ON THE ANALYSIS OF EXPLETIVE PASSIVE CONSTRUCTIONS

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The purpose of this paper is to reject the analyses of expletive passive structures of the type [there-participle-DP] as derivationally connected to another expletive structure containing a passive participle, but with the DP preceding it: [there-DP-participle]. I argue in favour of a separate analysis for [there-participle-DP] where the DP generates in the post-participle position and undergoes no movement throughout the derivation process.

Keywords: expletive passive, Thematization/Extraction, existential structures, Definiteness Effect, bare plurals.

1. Introduction

The study of the expletive construction illustrated in (1), which here will be referred to as [*there*-participle-DP], is necessarily connected to the study of the construction illustrated in (2) (henceforth [there-DP-participle]), since the former has been usually analysed as a derived structure from the latter, or more recently, in Chomsky (2000, 2001), both expletive structures have been claimed to be alternative constructions resulting from the phonological operation known as *Thematisation/Extraction* or *TH/EX* in its abbreviated form.

(1) There was elected an unpopular candidate
(2) There was an unpopular candidate elected

(Chomsky 2000: 119)

Chomsky's hypothesis of TH/EX is based on the observation that the order verb-direct object is ungrammatical in English passive and unaccusative structures:

(3) *There was placed a large book on the table
(4) *There arrived a strange package in the mail

(Chomsky 2001: 20)

According to Chomsky (2000, 2001), English activates TH/EX operation in order to avoid this particular order. TH/EX can be defined as the operation whereby the direct object is moved either to the left of a passive participle, resulting in a structure such as (5), or to the right, to a position adjoined to vP, resulting in (6).

(5) There were several large packages placed on the table
(6) There were placed on the table several large packages

(Chomsky 2001: 20)

However, the phonological nature that Chomsky ascribes to TH/EX has been the object of great criticism. Authors such as Svenonius (2000), Julien (2002) or Rezac

(2006) claim that the leftward variant of TH/EX is a syntactic operation triggered by an EPP feature connected to *v* rather than a phonological operation. On the other hand, authors such as Radford (2000) or Castillo (2009) maintain that TH/EX is untenable regardless of the phonological or syntactic nature ascribed to it. In fact, both Radford (2000) and Castillo (2009) claim that [there-DP-participle] is not an expletive passive but an existential structure. This is the analysis adopted here as well.

In the following sections, I give evidence against TH/EX operation and show the necessity of providing different analyses for [there-participle-DP] and [there-DP-participle]. On the other hand, I support an analysis of [there-participle-DP] in which DP generates in the post-participle position and remains *in situ* throughout the derivation process, just in the line of Radford (2000).

2. Arguments against TH/EX

The analysis in Chomsky (2000, 2001) assumes that [there-part-DP] and [there-DP-part] are alternative structures resulting from the application of Th/Ex, operation by which the nominal constituent undergoes either rightward movement or leftward movement. However, rightward movement is not a real alternative in many cases. In fact, [there-part-DP] seems to show a more marginal or restricted status than [there-DP-part].

(7) There were three men arrested
(8) *There were arrested three men

According to Julien (2002), the rightward variant of Th/Ex should get a different analysis from leftward Th/Ex. As noted by this author, a piece of evidence in favour of separate analyses is the *Definiteness Effect*. In fact, [there-participle-DP] seems to be less sensible to this restriction than [there-part-DP]. The sentences in (9) have been extracted from British National Corpus (henceforth BNC) and from Corpus of Contemporary American English (henceforth COCA)

(9)
a. Ultimately there had to be added to the list her marital problems. ACS 721 (BNC)
b. By this process of official propagation there is carried out the idea of conservation with the purpose of perpetuation. 1996 ACAD MarineFish (COCA)
c. There was heard the quiet, restrained, ever-so-smugly condescending patting of Gallic applause. 2006 FIC SouthernRev (COCA)

(10) * There was the man arrested

On the other hand, Radford (2000) points out other problematic aspects of TH/EX hypothesis. First, as noted above, Chomsky (2000, 2001) claims that it is possible to apply TH/EX not only to passive but also to unaccusative structures in general. However, Thematization, that is, the leftward variant of TH/EX is ungrammatical in the case of non-passive structures:

(11) a. *There have *several angry men* walked into the room
    b. *There had *a strange object* arrived in the mail

Second, whenever there is no Prepositional Phrase available (see (1) above), Extraction, that is, the rightward variant of Th/Ex, implies a vacuous movement of DP. As the linear order of constituents is not changed in these cases, Chomsky's claim that

there is a ban on verb-direct object order at PF-level is weakened to a great extend.

