

A new approach to transitive expletives: evidence from Belfast English

ALISON HENRY and SIOBHAN COTTELL

University of Ulster at Jordanstown

(Received 26 November 2006; revised 8 March 2007)

This article discusses the existence of transitive expletives in a variety of English. Belfast English has none of the features previously proposed as licensing transitive expletives, but nevertheless allows these, calling into question previous analyses of the licensing of this structure. This article considers the properties of transitive expletives in this variety, showing that they are restricted to sentences where the associate is quantified, and that the associate can appear in a range of positions, similar but not identical to those available to ‘floated’ quantifiers. It is argued that Belfast English has a higher merge position for the expletive than does Standard English, and that the general availability in English of quantifier positions between T and vP – perhaps because auxiliaries in English head phases, and phases can be closed by a quantification – means that, even though Belfast English is not a Verb Second language, a position is available for both the expletive and the associate.

1 Introduction

This article discusses the existence of transitive expletives in a variety of English, a fact which has not previously been reported in the literature. Belfast English has structures of the following type, which are ungrammatical in Standard English, but resemble the well-known transitive expletive constructions (TECs),¹ in languages such as Icelandic:

- (1) There’ve lots of people passed the test.
- (2) There shouldn’t anybody say that.

There is an extensive literature on transitive expletives in other languages (see for example Jonas, 1996; Bobaljik & Jonas, 1996; Rosengren, 2000; Koenenman & Neeleman, 2001; Vangsnes, 2002) which argues that their existence necessarily coincides with a range of other features in the language in question, for example the availability of full DP object shift, verb raising to T, V2 or obligatory associate–verb agreement. None of these properties applies to Belfast English, calling into question a number of previous proposals on the nature and licensing of transitive expletives.

One way in which Belfast English transitive expletives differ from those in languages like Icelandic is that there is a wider range of positions available for the associate; in

¹ We use the term transitive expletive (TEC), as it is usually used in the literature, to refer not only to structures in which the verb is actually transitive, but also those where the associate occurs in a higher position than in non-TEC languages, for example in passives:

- (i) There have several people been elected.

particular, the associate can occur between auxiliaries, in any position where a floated quantifier can occur:

- (3) There should (lots of students) have (lots of students) been (lots of students) taking the classes.

This article aims to consider the implications of the existence of transitive expletives in a variety of English, and the availability of a range of associate positions in those expletives, for the analysis of transitive expletives in general. The article is organized as follows. In section 2, the facts of transitive expletives in Belfast English are outlined briefly, and compared to those of another SVO language which is well known to have TECs, Icelandic, showing that many of the properties are similar, and that we thus seem to be dealing here with true transitive expletive structures. In section 3 we consider a number of previous analyses of transitive expletives in other languages, which argue that they are licensed by one or more other aspects of the languages concerned (such as rich agreement, V to T or V2), and it is shown that in relation to most if not all these aspects, Belfast English does not have the characteristics proposed as necessary for TEC languages. Subsequent sections consider the structure of Belfast English TECs, in particular the position(s) in which the associate may occur, and the implications of this for the analysis of transitive expletives in general.

2 Transitive expletives in Belfast English

Belfast English has transitive expletives of the following type:

- (4) There have lots of people eaten their lunch already.
 (5) There shouldn't anybody drink wine before dinner time.

They resemble transitive expletives in languages such as Icelandic in a number of ways. First, not only may the subjects of transitive verbs be associates of an expletive, but also the objects of passives can occur in a relatively high position in the sentence:

- (6) There have lots of cars been sold at this auction.
 (7) Það hafa margir bílar verið seldir á þessu uppboði.
 there have many cars been sold at this auction (from Jonas, 1996: 11)
 (8) There would some boats then probably not be sold at the auction.
 (9) Það mundu einhverjir batar pá senniliga ekki verða seldir á uppboðinu.
 there would some boats then probably not be sold at auction-the
 (from Sigurðsson, 2000)

In Belfast English, as in Icelandic, only certain sorts of associate are felicitous in a TEC. Thus (6) is fine, but with a nonquantified NP it becomes much less good:

- (10) *There have cars been sold at this auction.
 (11) *There has a car been sold at this auction.

On the other hand no such restriction applies when the object of the passive is in a lower position:

- (12) There have been cars sold at this auction.
 (13) There has been a car sold at this auction.

Apart from the fact that in Icelandic the lower position for the associate in passives is the complement of V, while in Belfast English the associate must occur before the participle, this is similar to the facts reported for Icelandic. Vangsnes (2002), for example, makes a detailed study of the positioning of associates in Icelandic, and establishes that the raised associate needs preferably to be quantified and that bare plurals are impossible in the higher position. Jonas (1996) notes that bare indefinites are much better in the lower position.

