded clauses introduced by the complementizer *að* ‘that,’ topicalization is sometimes allowed (cf. (10b)). This has been analyzed as CP-recursion (cf. Vikner 1995 and references cited there). However, *wh*-type complementizers such as *hvort* ‘if/whether’ generally do not allow such embedded topicalization. Accordingly, one may argue that CP-recursion is not allowed in such embedded clauses. Nevertheless, expletives do occur, and if we assume the associate in the embedded TEC in (10a) to occupy SpecTP, it seems quite straightforward to conclude that the expletive occupies SpecAgrSP. I will take this stand: the expletive is never base generated in SpecCP, but must at some point in the derivation occupy SpecAgrSP. This will be crucial to the discussion in section 5, and in 5.3 we will return to the question why the expletive does not surface in SpecAgrSP in main clauses.

3.2. The intermediate position

Although the Definiteness Effect applies in cases where there is no overt expletive, there are cases where the restriction does not apply although the expletive is overt. In fact, associates in the intermediate position are not subject to the Definiteness Effect: although they cannot be unembedded definite descriptions, they may be both universally quantifying and partitive noun phrases, and importantly a universally quantifying noun phrase may contain an embedded definite. Consider the intransitive expletive constructions in (11) and the TECs in (12). (Again definites are boldface, universally quantifying noun phrases are italicized, and partitive noun phrases are underlined.)

- (11) a. **Það** nerur **~kötturinn/~Petur** verio í eldhúsinu.
EXPL has cat.the / Peter been in kitchen.the
- b. **Það** hefur ***þessi köttur/*köttur Péturs** verið í eldhúsinu.
EXPL has this cat / cat Peter's been in kitchen.the
- c. **Það** hefur sérhver köttur/einn af köttunum verið í eldhúsinu.
EXPL has each cat /one of cats.the been in kitchen.the
- d. **Það** hafa allir kettirnir/báðir kettirnir verið í eldhúsinu.
EXPL have all cats.the /both cats.the been in kitchen.the
- e. **Það** hafa nokkrir kettir/sumir kettir verið í eldhúsinu.
EXPL have some cats /some.of.the cats been in kitchen.the
- (12) a. **Það** hefur köttur/***kötturinn/*Kalli** étið mýsna.
EXPL has cat / cat.the / Kalli eaten mice.the
- b. **Það** hefur ***þessi köttur/*köttur Péturs** étið mýsna.
EXPL has this cat / cat Peter's eaten mice.the
- c. **Það** hefur sérhver köttur/einn af köttunum étið mýs.
EXPL has each cat /one of cats.the eaten mice
- d. **Það** hafa allir kettirnir/báðir kettirnir étið mýs.
EXPL have all cats.the /both cats.the eaten mice
- e. **Það** hafa nokkrir kettir/sumir kettir étið mýs.
EXPL have some cats /some.of.the cats eaten mice

As we see from (11d) and (12d), the associate may contain the definite article, and it is important to notice that the associate may very well be contextually anaphoric. Consider the following authentic example taken from an advertisement: the text accompanied a drawing of personified condoms (i.e., with small faces and arms) performing various ‘human’ activities, such as smoking cigars, wearing sunglasses, and so on.

- (13) **Það** eru ekki allir smokkarnir prófaðir af RFSU.
EXPL are not all condoms.the tested by RFSU
 ‘Not all the condoms have been tested by RFSU’

The associate in this example is contextually anaphoric in that its referent is the totality of condoms in the drawing. If the definite article were left out of the associate, such a reading would not be salient. Rather, the resulting noun phrase, *allir smokkar*, would quantify over the universal set of condoms. (Cf. the corresponding difference between the English noun phrases *all the condoms* versus *all condoms*.) Whether or not universally quantifying noun phrases carry the definite article is of no consequence for the possibility of their occurring in the intermediate position—in the example in (14), also authentic (this time the title of a rock song), the universally quantifying noun phrase lacks the definite article and consequently denotes the totality of a universal set.

- (14) **Það** eru allir dagar eins í sveitinni.
EXPL are all days alike in countryside.the
 ‘All days are alike out in the countryside’

The sentence in (14) furthermore illustrates a trivial, but important, fact: as long as

an expletive sentence does not contain a nonfinite verb or a VP-adverbial, we cannot distinguish between the intermediate and the postverbal positions. However, we can legitimately conjecture that the associate in (14) must be in the so-called intermediate position (i.e., by hypothesis SpecTP), since if we were to convert the sentence into a variety that contains a complex tense form, the associate could occur only to the left of the nonfinite verb. This is illustrated in (15).

- (15) **Það** hafa (allir dagar) verið (*allir dagar) eins í sveitinni.
EXPL have all days been all days alike in countryside.the

3.3. Further facts

It is furthermore worth noticing that generic readings are not available for the associate. Consider the sentence pair in (16) involving an individual-level predicate (ILP) which requires a generic reading of the bare plural subject—as we see, only the nonexpletive version of the sentence is grammatical.

- (16) a. **Fiðluleikarar** eru greindir.
violinists are intelligent
 b. * **Það** eru fiðluleikarar greindir.
EXPL are violinists intelligent

Moreover, the generic pronoun *maður* ‘one’ (literally ‘man’) cannot occur as associate in expletive constructions either. Compare the transitive sentence in (17a) with its TEC counterpart in (17b).

- (17) a. **Maður/sérhver** krakki á að taka lýsi á hverjum degi.
one /each kid ought to take cod.liver.oil on every day
 ‘One/each kid should take cod liver oil every day’
 b. **Það** á sérhver krakki/*maður að taka lýsi á hverjum degi.
EXPL ought each kid / one to take cod.liver.oil on every day

Importantly, however, the ungrammaticality of (16b) does not hinge on the predicate being individual level. Milsark (1977) observed that ILPs are restricted from occurrence in existential sentences in English (see also Diesing 1992). However, ILPs are perfectly fine in Icelandic expletive constructions as long as the associate has a quantifier.

- (18) **Það** eru margir/allir fiðluleikarar greindir.
EXPL are many /all violinists intelligent

In fact, with stage-level predicates (SLPs), which Milsark observed to freely occur in English existential sentences, we find the same contrast: bare plurals are not possible, whereas noun phrases containing a quantifier are fine.

- (19) a. $\sim$ Það eru fiðluleikarar þreyttir á tónleikunum.
EXPL are violists tired at concert.the
 b. Það eru margir fiðluleikarar þreyttir á tónleikunum.
EXPL are many violists tired at concert.the

Moreover, it is clear that with both ILPs and SLPs the associate must occur in the intermediate position. This is illustrated in (20) and (21).