Additionally, examples provided by Radford (2000: 12) seem to contradict Chomsky's assumption that, given the phonological nature of Th/Ex, successive or cyclic movement of the nominal constituent is not possible.

(12) a. There are continually being *new treatments* developed for cancer
    b. There are continually *new treatments* being developed for cancer

I would like to add the following examples extracted from the BNC, in which the nominal constituent seems to have raised from the position immediately before the passive participle to the position to the left of the past participle. .

(13) a. There's 12 been completed KRM 2663 (BNC)
    b. There's nothing been decided KCN 6937 (BNC)
    c. There's also a view been expressed J9V 379 (BNC)
    d. There's people been injured KRT 6273 (BNC)
    e. There's orange been spilt KB8 2675 (BNC)

Nonetheless, the aim of Radford (2000) is not to prove the possibility of applying TH/EX in a cyclic or successive way but to reject the very existence of the cited operation. Interestingly, Radford notices that the sequence [there-DP-participle] is grammatical as long as the nominal constituent is preceded by verb *be*.

(14) a. *There got people burned in this car
    b. There was people getting burned in this car. 1998 SPOK CBS_PublicEye (COCA)

In the light of the evidence presented above, Radford (2000) concludes that [there-DP-participle] is an existential structure. In fact, this construction shows properties, such a strong Definiteness Effect, which have been generally associated with existential sentences.

(15) a. *There had been the book placed on the table
    b. There had been a book placed on the table

Additionally, the presence of the invariable existential form *there's* in the sentences provided in (13) above seems to reinforce this existential analysis.

3. Non-movement analysis of [there-participle-DP]

In this section I provide evidence in favour of a non-movement analysis of [there-participle-DP], namely, a derivation in which DP generates in post-participle position and undergoes no movement. At the same time, I argue against the analyses which assume that DP is not in its original position, specifically those of Huddleston and Pullum (2002) and Julien (2002).

3.1. Arguments against Huddleston and Pullum (2002)

Here I provide evidence against an analysis of [there-part-DP] as a derived structure from [there-DP-part] resulting from the extraposition or postponing of a long nominal constituent. A grammar like Huddleston and Pullum (2002) assumes length to be the determining factor of *there*-participle-DP constructions.

(16) a. There were several people killed

    b. There were killed some 650 infantry from the 2nd Battalion

                      (Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 1395)

However, the length factor cannot be invoked in the following sentences:

(17) a. These travelers inspired his respect, but in his questioning there could be detected *idle curiosity*, …. 2001 FIC Succesd'Estime (COCA)

    b. Now, as they shoved their way through the audience, two wooden chairs were knocked over and there were drawn *breaths of outrage*. HNK 432 (BNC)

    c. Er today we're going to look at this Policy E two, the op open countryside, and there are presented to you for the discussion *three matters*. J9V 7 (BNC)

Furthermore, whenever [there-DP-participle] contains a long DP it is not necessary to move the whole constituent. For instance, in (18), it is only the relative clause which has been postponed.