There are some ways in which Belfast English transitive expletives differ from Icelandic, however. In the first place, there is a wider range of positions available for the associate. It can occur in any position between the highest position in the minimal VP and the tensed verb form; thus it is possible to have the associate occur between auxiliaries, whereas in Icelandic, it cannot occur immediately following any auxiliary except the first.

- (14) There must have been many boats stolen.
- (15) There must have many boats been stolen.
- (16) There must many boats have been stolen.

Of these, only the equivalent of the last is grammatical in Icelandic (H. Thrainsson, p.c.).

We discuss these facts in more detail below when we consider the positions in which an associate may occur.

3 Belfast English and the licensing of TECs

There has been considerable discussion in the literature on transitive expletives regarding why TECs are licensed in some languages and not others; in particular, because of the availability of TECs in Icelandic but not the Mainland Scandinavian languages, considerable effort has gone into identifying the crucial features which differentiate the former (which has TECs) from the latter (which do not). In almost all these cases, the claimed properties which license TECs do not occur in Belfast English, which in the relevant respects resembles Modern Scandinavian languages more closely than it does Icelandic.

3.1 *Transitive expletives and the raising of V to T*

A number of accounts attempt to link the availability of transitive expletives to overt verb raising. Thus, for example, Jonas (1996) and Bobaljik & Jonas (1996) argue that TECs are possible in Icelandic, but not in Mainland Scandinavian languages, because only in the former does the verb always raise to T, thus licensing Spec/TP as a position for the subject. In these analyses, there is a split INFL and the verb is considered to occur in Agr_s, with the expletive in Spec/Agr_s P, and the associate in Spec/TP. Koenenman & Neeleman (2001) argue that the number of functional projections a language has depends on the number of verb positions, and that transitive expletives depend on a language having V to I movement and being V2 (for a discussion of V2 in relation to Belfast English, see the following section).

Like Standard English, Belfast English does not have lexical verb raising (except of *be* and *have*), so that the existence of transitive expletives cannot be dependent on the possibility of raising the main verb to T. As in Standard English, lexical verbs do not raise. (17)–(22) illustrate, for Belfast English, the standard criteria which diagnose verb raising (see Emonds, 1976; Pollock, 1989; and many others).

- (17) *Went a linguist to that conference?
- (18) Did a linguist go to that conference?
- (19) *She read not the book.
- (20) She didn't read the book.
- (21) *They drank never coffee.
- (22) They never drank coffee.

(17) and (18) show that lexical verbs cannot move to C in questions; (19) and (20) show that they cannot move in front of the negation element *not* which is generally assumed to occur in a pre-vP NegP; and (21) and (22) show that the verb cannot precede an adverb such as *never* which occurs before the VP. Exactly the same behaviour of main verbs is observed in TECs in Belfast English – the main verb cannot raise in front of the associate:

- (23) *There read nobody the book.
- (24) *There took somebody the cheese.

Rather, transitive expletives only occur when there is an auxiliary present:

- (25) There has somebody read the book.
- (26) There might somebody have taken the cheese./ There might have somebody taken the cheese.

The only exception to this is with *have* as a main verb. As in standard British English, *have* can raise to T, as illustrated in (27) and (28):

- (27) Has John the books with him?
- (28) John hasn't the books with him.

Have as a main verb can also occur in TECs:

- (29) There has somebody the book with them.
- (30) There have lots of students some good ideas.

However, it is to be noted that there is some connection between TECs and the filling of T, one which is strongly reminiscent of the V-raising requirement for Germanic proposed by Jonas (1996) and Bobaljik & Jonas (1996), a matter to which we return in more detail below. TECs are possible in Belfast English only if T is filled by an overt element or a trace/copy. Thus a structure with an auxiliary or a raised verb can have a TEC, but with the tensed verb remaining in VP it cannot:

- (31) There have lots of people attended those lectures.
- (32) *There lots of people attended those lectures.

In a question with T-to-C movement, T may be empty, but presumably the verb or an auxiliary has been in T at some stage and left a copy (assuming that head movement does so):

- (33) Have there lots of people attended those lectures?

Note the occurrence of the expletive in questions. First, it shows that there is no bar on the expletive and the associate being superficially adjacent, so that it is not adjacency of the expletive that rules out a structure like (32). Further evidence for this comes from Dutch, where in embedded contexts, where V2 is not operative, an expletive and a subject can be adjacent, as in the following example from Rosengren (2000):

- (34) ... dat er iemand in de tuin loopt.
 that there somebody in the garden walks
 'That somebody walks in the garden.'