- (20) a. Það hafa margir fiðluleikarar verið greindir í þessari hljómsveit.
EXPL have many violists been intelligent in this orchestra
 b. * Það hafa verið margir fiðluleikarar greindir í þessari hljómsveit.
EXPL have been many violists intelligent in this orchestra
 (21) a. Það hafa margir fiðluleikarar verið þreyttir á tónleikunum.
EXPL have many violists been tired at concert.the
 b. * Það hafa verið margir fiðluleikarar þreyttir á tónleikunum.
EXPL have been many violists tired at concert.the

The conclusion, then, is that the ILP/SLP distinction plays no role with respect to Icelandic expletive constructions: with both kinds of predicates the associate must occur in the intermediate position, and it must contain a quantifier.

The latter observation ties in with the observation that bare indefinites quite generally are awkward in the intermediate position (cf. Sigurðsson 1989, Jonas 1994, Bobaljik and Jonas 1996, Vangsnes 1995).⁶ Similar judgments are not reported for the postverbal position. Consider the examples in (22)–(24) not involving either ILPs or SLPs.

- (22) a. Það er eldaður fiskur í eldhúsinu.
EXPL is cooked fish in kitchen.the
 ‘There has been cooked fish in the kitchen’
 b. ? Það er fiskur eldaður í eldhúsinu.
EXPL is fish cooked in kitchen.the
 (23) a. Það hefur hellst bjór á gólfið.
EXPL has been.poured beer on floor.the
 ‘Beer has been poured on the floor’
 b. ? Það hefur bjór hellst á gólfið.
EXPL has beer been.poured on floor.the
 (24) a. Það hafa verið mýs í baðkerinu.
EXPL have been mice in bathtub.the
 ‘There have been mice in the bathtub’
 b. ? Það hafa mýs verið í baðkerinu.
EXPL have mice been in bathtub.the

Again, judgments vary, and it should be noted that many speakers find the (b) examples considerably more awkward than is indicated by the question mark. There do, however, seem to be at least two ways in which the associates in (22)–(24) may be more felicitous in the intermediate position, either by being interpreted contrastively or when they contain some descriptive attribute, for instance, an adjective. If the bare indefinites in (22b), (23b), and (24b) are stressed,

the sentences are more acceptable, and moreover the following sentences are fine.

- (25) a. *Það hafa mýs en ekki rottur verið í baðkerinu.*
EXPL have mice but not rats been in bathtub.the
 ‘There have been mice but not rats in the bathtub’
- b. *Það hefur úldinn fiskur verið eldaður í eldhúsinu.*
EXPL has rotten fish been cooked in kitchen.the
 ‘Rotten fish has been cooked in the kitchen’

Thus, it seems that for a bare indefinite to be felicitous in the intermediate position, it must have a nontrivial or marked interpretation. Such nontrivial interpretations are not salient for the isolated sentences in (22b), (23b), and (24b), but the reason why they are just odd, and not downright ungrammatical, is probably that the speaker with some effort is able to construct an appropriate interpretation.

In some sense adding more descriptive material amounts to the same thing as allowing a contrastive interpretation: rotten fish is intrinsically contrasted with nonrotten fish, as it were. It then seems that the correct characterization of bare indefinites in the intermediate position is that they must allow a contrastive reading.

We may in turn take contrast to involve a kind of quantification: in order to have a contrast there must be a set consisting of at least two members, one being the denoted entity, the other, the entity or entities with which the denoted entity is contrasted.⁷ Having said that, we can establish the following generalization: a referential noun phrase occupying the intermediate position of an Icelandic expletive construction must be quantificational.

3.4. Summary

We may now summarize the findings as to what types of noun phrases are allowed as associates in the two positions, as shown in table 1.

Table 1: *The distribution of subject types in Icelandic expletive constructions*

Expletive	Intermediate position (SpecTP)	Postverbal position
<i>Íað</i>	*unembedded definite	*unembedded definite
<i>Íað</i>	*generic	*generic
<i>Íað</i>	/partitive	* /partitive
<i>Íað</i>	indefinite	indefinite
<i>Íað</i>	*non-Q bare indefinite	non-Q bare indefinite

Although they note the awkwardness of bare indefinites in the intermediate position, Bobaljik and Jonas (1996), like most authors before them (e.g., Sigurðsson 1989, Vikner 1995, Holmberg and Platzack 1995), fail to observe the difference between the two positions with regard to strong noun phrases (i.e., definite descriptions, generics, and universally quantifying and partitive noun phrases), and they discuss Icelandic TECs as if intermediate associates were subject to the Definiteness Effect in the same manner as postverbal associates.⁸

Partially on that basis Bobaljik and Jonas (1996) argue that the Mapping Hypothesis of Diesing 1992 must be revised.⁹ The core idea of the Mapping Hypothesis

is that indefinite subjects in VP receive an existential/nonspecific reading (“mapped into the nuclear scope”), whereas indefinite subjects in IP receive either a generic or specific reading (“mapped into a restrictive clause”). If associates in the intermediate position were subject to the same restriction as associates in the postverbal position, that would not be in line with the Mapping Hypothesis, given that the intermediate position is SpecTP, an IPspecifier. Bobaljik and Jonas (1996) therefore suggest modifying the Mapping Hypothesis so that subjects in SpecTP are mapped onto a semantic interpretation in the same way as VP subjects, and that only SpecAgrSP counts as the SpecIPposition in Diesing’s original formulation of the Mapping Hypothesis.

It is, however, unclear how the Mapping Hypothesis can accommodate the Icelandic data. For one thing, there does not seem to be any difference in the semantic interpretation of the indefinite subject in the example set in (26): most informants agree that it can receive only an existential interpretation. (Accordingly, the determiner could appropriately have been glossed as ‘sm,’ that is, unstressed ‘some.’)

- (26) a. Einhver nemandi hafði fallið á prófinu.
 some student had flunked on exam.the
 b. Það hafði einhver nemandi fallið á prófinu.
 EXPL had some student flunked on exam.the
 c. Það hafði fallið einhver nemandi á prófinu.
 EXPL had flunked some student on exam.the

On the other hand, a noun phrase which necessarily must receive a specific (presuppositional) reading may occur in the very same positions as the subject in (26). Consider the following sentence where the subject is an intensifying noun phrase entailing presuppositionality on a par with indefinite-*this* noun phrases in English (cf. Vangsnes 1999:75; also see note 4).

- (27) a. Þessi líka gullfallega stúlka hafði fallið á prófinu.
 this PRT gold.beautiful girl had flunked on exam.the
 b. Það hafði þessi líka gullfallega stúlka fallið á prófinu.
 EXPL had this PRT gold.beautiful girl flunked on exam.the
 c. Það hafði fallið þessi líka gullfallega stúlka á prófinu.
 EXPL had flunked this PRT gold.beautiful girl on exam.the

Accordingly, there is some uncertainty as to how the Icelandic data relate to the Mapping Hypothesis, and the issue awaits further investigation.