(18) Since he first published his equations there has been *a considerable literature* developed *which is devoted to expanding and refining this algebraic approach,* but it was Bukharin who helped lay the foundation for this later work BMA 140 (BNC)

3.2. Arguments against Julien (2002)

According to Julien (2002), the nominal constituent in [there-participle-DP] is not in its original position. On the contrary, the author claims that DP raises from subject position to Foc(us) P(hrase) in the Complementizer Phrase domain. Interestingly, what Chomsky takes to be the rightward variant of TH/EX is, according to Julien (2002), a leftward movement. Moreover, the starting point of this focalization operation is not the post-verbal position but the subject position or Spec-IP, that is, a sentence such as *There was elected an unpopular candidate* derives from *An unpopular candidate was elected*. As claimed by Julien, expletive *there* is the trace left behind by the nominal constituent after its movement from subject position to Spec-FocP. Afterwards, the clause moves itself to an even higher position, to the specifier of Topic Phrase. The derivation in (19) clarifies this analysis.

(19) a. The book that Mary wanted everyone to see was placed on the table

    b. [FocP[the book that Mary wanted everyone to see] [IP there was placed on the table]]

    c. [TopP [IP there was placed on the table] Top [FocP [the book that Mary wanted everyone to see] Foc t IP]]

As I try to show, Julien's assumption that the nominal constituent occupies subject position before the focalization process takes place can be called into question by the examples in (20) below where the nominal constituent is either a bare plural or a bare singular. Compare the sentences in (20) with the standard passives in (21).

(20) a. Now, as they shoved their way through the audience, two wooden chairs were knocked over and there were drawn *breaths of outrage*. HNK 432 (BNC)

    b. There are just too many people at the bottom of our society that aren't covered by any health care, and so, yes, there will be needed *additional revenues*. 1993 SPOK PBS_Newshour (COCA)

    c. These travelers inspired his respect, but in his questioning there could be detected *idle curiosity*, ... 2001 FIC Succesd'Estime (COCA)

(21) a. ?Breaths of outrage were drawn
    b. ?Additional revenues will be needed
    c. ?Idle curiosity was detected

The unacceptability of the canonical passives shown in (21) suggests that the natural place of these nominal constituents seems to be the post-verbal position and that they do not move to subject position at all. In this sense, Kallulli (2006: 30) claims that generic and existential bare plurals differ with respect to the D-feature, that is, while generic bare plurals are DPs with a morphologically null D, existential bare plurals, like bare singulars, are NPs altogether lacking a D-projection. The examples in (22) clarify the difference between the generic and the existential interpretation of bare plurals.

(22) a. Firemen are altruistic   (generic meaning)
    b. There are firemen available   (existential meaning)

Moreover, post-verbal position favours a non-specific interpretation of DP which is lost in subject position. Observe the contrast between the sentences in (23) and the standard passives in (24) below.

(23) a. In the Tamboctata Reserve, Peru, there can be found 530 bird species. BN4 894 (BNC)
    b. In the reported cases there can be found a wide range of different approaches. EDL 1515 (BNC)

(24) a. 530 bird species can be found in the Tamboctata Reserve, Peru.
    b. A wide range of different approaches can be found in the reported cases

The last argument against Julien's analysis concerns the impossibility for get-passives to appear in [there-part-DP] constructions, as noted in Postal (2004: 46).

(25) a. In that field (there) were/*got executed dozens of partisans
    b. In that way (there) were/*got quickly trained a number of new recruits

It is widely accepted in bibliography that get-passives involve an adjectival or resultative participle instead of an eventive one. Therefore the nominal constituent does not originate in post-participle position. (26) shows get-passive analysis since Haegeman (1985).

(26) John$_i$ got [t$_i$ killed]

However, if we assume that the starting point for the focalization and topicalization process resulting in [there-participle-DP] is subject position, as claimed by Julien, it is difficult to explain why get-passives are excluded from these structures. Once more, an analysis of [there-participle-DP] in which DP originates in the post-participle position and remains *in situ* throughout the derivation process makes it possible to exclude get-passives, since, as noted above, DP never occupies post-participle position in such a structure.

As I have tried to show in this paper, the analysis of [there-participle-DP] as an expletive passive unconnected to [there-DP-participle] in which DP generates to the right of the participle and undergoes no movement throughout the derivation process seems to be a more explicative and economic syntactic derivation than the one

presented in Julien (2002), which, as pointed out above, involves multiple movements of DP.

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