We return below to consider why a transitive expletive is only possible in Belfast English where T is filled, arguing that it is because otherwise the associate blocks the attaching of the Tense affix to the main verb.

It is to be noted that in Icelandic, it is not necessary for the lexical verb to have raised for a TEC to be possible: a TEC may occur where the tensed verb is an auxiliary, as the following example from Bobaljik & Jonas (1996) shows:

- (35) Það hafa margir jólasveinar borðað búaðing. (Ice)
 there have many Christmas-trolls(NOM) eaten pudding(ACC)
 'Many Christmas trolls have eaten pudding.'

Thus it seems to be sufficient for some head to be or have been in T, not necessarily the lexical verb. However, if that were the case, one would expect TECs to be possible in main clauses in Mainland Scandinavian languages, where the verb or auxiliary presumably moves to T (and via there to C). In embedded clauses, Mainland Scandinavian languages differ from Icelandic in that nothing raises to T, as shown by the fact that auxiliaries as well as lexical verbs occur after the negative element which is assumed to occur before VP. However, TECs are not generally possible in Mainland Scandinavian languages, regardless of whether or not the verb has raised, as illustrated in the following examples from Bobaljik & Jonas (1996):

- (36) *Der har nogen spist et äpple. (Da)
 *Det har någon ätit ett äpple. (Sw)
 there has someone eaten an apple
 'Someone has eaten an apple.'

3.2 *Verb second*

A number of accounts attempt to link the availability of TECs to the existence of V2 or the combination of V2 plus another property (such as verb raising). Not all V2 languages have TECs of course: the Mainland Scandinavian languages are well known

to be V2 in matrix sentences, but not to have V2 in embedded clauses. Nevertheless, as noted above, they do not have TECs even in main clauses.

Belfast English is, like Standard English, definitely a non-V2 language. Sentences such as the following which are typical of V2 languages are ungrammatical:

(37) *Today are the children going to the party.

(38) *The book were the students reading.

(39) *Suddenly can strong winds begin.

Secondly, the verb in TECs in Belfast English does not have to be second. It can be third with other elements preceding the expletive. There is no requirement that the verb in TECs be in second position.

(40) Every day there've many students been taking these classes.

(41) Possibly there could some students be admitted earlier.

3.3 *Multiple specifiers*

Chomsky (1995) suggests that in a language like Icelandic that allows TECs, T can have more than one specifier. Thus a sentence like (7) above would have two elements merging in the specifier position of T. In response to the problem that this does not give the correct linear order, which is always expletive–tensed verb–associate, he suggests that the linear order is derived in the phonology in order to ensure that the order is V2 as required.

This again of course cannot account for Belfast English, where the specifier and subject are never both adjacent in the specifier position of T, and where there is no evidence of V2 anywhere else.²

3.4 *Object shift*

A number of approaches have attempted to link the occurrence of TECs to the availability of (usually full DP) object shift. A recent example of this is Richards' (2004) account which argues that TECs occur in languages which have full DP object shift, because the expletive is merged in the (nontheta) position, the external specifier of v*P, where the object moves in object shift. In languages without TECs, on the other hand, this position does not exist and therefore it is impossible to merge both a subject and an expletive.

All of the Germanic languages claimed to show transitive expletives allow object shift – and all except Faroese have object shift of full DPs. However, there does not seem to be a necessary connection between transitive expletives and object shift, since Faroese (Jonas, 1996) has transitive expletives in one dialect, but does not allow full DP object shift, only shift of weak pronominals. The Mainland Scandinavian languages, such as Danish, Swedish, and Norwegian, have in general object shift only of weak

² Exceptions are, as in StE, 'residual V2' in questions and negative preposing. But StE, which has both, of course lacks TECs.

pronouns, and do not have transitive expletives. We might therefore claim that languages that have transitive expletives allow object shift of some kind, but not necessarily of full DPs. It is important then to establish whether Belfast English has object shift. Since, under Holmberg's Generalization, object shift is restricted to sentences where the lexical verb has left the VP, there are not many possible occasions for object shift in English. The only instances where the main verb leaves the VP are, first, when the main verb is *have* and second, possibly, as argued in Henry (1995: ch. 3), in imperatives.

As noted by Vikner (1995) for Standard English, there does not appear to be any object shift with *have*. In Belfast English, as in standard British English, *have* can raise to T. Thus, it can move to C in questions and can precede the negative, unlike other lexical verbs:

- (42) Has John the book with him?
- (43) Does John have the book with him?
- (44) John hasn't the book with him.
- (45) John doesn't have the book with him.

In the examples where the verb raises to T, we might expect to see object shift, either of full DPs or of weak pronominals. However, this does not seem to be possible.