However, the data presented clearly show that there are correlations between syntactic positions and types of noun phrases in Icelandic expletive constructions, and, what is furthermore important, in nonexpletive constructions, all the types may appear both in an initial position (i.e., SpecCP) and a noninitial position to the left of the intermediate position. Consider the following examples where different types of noun phrases appear sentence initially (i.e., in the position filled by the expletive in expletive-associate constructions).

- (28) a. Stúkan nerur rann a prófinu.
girl.the has flunked on exam.the
- b. Allir nemendurnir hafa fallið á prófinu.
all students.the have flunked on exam.the
- c. Einhver nemandir hefur fallið á prófinu.
some student has flunked on exam.the
- d. Nokkrir af nemendunum hafa fallið á prófinu.
some of students.the have flunked on exam.the
- e. Bjór hefur hellst á gólfið.
beer has been.poured on floor.the

The evidence from Icelandic then tells us the following: (i) the idea that the expletive triggers the Definiteness Effect (through coindexation, unselective binding, Case transmission etc.; cf. Lasnik 1995 for references and an overview) cannot be correct, (ii) the idea that the associate raises to the position of the expletive cannot be correct. In the following section I will explicate why these conclusions can be drawn and, moreover, in the remainder of the chapter I will sketch an alternative approach to expletive constructions which can better deal with the Icelandic facts. Let me first give the basic intuition behind my objections against these fairly well-established ideas.

First of all, if some explicit expletive-associate relation were the trigger for the Definiteness Effect, and thus served to explain why universally quantifying noun phrases (along with definites) are not allowed in the postverbal position, we should expect such noun phrases to be barred from occurrence in the intermediate position as well. If in turn the expletive does not trigger the semantic restrictions seen on the associate of expletive constructions, it seems entirely counterintuitive that there should be a difference between overt and covert movement of the associate to the position of the expletive: there are no semantic restrictions on subjects occurring to the left of SpecTP in nonexpletive constructions, so why should there be any if the associate moves to this (or these) LF-position(s) after Spell-out?

The alternative approach that I will outline assumes that no covert movement of the associate takes place—in fact, associate raising to the position of the expletive cannot take place, and the semantic effects appear for exactly that reason. The analysis that I develop will rely on certain ideas in Alexiadou and Anagnostopoulou 1998 (henceforth A&A) as to how the Extended Projection Principle is satisfied, though rethought in a particular framework in which the EPP has a more explicit semantic foundation than standardly assumed. As I will show, the fact that Icelandic has expletives can be taken to follow from the language not being a null-subject/*pro*-drop language (in line with A&A), and the fact that SpecTP is available in expletive constructions can be taken to follow from Icelandic nevertheless having ‘strong AGR’ (contra A&A, but in line with Holmberg and Platzack 1995). The difference between Icelandic and Mainland Scandinavian (and English) will in turn follow from the latter having ‘weak AGR.’

4. The Definiteness Effect and Case checking

4.1. Expletive-based approaches

The semantic restrictions seen on noun phrases in the postverbal position of Icelandic expletive constructions are clearly the same as found in, for instance, English and Mainland Scandinavian languages, and it is of course desirable to give a unified account for all the languages. Also, whatever analysis we propose for English and Mainland Scandinavian should capture the full range of Icelandic facts. The purpose of this section is to accomplish that goal. Let us first consider some accounts that are inadequate.

Milsark (1974, 1977) proposes that the expletive introduces an existential quantifier that must bind a variable, the variable being the associate. For this reason universally quantifying noun phrases cannot occur as associates of the expletive: their universal quantification would simply clash with the existential quantifier introduced by the expletive. Milsark further treats definiteness as a special kind of universal quantification, and accordingly he gives a unified account of why both definite descriptions and universally quantifying noun phrases are not possible as associates.

Safir (1985, 1987) argues that the Definiteness Effect occurs in what he calls unbalanced ‘ θ -chains,’ which obtain, among other things, between the expletive and the associate in an expletive construction. Safir argues that the associate does not receive Case from the verb, and that it instead inherits it from the position of the expletive through coindexation. After modifying Principle C by substituting ‘names’ for ‘R-expressions’ (hence “names must be free”) and defining the denotation of ‘names’ to be ‘strong noun phrases’ (i.e., definite descriptions and universally quantifying noun phrases), he argues that only indefinites can inherit Case from the expletive.

With various modifications and extensions, Safir’s general idea (i.e., that a relation between the expletive and the associate triggers the Definiteness Effect) has been applied to Scandinavian expletive constructions by Sigurðsson (1989:292ff.), Áfarli (1992:70f.), Holmberg (1994:220, note 4), and Holmberg and Platzack (1995). Moreover, Safir’s idea was also adopted in Chomsky 1986 and is, to my mind, implicit in Chomsky 1995.

As they stand, neither the Milsarkian nor the Safirian approach to the Definiteness Effect can account for the Icelandic data, notably the fact that universally quantifying noun phrases may occur in the intermediate position. A way of saving Safir’s analysis would be to say that when the associate occurs in the intermediate position, it does indeed get Case, say from T. Hence, no expletive-associate chain is established, and no Definiteness Effect occurs either. However, the question that would then arise is why the expletive is there in the first place, and the question seems unanswerable. Milsark’s account cannot be saved either, since the expletive must bind a variable, and the variable is unequivocally the associate.

4.2. A Case-based approach

Another approach to the Definiteness Effect can be attributed to Belletti (1988) ,

who argues that *be* and other unaccusative verbs assign and license a particular Case, ‘partitive Case,’ to their postverbal argument, and that this Case is compatible only with indefiniteness, hence accounting for why the associate is subject to the Definiteness Effect when it occurs in the postverbal position. This approach is followed by Lasnik (1992, 1995).

Concerning the Icelandic facts, a Case-based approach may appear more promising since it makes no direct reference to the presence of expletives, and we can locate the Definiteness Effect to the postverbal position as such. However, there are certain problems with Belletti’s original theory. First, her choice of terminology is rather unfortunate, as it is quite clear that there is no direct relation between morphological partitive case (in Finnish) and Belletti’s abstract partitive Case.¹⁰ Second, Belletti argues that (abstract) partitive Case is inherent, but there are both conceptual (cf. Lasnik 1992, 1995) and empirical (cf. Vainikka and Maling 1996) arguments in favor of regarding partitive Case as a structural Case. In fact, it seems clear that the content of the notion ‘partitive Case’ must relate to the referential properties of the noun phrase which carries it rather than to morphological case and even θ -roles: in Icelandic the postverbal argument of an expletive construction may very well carry a lexical/inherent/quirky morphological case. Consider the example in (29) from Sigurðsson 1989:288, where the associate carries dative.

- (29) Það hafði kólnað þremur málfræðingum.
EXPL had cooled three.DAT linguists.DAT
 ‘Three linguists had got colder’

It thus seems quite clear that the general idea we should pursue is that partitive Case represents a particular type of semantic property which is licensed in the postverbal position of unaccusatives, and that it opposes some other semantic property which is not licensed in that position. In that respect the theory developed by de Hoop (1992) seems appropriate: based on Milsark’s (1974, 1977) distinction between weak and strong noun phrases, she labels the semantic property licensed in the postverbal position of unaccusatives ‘weak Case’ and the property not licensed, ‘strong Case.’

Let us now make some assumptions regarding the checking of Case. First of all we acknowledge a complex VP-structure as in (30), where external arguments (‘subjects’) are base-generated in SpecvP and internal arguments (‘(direct) objects’) in the lower SpecVP.

- (30) [_{VP} DP_{SUBJ} [_{vP} v [_{VP} DP_{OBJ} [V]]]]

Given this structure, we take the difference between unaccusative and unergative predicates to be that the former assign a θ -role to the internal argument position, whereas the latter assign a θ -role to the external position. Similarly, regular transitive verbs assign their external, subjective θ -role to SpecvP and the internal, objective θ -role to SpecVP. These assumptions concerning θ -role assignment should be quite straightforward.

Next we dispense with the idea that Case is checked in AGR projections, but instead assume that Case checking is done in local spec-head relations with the verb and tense. In particular we consider weak Case a default Case which can always be

checked in SpecVP, and furthermore, for obvious reasons, we firmly acknowledge a distinction between morphological case and abstract Case (cf. above). Moreover, along with the first claim (repeated as (i)) we assume the following, where (ii) is intended to capture Burzio's Generalization:¹¹

Checking of Case_{def}:

- (i) Weak Case can be checked in SpecVP against the verb in V⁰.
- (ii) Strong Case can be checked in SpecVP against the verb in V⁰, iff the verb assigns a θ -role to SpecvP.
- (iii) Case, both weak and strong, can be checked in SpecTP against [tense] in T⁰.
- (iv) No Case can be checked in SpecvP.
- (v) An X⁰ can check only one Case.

For the issues under consideration here this definition is sufficient—we are not concerned with indirect objects and prepositional complements.

The effect of the assumptions about Case checking above is the following: (i) if the argument of an unaccusative verb carries strong Case (i.e., if it is definite, universally quantifying, partitive), it must raise to SpecTP, (ii) the argument of an unergative verb must always raise to SpecTP, (iii) an object of a transitive verb carrying strong Case can remain in situ in SpecVP.¹² Notice that the assumptions regarding T⁰ capture the basic intuition that subjective Case (in general nominative) is related to tense.

Given that SpecTP is available in Icelandic expletive constructions but not in other languages such as English and Mainland Scandinavian, the fact that universally quantifying and partitive noun phrases are allowed in this position now follows. We are then left with the questions why the availability of SpecTP varies and why definites are not allowed in this position even in Icelandic expletive constructions.

As for the availability of SpecTP, I will relate that to the classical insight that the Mainland Scandinavian expletive is a subject, whereas the Icelandic one is an empty topic (see Platzack 1983, Christensen 1991, Falk 1993). One way of capturing that difference is to say that the Mainland Scandinavian expletive carries Case, whereas the Icelandic one does not. Accordingly, we take it that the Mainland Scandinavian expletive must check its Case, and the only position where that can be done is in SpecTP. On that account SpecTP is never available for the associate in Mainland Scandinavian.

Why the expletive differs in this way is a question with no obvious answer, but a tentative answer will be given in section 5.3 along with an account of why definites are not allowed in SpecTP in Icelandic expletive constructions.

5. The content of (Agr)SP

5.1. Agreement

The purpose of this section will be to outline a theory which enables us to capture

the facts presented in this chapter while at the same time of course being suitable to account for other phenomena. The account of the Definiteness Effect in the preceding section has paved the ground for eliminating the idea that the associate raises to the position of the expletive at the level of Logical Form. However, the main empirical reason (apart from the conceptual ones in Chomsky 1995) for assuming that such LF-raising of the associate takes place is the fact that the verb agrees with the associate in number. Consider the English examples in (31) and the corresponding Icelandic ones in (32).

- (31) a. There are/*is linguists in the room.
 b. There seem/*seems to be linguists in the room.
- (32) a. Það eru/*er málfræðingar í herberginu.
EXPL are/ is linguists in room.the
 b. Það virdast/*virðist vera málfræðingar í herberginu.
EXPL seem / seems be linguists in room.the

The particularly interesting cases are the ones in the (b) examples, where there is agreement between the matrix raising verb and the associate in the embedded infinitival.

In a system where the associate would raise to an agreement-checking position at LF, these facts receive a straightforward account, but if we are to dispense with LF-raising of the associate, we need an alternative account.

The alternative account is the following. Agreement is a lexically defined matter. Constituents share morphological features if they are lexically defined to do so and if either of the following structural relations hold between them: (i) they are overt heads in the same local binding domain, (ii) they are specifiers of a head which is either specified for the features in question or shares them with another head. As argued in Vangsnes 1999:109f., such an approach to agreement is needed in order to account for noun phrase internal agreement where features may be shared among a relatively high number of constituents. Take, for instance, the following Icelandic example from Sigurðsson 1993:181, where agreement features ‘spread’ from the feminine plural noun to five adnominal constituents.

- (33) allar hinar þrjár nýju kenningar þínar
all.F.PL the.F.PL three.F new.PL theories your.F.PL

Returning to the expletive constructions in (31) and (32), I will assume that an agreement relation is established between the associate and the verb heading V^0 . If this verb is the finite verb, it will exhibit an overt correlate of the agreement. If, on the other hand, the verb is a nonfinite verb, it will not show any overt correlate, but it will nevertheless agree, and in turn the finite verb, occupying a higher X^0 position in the clause, will agree with the nonfinite verb as long as no finite C^0 intervenes.¹³

Under this approach to agreement we need not assume that the associate moves to the position of the expletive at LF in order to account for why the associate agrees with the verb. Moreover, we do not need to assume any Agr-projections solely for the purpose of agreement checking.

Let us next consider certain other issues pertaining to the functional domain

5.2. The Extended Projection Principle

In Chomsky 1995 the Extended Projection Principle (EPP) is related to checking of a ‘categorical D-feature’ in IP, and more specifically, given a split-IP, in AgrSP, the functional domain where the subject-related ϕ -features are checked. The D-feature is by hypothesis a noninterpretable nominal feature (on a par with ϕ -features) and must be checked off before LF. This follows from the principle of Full Interpretation, which requires that only interpretable features be present at LF, the interface level with the conceptual-intentional component of the brain.