- (46) *John has the book not with him.
- (47) *John has it not with him.

There is some dubiety about these examples because the equivalents without object shift, but with the negative occurring as the full form *not* instead of contracted on to the verb as *n't*, seem also to be at least awkward if not ungrammatical:

- (48) ?John has not the book with him.
- (49) ?John has not it with him.

It is difficult to test this with adverbs because most English adverbs can occur VP-finally, and therefore cannot be used to test whether a DP has moved out of VP, for which an adverb which must occur before VP is essential. One adverb which behaves like this in English is *never*:

- (50) John never reads the book.
- (51) *John reads the book never.

Never, like *not*, however, is not very felicitous after raised *have*:

- (52) ?John has never the books with him.
- (53) ?John has never them with him.

However, these seem much better than the equivalents with object shift:

- (54) *John has the books never with him.
- (55) *John has them never with him.

Thus it seems that, although the somewhat restricted possibilities with raised *have* are problematic, object shift does not happen with it.

Object shift of weak pronouns has been argued to occur in overt-subject imperatives in Belfast English (Henry, 1995: ch. 3), but again the data are rather unclear. In Belfast English, weak pronoun subjects in imperatives can appear before subjects:

(56) Finish it you for me before you go out.

For most speakers, full DPs cannot occur in this position. However, some speakers do allow full DPs:

(57) Tell the teacher you straightaway if you're having problems.

This looks rather like object shift – with the object moving in front of the subject – though there are some problems in showing that it definitely does involve movement of the verb and the object out of VP, rather than some property of the location of the subject.

However, whether or not this is object shift, the key point is that there is no consistency between the group of speakers who allow full DPs in pre-subject position in imperatives, and those who allow TECs. TECs appear to be an innovation, occurring mainly in the speech of younger speakers, whereas, as Henry (1995) notes, inverted overt subject imperatives which can show object shift are mainly used by older speakers, with younger speakers either not allowing this structure, or only allowing the order verb–subject in unaccusatives (where of course there cannot be object shift). In particular, when the small number of speakers who allowed full DP ‘object shift’ was questioned about the availability of transitive expletives, only just over half (10/18) allowed these. Moreover, many speakers who allow only weak pronoun object shift, or do not have inverted imperatives at all, do find TECs grammatical. Thus, even if the inverted imperatives may have object shift, it does not appear that there is any link between the availability of this and the existence of transitive expletives in a speaker’s grammar.

3.5 *Agreement with the associate*

A number of accounts, for example Vangsnes (2002), link the availability of TECs to the existence of agreement with the associate, in addition to other properties. Thus the Mainland Scandinavian languages, which do not have agreement with the associate, do not have TECs, whereas Icelandic, where such agreement is in general obligatory,³ does have TECs. That there is no link between agreement and the occurrence of TECs is shown clearly in Belfast English; as in many varieties of English, agreement with the associate is optional:

(58) There is/are three books on the table.

(59) There has/have been several people arrested.

³ An anonymous reviewer points out that TECs without agreement are in fact possible in certain circumstances in Icelandic; this throws further doubt on the claim of a link with agreement.

(i) Það hefur mörgum stúdentum líkað þessi bók.
there has-3.sg. many students-DAT.PL likes this book-N.sg

TECs are equally possible with or without agreement:

- (60) There has/have several people been arrested.
 (61) There has/have many people lodged complaints about that.

There is no difference between the status of the examples with and without agreement, showing that this factor is of no significance in the availability of TECs.

3.6 *Other phenomena proposed to be linked to TECs*

Hiraiwa (2002) links the appearance of TECs to a wide range of phenomena in a language. Thus he argues that his split EPP/Agree theory, under which the EPP is not necessarily linked to the occurrence of agreement, accounts for the fact that Icelandic, but not for example the Mainland Scandinavian languages, has the following characteristics:

- a. Full-DP Object Shift
- b. Stylistic Fronting (SF)
- c. Quirky Subject Construction (QSC)
- d. No Raising-over-Experiencer
- e. Transitive Expletive Construction (TEC)

We have already considered object shift. As regards the other characteristics apart from TECs, they are not found in Belfast English.

Stylistic fronting describes the possibility of another element fronting if the subject position is empty, as in the following data from Hiraiwa (2002):

- (62) (a) Þetta er maður sem hefur ekki leikið níttíu leiki. (Ice)
 this is a-man that has not played ninety games
 'This is a man that has not played ninety games.'
 (b) Þetta er maður sem ekki hefur leikið níttíu leiki.
 this is a man that not has played ninety games
 (c) sá sem hefur skrifað þessa bók (Ice)
 he that has written this book
 'the one who has written this book'
 (d) sá sem skrifað hefur þessa bók
 he that written has this book
 (e) þeir sem verða að taka þessa erfirðu ákvörðun (Ice)
 those that have to take this difficult decision(ACC)
 'those who have to take this difficult decision'
 (f) þeir sem þessa erfirðu ákvörðuni verða að taka
 those that this difficult decision(ACC) have to take

This is impossible in Belfast English. All of the following are ungrammatical:

- (63) *This is a man that not has played ninety games.
 (64) *The man that written has this book.
 (65) *Those that this difficult decision have to take.

Similarly, Belfast English does not have quirky subjects; Icelandic is well known to have quirky subjects, as shown for example in the following from Hiraiwa (2001):

- (66) Hafði þér ekki leiðst? (Ice)
 had you(DAT) not bored
 ‘Were you not bored?’

Like Standard English, Belfast English has overt case marking only on pronouns, and no sign of quirky case.

Similarly, like Standard English, Belfast English allows raising over an experiencer:

- (67) John seems to Bill to have a good chance of winning.

Such raising is impossible in many languages including Icelandic, as shown in the following example from Hiraiwa (2001):

- (68) *Ólafur hafi virst þeim Ólafur vera gáfaður
 Olafur(NOM) has seemed them(DAT) Ólafur be intelligent
 ‘Olafur seemed to them to be intelligent.’⁴

Thus on all of Hiraiwa’s properties which he argues to derive from the same parameter setting as the availability of TECs, Belfast English shows exactly the opposite behaviour to Icelandic, showing again that the claimed properties of languages allowing TECs cannot be correct.

To summarize the findings of this section, it has been shown that although Belfast English has TECs which strongly resemble those of well-known TEC languages such as Icelandic, it has none of the other properties which have been argued to necessarily co-occur with the occurrence of transitive expletives. Moreover, it is to be noted that it does not merely seem to be the case that studies have found the wrong set of properties, and that some other set could be found which would also fit Belfast English. It is not easy to envisage what properties might be found which are common between Belfast English and languages like Icelandic, but which are not found in languages (such as Standard English) which do not allow TECs.

One approach which draws less than others on the supposed co-occurrence of other properties with the existence of TECs is that of Bowers (2002), who proposes that TECs exist in those languages where the expletive is inserted in a high position. In non-TEC languages, such as Standard English and the Mainland Scandinavian languages, the expletive is inserted in a rather low position, Spec/PrP (equivalent in many respects to what is more commonly called vP). Because the expletive is merged there, the associate cannot raise to that position or beyond. The expletive then raises to Spec/T. Under Bowers’ analysis, the occurrence of TECs is dependent on the expletive merging in a relatively high position. Bowers suggests this is the specifier position of CP,⁵ though as we noted above, there is no evidence that the expletive is as high as this in Belfast

⁴ An anonymous reviewer points out that Hiraiwa’s example (68) is ungrammatical for reasons other than raising over experiencer, since a pronominal dative cannot surface so low in Icelandic.

⁵ TECs can be embedded in Icelandic, which may suggest that the expletive is not in fact as high as Spec/CP.

English. He argues that an expletive can only be merged in the specifier position of a probe that does not contain phi-features. A problem with this in relation to Belfast English is that there is evidence that the expletive is not in Spec/C but in Spec/T. Moreover, Bowers argues that his analysis predicts that sentences like the following are grammatical in languages with TECs because the expletive can only merge in Spec/C, leaving Spec/T free for the subject:

- (69) There might seem mice to be in the cupboard.
 (70) There might mice seem to be in the cupboard.

However, despite the fact that there is evidence that the expletive is not in Spec/C in Belfast English, these sentences are in fact grammatical, alongside the Standard English equivalent, at least when, as is generally required in this and other languages with TECs, the associate is quantified:

- (71) There might seem lots of mice to be in the cupboard.
 (72) There might lots of mice seem to be in the cupboard.

Moreover, according to Bowers, sentences with an expletive in the subject position of an ECM infinitive are ungrammatical in languages like Icelandic, which he argues is because these are TPs and the expletive cannot merge in Spec/T. However, such sentences are fine in Belfast English:

- (73) *Ég hafði talið það vera villu í þessu handriti.
 I had believed there to be error-ACC in this manuscript
 'I had believed there to be an error in this manuscript.'
 (74) I had believed there to be an error in this manuscript

However, Bowers' analysis might be modified for Belfast English by having the expletive inserted in Spec/TP rather than Spec/CP.

It seems then to be the case that TECs do not form part of a cluster of properties which differentiate languages. Rather, a language may or may not allow TECs (we have argued, following Bowers, dependent upon the merge position of the expletive), but nothing else necessarily co-occurs with this. This suggests that microvariation may be a matter of small and discrete rather than wide-ranging properties differing across language varieties.