Checking of the D-feature can be met either by raising a referential subject to SpecAgrSP or by merging an expletive in that position.¹⁴ Languages differ as to the strength of the D-feature: in languages with (overt) expletives, the D-feature is strong and must therefore be checked before Spell-out, whereas in languages without (overt) expletives the D-feature is weak and can therefore be checked covertly (possibly by a covert ‘null’ expletive). The presence versus absence of expletives is thus related to the strength of the D-feature.

However, A&A (i.e., Alexiadou and Anagnostopoulou 1998) argue that the D-feature in AgrSP is universally strong (i.e., that it must be checked prior to Spell-out in all languages). They suggest that in addition to moving/merging an XP in SpecAgrSP, checking of the D-feature in AgrSP can also be accomplished by head movement of the verb to AgrS⁰. The latter checking is, however, possible only in null-subject (*pro*-drop) languages, on their account, because the finite verb in such languages carries nominal features on a par with pronouns. The presence of nominal features on the verb is in turn the standard account of why these languages allow *pro* drop: the presence of pronouns is superfluous since their denotation is expressed by the verb.

As A&A acknowledge, the theory they develop requires that a distinction be drawn between overt subject/verb agreement and the presence of the nominal features which are suitable for checking the D-feature in AgrSP. Icelandic, for example, has overt subject/verb agreement, but nevertheless also has expletives, indicating that EPP-checking cannot be achieved by head movement of the verb to AgrS⁰.

On the other hand, in a series of works, starting with Holmberg and Platzack 1988 and culminating with Holmberg and Platzack 1995, Anders Holmberg and Christer Platzack have worked toward relating several of the differences between Icelandic (and to some extent Faroese) and Mainland Scandinavian (e.g. [$\pm$ V-to-I-movement], [$\pm$ oblique subjects] etc.) to a single parameter which has its basis in the simple fact that Icelandic has rich verbal inflection with both tense and person affixes, whereas Mainland Scandinavian (with a few exceptional dialects) has only tense inflection. The well-known difference between Icelandic and Mainland Scandinavian V-to-I-movement is illustrated by the examples in (34) and (35), Norwegian representing Mainland Scandinavian in general.

- (34) a. aó Jón las aldrei bókina. *Icelandic*
 that Jón read never book.the
 b. * að Jón aldrei las bókina.
- (35) a. at Jón aldri las boka *Norwegian*
 that Jon read never book.the
 b. * at Jon las aldri boka

Holmberg and Platzack's approach appears highly successful, indicating that overt subject/verb agreement does play an important syntactic role in Icelandic, but this then is potentially in conflict with the theory developed by A&A (and in fact with any theory which attempts to relate the presence/absence of expletives to the null-subject parameter).

However, it seems that the insights of both theories can be brought together in a highly fruitful way if we exploit the idea in A&A that subject/verb agreement either involves a pronominal, [+interpretable] feature, or not. In other words, subject/verb agreement may either be a mere morphological phenomenon, the requirement that two (or more) constituents share formal features, or it may also have a semantic impact in that the feature shared has a semantic content. That would allow us to conjecture that there are two parameters related to subject/verb agreement: the null-subject parameter and the AGR parameter.

In the next subsection I will capitalize on the distinction between two types of agreement and outline a theory which captures both the syntactic relevance of the overt subject/verb agreement in Icelandic and the fact that expletives are present in the language. The difference between Icelandic and other languages with respect to the availability of SpecTP in expletive constructions will also be accounted for.

5.3. *Checking versus identification*

In Chomsky 1995 AGR is related to the checking of uninterpretable features such as Case, the assumed D-feature, and in particular agreement features. AGR is not relevant for the interpretation of a sentence—it serves only as the locus where uninterpretable features are checked and deleted before LF. As a consequence, in Chomsky 1998, where checking of (person) agreement is achieved through the operation AGREE, which makes no reference to AGR projections, AGR projections are dispensed with altogether, and the functional domain of the clause is reduced correspondingly (cf. note 14).

However, let us consider the possibility that there is in fact a functional category between T and C which does have semantic relevance, specifically that of anchoring the state-of-affairs with respect to the participants in the act, in particular the relation between the state-of-affairs and the most prominent participant: the subject. This functional category can then be identified with AgrSP, but we may label it '(Agr)SP' since we will tone down the role played by agreement as inducing purely formal mechanisms, and the existence of the functional domain will instead be motivated on semantic grounds.

The function of TP is to anchor the state-of-affairs denoted by the verb with respect to time, and (Agr)S and T are then 'extensional' functional categories: both

are relevant for determining the extensional interpretation of the clause. Correspondingly, the VP-domain will be the ‘intensional’ domain, the domain where the denotative properties of the clause are determined. Following Vangsnes 1999, where a similar referential split into an extensional and an intensional domain is argued for in the case of the noun phrase, we assume that the presence of T is necessary for the clause to receive a temporal interpretation (of its own), and correspondingly the presence of (Agr)S is necessary in order to anchor the state-of-affairs with respect to the subject (i.e., the argument carrying the θ -role highest on the θ -hierarchy—cf. Jackendoff 1972—hence the most prominent participant). CP differs from (Agr)SP and TP in being a ‘categorical’ rather than an extensional functional projection: it defines a syntactic object as a ‘clause.’

Moreover, also following Vangsnes 1999, we assume that functional projections are headed by abstract heads—CP, (Agr)SP, and TP by κ , σ , and τ , respectively—and we assume that these abstract heads must be *identified*, stated as the ‘Identification Principle’:

The Identification Principle

A functional category must be identified.

Proper identification is defined as follows, where ‘extended projection’ is understood in the sense of Grimshaw (1991).

Identification_{def}:

A functional category F in an extended projection P is identified iff a constituent containing at least one feature relevant for F is merged in the head or specifier position of F.

Furthermore, we acknowledge two types of morphological features, ‘lexical’ features and ‘agreement’ features, and importantly we assume the following preference principle:

Preferred identifier_{def}:

When there are several candidate constituents for identifying a functional category F, the preferred identifier for F will be:

- (i) the constituent containing the largest number of agreement features relevant for F; or else, if there is no such constituent,
- (ii) the constituent containing the largest number of lexical features relevant for F; or else, if there is no such constituent,
- (iii) the constituent containing the smallest number of irrelevant lexical features; or else, if there is no such constituent,
- (iv) an X^0 .

Issues where this preference principle plays an important role are discussed in some detail in Vangsnes 1999. What is important to notice here is that the principle implies that a potential identifier carrying one relevant agreement feature more than some other identifier will always be the preferred one regardless of how many lexical features the other carries. Moreover, the preference for an X^0 identifier over an XP identifier is argued for by A&A (519-520) with reference to a notion of ‘Economy of Projection,’ the basic idea being that when head movement takes place, projection of the full phrase need not apply. (See also Nunes 1998.)