4 The merge position of the expletive in Belfast English TECs

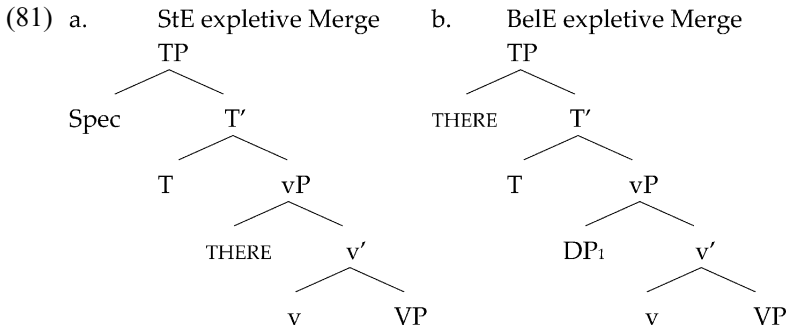
As we noted at the beginning of this article, the most striking difference between Standard English expletive constructions and Belfast English TECs is the lack of restriction of verb class in the latter. In the former, expletive constructions are strictly limited in the range of verb types that can appear: to be precise, only passive and unaccusative verbs may appear:

- (75) There have been some people arrested.
 (76) There will be several measures proposed.

- (77) There arrived some men.
 (78) There immediately arose a number of problems.
 (79) *There have some students written a paper. (* in StE)
 (80) *There should lots of students attend the conference. (* in StE)

On the contrary, Belfast English allows a range of verbs, so that sentences such as (79) and (80) are grammatical.

It is possible to make sense of this crossdialectal contrast in the following way. If we assume that Standard English allows the expletive to merge only in Spec/vP, then the unaccusative restriction follows without further complication, since an external argument and an expletive will always be in competition for a single position. The lack of the unaccusative restriction in Belfast English, on the other hand, implies that no such competition exists, and that the expletive is merged in a different position. In principle this position might be Spec/TP or Spec/CP. We have already shown that the expletive is not in Spec/CP and that it appears to the right of an auxiliary which has moved to C, so the conclusion must be that in Belfast English TECs, *there* merges in Spec/TP. This view of expletives reveals a point of crosslinguistic variation: they can merge in Spec/vP, in Spec/TP and, following Bowers (2002), in Spec/CP. The structures of the two English dialects are given in (81).



5 The position of the associate in Belfast English TECs

If this account of the merge position of the expletive is correct, there are two puzzling aspects of the position of the subject in Belfast TECs. The first is that, since Belfast English is not V2, there would not appear to be two subject positions available: if Spec/T is filled by the expletive, then where is the associate and why in sentences like the following can it occur between auxiliaries?

- (82) There have lots of people been looking for him.
 (83) There shouldn't anybody have left early.

Secondly, there does not seem to be a single possible position for the associate. As noted above, one of the characteristics of Belfast English TECs is the availability of a number of possible positions for the associate.

- (84) There should (lots of people) have (lots of people) read this book.
 (85) There might (several students) have (several students) been (several students) arrested.

It might be thought that in fact in an example like (84), where the associate occurs after *have*, it is because the auxiliaries *should have* contract into a single auxiliary form, so that the associate is still after the first auxiliary position.

- (86) There shoulda lots of people read this book.

However, if that were the case, this contracted auxiliary should be able to move to C in questions; although this appears to be grammatical in some US dialects of English, it is ungrammatical in Belfast English.

- (87) *Shoulda there lots of people read this book?

Note that in general it is possible for a contracted element to move to C, as in for example:

- (88) Shouldn't you go to class?
 (89) Shouldn't there some students take this class?

The other elements that surface in the same range of intra-auxiliary positions as associates are floated quantifiers:⁶

- (90) They should (all) have (all) read this book.
 (91) The students might (all) have (all) been (all?) arrested.

Note also that just as these intermediate positions are not available for associates in Icelandic, they are not available for floated quantifiers either. Moreover, the type of associate which can take part in TEC structures is, both in Belfast English and in Icelandic (Vangsnes, 2002), in general quantified. This suggests that it is worth exploring the possibility that the associate in TECs is a kind of floated quantifier, with the expletive originating as part of the associate phrase, and raising to C or T stranding the associate. We might conceive of the associate phrase as consisting of *there-several people*, for example.

However, it should be noted that there is a difference between stranded quantifiers and TEC associates, which is that TEC associates cannot occur unless T or C is filled:

- (92) There have lots of people bought that book.
 (93) These people have all bought that book.