As for the features relevant for the identification of σ and τ , we assume the following:

- (36) σ must be identified by an element containing at least one of the following features: [deixis], [Case], [person].
- (37) τ must be identified by an element containing at least one of the following features: [tense], [number].

As for the distinction between lexical features and agreement features, we take [deixis], [Case], and [tense] to be lexical features, and [person] and [number] to be agreement features. Taking [person] to be an agreement feature implies that this feature is not present on pronouns—in fact, we will assume that the person specification of pronouns is a value of the lexical feature [deixis], which is a feature carried by pronouns and definites.

Relating this to the discussion of subject/verb agreement in the previous subsection, the kind of agreement which licenses *pro* drop (i.e., in null-subject languages) involves both an agreement feature and a lexical feature (the pronominal [+interpretable] feature), whereas subject/verb agreement in languages such as Icelandic involves only an agreement feature. The lexical feature in question we take to be [deixis], and the agreement feature, [person]. This then means that we can represent the difference between null-subject languages, Icelandic, and Mainland Scandinavian as in (38)—the latter has neither of the two features relevant for the identification of σ .

- | | | |
|---------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| (38) a. | V_{fin} [deixis, person, tense] | <i>Null-subject languages</i> |
| b. | V_{fin} [person, tense] | <i>Icelandic</i> |
| c. | V_{fin} [tense] | <i>Mainland Scandinavian</i> |

As for nonfinite verbs, the feature [tense] is not present in any of the three language types.¹⁵

Let us now assume that in addition to the identification requirement on σ , there is a requirement that a referential expression for the subject must be represented in the (Agr)SP domain in order for the denotations of the verb and the subject to be successfully anchored to the same state-of-affairs—in effect this then represents our understanding of the Extended Projection Principle.

However, in its strictest form we take this requirement to apply only to definite subjects which by hypothesis carry the lexical feature [deixis], the intuition behind this being that only uniquely identifiable referents need such an explicit anchoring. In the case of nondefinite subjects we assume that only a default, nonspecific anchoring is required, and this is achieved as long as some relevant lexical feature is present in either the specifier or head position, in other words, if either of the features [deixis] and [Case] (or both) is there.

The system now works in the following way. In null-subject languages σ is identified by raising of the verb to (Agr) S^0 —the verb carries two features relevant for the identification, an agreement feature ([person]) and a lexical feature ([deixis]). Since the verb in these languages carries the lexical feature [deixis], there is no need for an overt XP in Spec(Agr)SP—the feature will contain the same information as pronouns and, furthermore, provide a default interpretation in other

cases.

In Icelandic σ is identified by head movement of the verb to (Agr) S^0 just as in null-subject languages, since the verb carries an agreement feature relevant for the identification ([person]). However, since the verb does not carry the feature [deixis], an overt XP must occur in Spec(Agr)SP—the verb cannot provide any anchoring for the subject, neither a specific nor a default, nonspecific one. Accordingly, pronominal subjects must be overt, and moreover, in the case of nondefinite subjects an element containing either of the features [deixis] or [Case] must occur in Spec(Agr)SP. A definite subject will necessarily move to Spec(Agr)SP. Moreover, a nondefinite subject will meet the requirement for a successful anchoring if it moves to Spec(Agr)SP as it will carry the feature [Case]. Finally, merging of an expletive in the position will also accommodate the requirement on the assumption that it contains the feature [deixis].

And the last assumption seems quite plausible. The etymological origins of expletives are typically either pronouns (*it*, *það*) or deictic adverbs (*there*), and since pronouns by hypothesis carry the feature [deixis] and deictic adverbs arguably do so, too, the conjecture that expletives carry this feature appears unproblematic. In fact, the present theory offers an explicit explanation for why exactly pronouns and deictic adverbials serve as the ‘etymological pool’ for expletives.

Turning now to Mainland Scandinavian, verb raising does not suffice to identify σ since the verb does not carry any relevant feature. Unlike the situation in Icelandic, the verb does not raise to (Agr) S^0 in Mainland Scandinavian (in embedded clauses and infinitivals—in main clauses the verb raises to C^0 due to the V2 effect, which will not be discussed here). This captures the general insight of Holmberg and Platzack (1995) with respect to verb raising.

Now, since the verb cannot identify σ in Mainland Scandinavian, the abstract head must be identified by an XP carrying either of the lexical features [deixis] or [Case]. A subject noun phrase raised from a lower position will suffice since it will always be Case-marked, and if it is definite it will carry the feature [deixis], too. Moreover, an expletive in Spec(Agr)SP would also suffice since it presumably carries the feature [deixis] as well as the feature [Case] (cf. section 4.2). *Pro* drop is obviously not allowed. This follows for reasons pertaining both to the identification of σ and to the anchoring of the subject, and not just for the latter reason, as in Icelandic.

The differences between null-subject languages, Icelandic, and Mainland Scandinavian can now be summarized as follows.¹⁶

Table 2: *Subject anchoring and identification of σ across languages*

	NSL	Icelandic	Mainland Sc.
Subject anchoring	V^0	XP	XP
Identification of σ	V^0	V^0	XP

Returning to the question why the Mainland Scandinavian expletive carries Case whereas the Icelandic one does not (cf. section 4.2), the key to understanding this

difference could lie in the different ways in which identification of σ is achieved in the two language types. In Mainland Scandinavian nonexpletive constructions the identifier will always be a noun phrase which carries Case, and identification by the feature [Case] is therefore possibly recognized as a ‘generalized strategy’ for identification of σ . That is, from an acquisitional point of view, since what the identifiers of σ in nonexpletive constructions have in common is that they all carry [Case], definites and indefinites alike, the child infers from this that the identifier of σ in expletive constructions (i.e., the expletive) does, too.

In Icelandic the identifier is always the verb, so the feature [Case] is never involved in the identification and there is no evidence for inferring the presence of the feature [Case] from its presence on subjects of nonexpletive constructions. The recognition of the verb as the generalized identifier, on the other hand, would serve to explain why there is verb raising in control infinitives (on the assumption that (Agr)SP is present and TP is not) (cf. Vangsnes 1999: 86ff., 2000).

Moreover, returning to the view stated in section 3.1 that the expletive is never base-generated in SpecCP in Icelandic, we may argue that other constituent types than expletives and noun phrases may provide a default subject anchoring. Consider, for example, the sentences in (8d) and (8e) repeated here.

- (8) d. Í dag hafa (*það) verið *allir kettirnir/*báðir kettirnir í eldhúsinu.
 today have EXPL been all cats.the/ both cats.the in kitchen.the
 e. Í dag hafa (*það) verið nokkrir kettir/*sumir kettir í
 today have EXPL been some cats / some.of.the cats in
 eldhúsinu.
 kitchen.the

These sentences exhibit the Definiteness Effect although no overt expletive is present. If we assume that the fronted temporal adverbial moves via Spec(Agr)SP and thereby provides a default subject anchoring, and, moreover, that this applies to all cases where constituents are fronted, there is no reason to assume the existence of a covert expletive in examples like these. On the additional assumption that SpecCP must always be filled in main clauses, it will follow that the expletive always occurs sentence initially, that is, that it always moves from Spec(Agr)SP to SpecCP.¹⁷

The notion of ‘generalized strategy’ obviously deserves some further discussion, but that would lead too far here. In Vangsnes 1999 the relevance of the notion is discussed in the light of several issues pertaining to cross-dialectal differences in the Scandinavian noun phrase. With reference to the present discussion, an interesting point is that the present line of reasoning predicts that in the history of Mainland Scandinavian, Case-marked expletives should evolve after the verb is no longer recognized as the identifier of σ . That appears to be compatible with the findings of Falk (1993) for Swedish.¹⁸

All in all, the theory outlined here may appear somewhat unorthodox and incompatible with established beliefs, say, within Minimalist syntax. The incompatibility is only slight, however. The notion of ‘identification’ has a clear parallel in the Minimalist notion of ‘checking’ as conceived of in Chomsky 1995. It is a central trigger for movement, and it involves morphological features.

however, the morphological features involved in checking are highly suppletive and bear only a faint relation to visible morphology—if a language exhibits a particular kind of movement, a feature is involved regardless of whether there is an overt correlate of the feature. On the other hand, a language may very well possess overt correlates of a feature which triggers movement although the movement in question is not visible in overt syntax.

Although there seems to be considerable evidence in favor of making a distinction between overt morphology and syntactically relevant morphology, one runs the risk of reducing the explanatory force of the theory considerably. In that respect it seems that if the notion of ‘checking’ were to be replaced by ‘identification,’ that risk is reduced. By making a distinction between agreement features and lexical features, it appears easier to evaluate the syntactic role of morphology from both a synchronic and a diachronic point of view. A full discussion of these matters is unfortunately beyond the scope of this chapter.

6. Conclusion

Empirical evidence from Icelandic tells us that the expletive as such cannot be the trigger of the Definiteness Effect, and that in turn suggests that the idea of expletive-associate replacement at LF is on the wrong track.

The present chapter has outlined a syntactic theory which can do without these ideas. The Definiteness Effect is accounted for by exploiting the insights of the Case theories of Belletti (1988) and de Hoop (1992), where the presence of the expletive as such is irrelevant, agreement is accounted for in a way which renders covert raising of the associate to the position of the expletive unnecessary, and the presence versus absence of expletives, as well as their differing status, across languages is accounted for by attributing to (Agr)SPa semantic function which in turn requires that certain formal conditions are met.

Although the theory outlined is speculative to some extent, it is clear that it can account for the Icelandic facts which the chapter set out to explain while at the same time keeping related facts about other languages in sight. Whether the basic ideas underlying the theory prove successful for a wider range of phenomena remains to be seen, but there are no a priori reasons that they will not.

Notes

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1. In the recent literature, in particular Minimalist syntax, it has been customary to use the term ‘associate’ to refer to the referential noun phrase which earlier had been referred to as ‘logical subject’ (i.e., *a man* in a sentence like *There is a man in the garden*). Although this terminology reflects a particular theoretical idea that I will argue against, roughly that the noun phrase in question is ‘associated’ with the expletive, I will adhere to the new established terminology.

2. There are exceptions to this. In Swedish the associate may occur between the finite and the non-finite verbs in passive constructions formed with the auxiliary *bli* (cf. (ib)).

- (i) a. Det blev skjutet några älgar Swedish
EXPL was shot some moose.PL
 b. Det blev några älgar skjutna
EXPL was some moose.PL shot.PL

Notice that the participle agrees with the associate when the latter appears to the left of it (as in (ib)), but not when it appears to the right (as in (ia)). This is an interesting fact. See note 13 for further discussion.

Moreover, expletive sentences with a quantified NP in the intermediate position have been reported in traditional descriptions of all the Mainland Scandinavian languages (cf. Christensen 1991:148-156 for references), and although such sentences are nowadays generally considered archaic and/or stylistically highly marked, this is of course an interesting fact from a diachronic point of view—in fact, possibly also from a dialectal perspective. The following impersonal passive, uttered by a speaker of a western Norwegian dialect, was heard by the author on the radio in March 2000.

- (ii) No har det vore mange bøker skrivne om det emnet. Western Norwegian
now has EXPL been many books written.PL about that subject

(See note 18 for further discussion.)

3. The example Bobaljik and Jonas (1996:213) provide is the following (their (22a)).

- (i) Það lauk einhver verkefninu alveg.
there finished someone assignment.the completely
 ‘Someone completely finished the assignment.’

However, several speakers of Icelandic consider this sentence highly deviant, and I have therefore chosen not to copy the example. Still, Bobaljik and Jonas’s point is probably valid, given that the sentences I provide are fairly acceptable.

4. There are a number of apparent counterexamples to the Definiteness Effect in both Scandinavian and English. For discussion and accounts of several of such alleged counterexamples, see Vangsnes 1994, 1999:74ff. and references cited there. Icelandic also allows certain instances of grammatically definite noun phrases in expletive constructions (cf. Rögnvaldsson 1984: 365, Sigurðsson 1989:294ff.), such as the following example taken from Rögnvaldsson 1984: 365:

- (i) Það skín alltaf blessuð sólín.
EXPL shines always blessed sun.the
 ‘There shines always the blessed sun’

Examples like this have been taken as evidence for a pragmatic treatment of the Definiteness Effect, but in my opinion they can be accounted for in much the same way as the cases discussed in Vangsnes 1994, and I will not discuss them further here.

The same goes for a particular kind of intensifying noun phrases involving the proximal demonstrative *þessi*, noted in Vangsnes 1995, 1999:75 and due to Gunnar Ólafur Hansson (p.c.), which do not involve unique reference, and whose occurrence as associates is therefore not surprising.

- (ii) Það var komin þessi líka gullfallega stelpa í partyið.
EXPL was come this PRT gold.beautiful girl in party.the
 ‘This really good-looking girl had come to the party’

These noun phrases are similar (apart from the intensifying effect) to indefinite-*this* noun phrases in English.

5. By ‘definite descriptions’ I understand proper names and noun phrases with the definite article, a demonstrative, and/or a possessor.

6. Anders Holmberg (p.c.) points out that bare NPs are also awkward in the VP-external position of Swedish expletive passives (cf. note 2).

- (i) Det blev några älgar /??älgar skjutna Swedish
EXPL became some moose.PL / moose.PL shot

Similar judgments have been reported about VP-external bare indefinites in Finnish expletive constructions, cf. Holmberg and Nikanne 1994.