⁶ It is well known that some adverbs can also occupy a number of positions interspersed between auxiliaries. We regard this as a separate issue, however, for two reasons: first, adverbs do not exhibit the same freedom as quantifiers, and where more than one position is available for a given adverb, subtle scopal differences arise with different orders:

- (i) He will probably have gone home.
 (ii) He will have probably gone home.

- (94) *There lots of people bought that book.
 (95) These people all bought that book.

Assuming, following Alexiadou & Agnostopoulou (2001), that the quantifier only occurs DP-finally if the subject DP has moved out of the VP, it seems that here it is possible to strand a quantifier at the beginning of a VP containing a tensed verb. However, it is not possible to strand an associate in this position, as (94) above shows.

This suggests that *there* only spells out where it splits from the associate in some nonvacuous movement.

Note that not only quantifiers can strand. As Bobaljik (2003) points out, full DPs can be found in the same position, associated with pronouns in subject position.

- (96) They have all of them forgotten the meeting.
 (97) They could (most of them) have (most of them) been successful.

Note that, like TECs in Belfast English, this structure is restricted to quantified DPs

- (98) *They have the sensible ones of them left already.
 (99) *They could the better ones among them have been successful.

What we seem to have in intermediate auxiliary positions in English, then, is a position that can be occupied by elements which are quantified.

Similar to the case with Belfast English expletives, it does not seem grammatical to have both the pronoun and the associated DP adjacent before a nonraised verb,⁷ unless there is an intonation break. We return to consider why this is so below.

Note that this analysis may offer an avenue to explain why floating quantifiers in English do not appear in their base positions in passives and unaccusatives:

- (100) *The children have arrived all.
 (101) *The books were read all.
 (102) *They went all.
 (103) *They arrived all.

which one would expect if the floating quantifier can appear in trace positions, or in more recent terms in the place of a copy. It seems that quantifiers can float at the left edge of verbal constituents – possibly at the left edge of phases, if the modals, perfects and progressives can be considered phases in English, as argued by Butler (2004) who also suggests that each phase may be closed by a quantification.

Thus transitive expletives with quantified associates are possible because there are positions where such quantified constituents can be linearized – as with floating quantifiers – at the left edge of a verbal phase.

Note that this analysis does not strictly require that quantifiers actually float: an adverbial analysis is also possible. It simply requires positions where a quantified constituent associated with the subject can occur outside vP.

⁷ We refer here to lexical verbs without auxiliaries; we are not taking a stand on whether or not these raise out of the VP in English; they at least do not appear to raise to T.

However, given the similarity of the positions of floated quantifiers and associates in Belfast English, we should consider the possibility that the associates themselves are in fact floated; following Takahashi (1994) and Boskovic (1997), we might maintain that movement occurs in such a way as to minimize links, with movement to non-EPP intermediate heads possible for this reason. Such an account is necessary if we wish to maintain the classic ‘floating quantifier’ analysis of Sportiche (1988), according to which quantifiers can float in positions through which a NP has passed, for in sentences such as:

(104) The children must (all) have (all) been (all) being read to.

the quantifier *all* can occur in a range of intermediate positions. A stranding analysis of associates has been proposed by Sabel (2000) quite independently of the Belfast facts, but it is argued strongly against by Boskovic, who points out that it encounters problems in a number of cases. And it seems particularly unlikely in Belfast English given that a plural associate does not necessarily trigger agreement – if *there* is a spell-out of a feature or features of the associate, one would expect it to have the same properties – including number – as the associate, thus obligatorily triggering verb–associate agreement, which it does not, as (105) shows. This strongly suggests that the associate and expletive are distinct constituents, rather than being essentially members of the same constituent, which would necessarily have the same phi-features in regard to number.

(105) There has/have three students asked the same question.

It is to be noted that, according to Vangsnes (2002), associates in Icelandic TECs, when they occur in a ‘high’ position outside VP, have similar properties to those in Belfast English – they are preferably quantified and cannot be bare DPs. It is also to be noted that they exhibit a degree of ‘float’: they can occur in a range of positions in relation to adverbs. It is thus possible that the same factor licenses them as in Belfast English.

6 Why must T be filled in Belfast English TEC constructions?

A superficially puzzling aspect of Belfast TECs is that T must be filled: as noted above, a TEC of the following type is ungrammatical:

(106) *There lots of students read this book.

(107) *There somebody asked that question already.

It is not always the case that T must be filled in sentences with expletives. Thus sentences with unaccusatives are possible where the associate appears after the verb:

(108) There arose a fierce storm.

(109) There arrived three people.

Therefore it is not possible to seek an explanation along the lines of *there* only appearing in the specifier position of a filled T. Note also that there is in general no bar on surface

contiguity of the expletive and associate, which occurs for example in questions (where the auxiliary in T has moved to C):

- (110) Has there anybody asked about this?
 (111) Is there somebody at the door?