7. Cf. the Principle of Contrastiveness of de Hoop (1992:100).

8. It is also worth noticing that Chomsky (1995:340ff.), who bases his discussion of Icelandic TECs on work by Bobaljik and Jonas, also contributes to spreading this incorrect information when he states about Icelandic TECs that “[t]he usual properties of expletive constructions hold: [Spec, T], the associate of the expletive in [Spec, AgrS], is nonspecific ...” (p. 341), and he furthermore (p. 342) makes a suggestion as to why associates in both VP and SpecTP are subject to the Definiteness Effect. That suggestion is of course pointless, given the evidence presented here.

9. Bobaljik and Jonas (1996) also base their revision of the Mapping Hypothesis on the (valid) observation that definite descriptions of nonexpletive constructions precede a TP-adverbial. Cf. (i), which is Bobaljik and Jonas’s (3a) and (30a).

- (i) Í gær kláruðu (þessar mýs) sennilega (*þessar mýs) ostinn.
yesterday finished these mice probably these mice cheese.the
 ‘These mice probably finished the cheese yesterday’

They suggest that the reason why definites occur in a position preceding the adverbial (i.e., in SpecAgrSP) can be related to the Mapping Hypothesis in its revised version.

10. Taking Finnish as her starting point, Belletti (1988) shows that the postverbal argument of Finnish existentials can carry partitive morphological case and, moreover, that the alternation between accusative and partitive objects in certain cases coincides with the distinction between a definite and an indefinite reading, Finnish otherwise lacking both definite and indefinite articles. However, partitive as a morphological case is far from strictly related to indefiniteness in Finnish (cf. de Hoop 1992, Kiparsky 1998, Vainikka and Maling 1996, Vangsnes 1994), suggesting that there is no direct relation between partitive morphology and the abstract partitive Case that she proposes.

11. The classical GB formulation of Burzio’s Generalization is as follows (cf. Van Riemsdijk and Williams 1986:250): “If a verb assigns case to its object, then it assigns a θ -role to its subject.”

12. It is worth noticing that the proposed definition of Case checking also accounts for certain instances of the Definiteness Effect in nonexpletive constructions in Norwegian, notably the fact that the postverbal argument of pseudo-passives is subject to the restriction. Consider the examples in (i): (ia) a regular passive, (ib) a corresponding impersonal passive, and (ic) a pseudo-passive where the raised noun phrase is the argument of a stranded preposition.

- (i) a. Rotne egg /dei rotne egga vart kasta på politikaren. *Norwegian*
rotten eggs/the rotten eggs.the was thrown on politician.the
 ‘Rotten eggs/the rotten eggs were thrown on the politician’
 b. Det vart kasta rotne egg /*dei rotne egga på politikaren.
EXPL was thrown rotten eggs/ the rotten eggs.the on politician.the
 c. Politikaren_i vart kasta rotne egg /*dei rotne egga på t_i.
politician.the was thrown rotten eggs/the rotten eggs.the on

We see that the postverbal argument is subject to the Definiteness Effect in the pseudo-passive just as it is in the impersonal passive. This is accounted for since no θ -role is assigned to SpecvP in either case, the raised noun phrase in the pseudo-passive having received its θ -role from the stranded preposition. See Vangsnes 1994:46ff. for discussion of this and other instances of the Definiteness Effect in nonexpletive contexts, notably on the direct objects of certain double object constructions in Norwegian. The latter cases presumably can also be accounted for within the present approach if Burzio’s Generalization is formulated so as to apply to the relation holding between the indirect and the direct object—in the cases in question, the verb arguably does not assign any θ -role to the indirect objects.

13. It is not immediately clear how the participle agreement in Swedish expletive passives can be accounted for under this approach. As shown in note 2, the participle will agree in number with an associate which precedes it but not with an associate which follows it. In Icelandic, on the other hand, there will be number agreement in both cases. Cf. the following examples.

- (i) a. Það voru skotnir /*skotið nokkrir elgir.
EXPL were shot.PL/ shot.PL some moose.PL
 b. Það voru nokkrir elgir skotnir /*skotið.

The reason may simply be that agreement is lexically defined in a different way in Swedish than in Icelandic, perhaps so that number agreement can be established between the verb and a noun phrase

only in the external subject position. The issue deserves further investigation and speculation, but I will leave that to future research.

14. In Chomsky 1998 the functional domain AgrSP is dispensed with along with other Agr-projections as checking of agreement no longer is argued to take place in designated functional projections. The EPP is now attributed to the presence of an EPP-feature in T^0 , corresponding to the D-feature in the earlier account, but the basic machinery remains the same: the checking of the feature is achieved either by raising of a subject to SpecTP or by merging an expletive in the position.

15. An important deviation from standard assumptions, discussed in Vangsnes 1999:86ff. and Vangsnes 2000, is that T^0 is never present in infinitivals. (Agr)SP, on the other hand, is projected in for instance control infinitivals, and the difference between Icelandic and Mainland Scandinavian with respect to verb raising in such infinitivals is accounted for in a uniform way with verb raising in (embedded) finite clauses: the verb raises in Icelandic, and that follows from the AGR-parameter since the verb is a suitable identifier of σ in Icelandic but not in Mainland Scandinavian.

16. This system gives us a fourth possible language type, one where subject anchoring is provided by the verb and identification of σ by an XP. However, notice how the preference principle for identifiers interferes in that respect: the XP would have to carry either the same number of relevant agreement features and at least one more lexical feature, or at least one more agreement feature than the verb. Given that the verb at least would carry the feature [deix] (since it accommodates subject anchoring), we expect such languages to be rare, if existent at all.

17. This line of reasoning appears to be compatible with Holmberg's (2000) discussion of Stylistic Fronting (SF) in Icelandic. In SF a sentence adverbial, participle, or particle is fronted to first position, there is always a subject gap (i.e., no argument noun phrase in the intermediate position), and, importantly, a Definiteness Effect can be observed on the postverbal argument (if there is one). Cf. (ia) and compare with the expletive construction in (ib).

- (i) a. Tekin hefur verið _erfið ákvörðun/*erfiða ákvörðunin.
taken has been difficult decision / difficult decision.the
'A difficult decision/*The difficult decision has been made'
- b. Það hefur verið tekin erfið ákvörðun/*erfiða ákvörðunin.
EXPL has been taken difficult decision / difficult decision.the

Holmberg argues that the fronted constituent in SF functions as an expletive, and although his theoretical interpretations differ somewhat from the present ones, that is in effect what I argue for the fronted adverbial in the examples in (8).

18. On the other hand, it is not entirely inconceivable that non-Case-marked expletives would exist after the verb no longer is the identifier of σ , say in a transition period before identification by the feature [Case] is recognized as the generalized strategy. That could possibly serve to explain the remnant cases noted by Christensen (1991) where Mainland Scandinavian expletive constructions have the associate in the intermediate position (cf. note 2).

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