Rather, the problem seems to arise because there is an associate intervening between T and the verb in VP. If the verb does not carry tense (because this is marked on an auxiliary) this does not cause problems, but if tense is on the main verb, the intervening subject blocks the linking of Tense to the verb. It is possible for this to be rescued by *do*-support:

- (112) There did lots of students read that book.
 (113) There did somebody ask that question already.

though more commonly in this case speakers will use a subject contact clause structure:

- (114) There are lots of students read that book.
 (115) There is somebody asked that question already.

The ungrammaticality of a sequence where the associate intervenes between a T which is not overtly filled and a lexical verb in VP suggests that analyses which assume an adjacency requirement for the licensing of Tense on main verbs in VP are along the right lines. For example, Lasnik (2000: 187–96) suggests that in English, tense is affixal and thus must attach to the lexical verb, an attachment which is blocked by intervening material such as negation. The Belfast English facts suggest that an associate also blocks this attachment:

- (116) There T-AFF some students asked that question.
 (117) There have some students asked that question.

We would predict that in such a case *do*-support might be possible to rescue the derivation, and indeed this seems to be the case:

- (118) There did some students ask that question.

Thus the impossibility of an associate occurring between a nonovertly filled T and a tensed main verb lends independent support to approaches which consider adjacency (apart from adverbs) necessary in English for the attachment of Tense to a verb in VP.

It is to be noted however that floating quantifiers do not seem to be subject to the same restriction; sentences such as the following are possible:

- (119) The students all asked that question.

If the positioning of *all* after *the students* implies that the *all* is in a different position from the DP, then it must be possible for it to strand in Spec/vP even when it thus intervenes between T and the lexical verb. Thus, if our analysis is correct, the presence

of an associate blocks the joining of the content of Tense to the verb, but the presence of a floating quantifier does not. As Lasnik points out, the intervention of an adverb does not block the affixation of tense to the verb; this is clear in sentences such as:

(120) The students carefully answered the questions.

From this it would seem that a floating quantifier is adverbial, thus not blocking affixation, whereas a 'floating' associate is not; the similarity in the positions in which they can occur is attributable to their both being quantificational, rather than to their both being constituents of the same type.

7 The development of transitive expletives

Transitive expletives appear to be an innovation in Belfast English, rather than a survival from earlier varieties, for unlike conservative features such as *for-to* infinitives (Henry, 1995: ch. 4), they are not characteristic of the grammars of the oldest speakers. Moreover, no earlier descriptive accounts of the variety have noted these structures. It is therefore necessary to consider why this particular variety may be developing these structures.

Belfast English also makes extensive use of subject contact relatives, of the type:

(121) There are some people don't like coffee.

(122) There is a student wants to see you.

Now, where this structure is introduced by the contracted form *there's* and the contact clause has a verb which has the same form in the simple past tense and past participle, the sentence is ambiguous between a contact relative analysis and a transitive expletive analysis:

(123) There's somebody bought the book.

(= There is somebody who bought the book.

OR = There has somebody bought the book.)

In Belfast English, a considerable number of irregular verbs which have distinct past-tense and past-participle forms in Standard English have a single form, so that in Belfast English we find for example:

(124) I seen /I have seen

I done /I have done

I wrote /I have wrote

I went /I have went

The fact that many common irregular verbs behave in this way means that more sentences than in Standard English will be susceptible of interpretation as transitive expletives instead of sentences containing contact relatives:

(125) There's somebody wrote a book about that.

(= There is somebody who wrote a book about that.

OR There has somebody written a book about that.)

- (126) There's some people seen the film already.
 (= There are some people who have seen the film already.
 OR There have some people seen the film already.)

It thus seems possible that the reason for development of transitive expletives is likely to be the larger number of identical past participles and past tenses in this variety than in many others.⁸

8 Transitive expletives in other varieties of English

Transitive expletives do not seem to be exclusive to the Belfast variety, but occur occasionally in other varieties. A Google search turns up examples like the following. Of course, it is impossible to be certain that these are examples from native speakers, and are not errors, but their not-infrequent occurrence suggests that they may be productive.

- (127) when you enter the chat room and you see a member name on the right hand side of the window *there should somebody* be there to talk with.
 (www.globosapiens.net/topic-chat_34_1698_0000.html - 57k)
- (128) *There hasn't anybody* registered a complaint against me in here
 (www.readprint.com/chapter-1370/Edgar-Rice-Burroughs)
- (129) *Has there somebody* had a chance to use SignalOne Milspec 1030CI receiver
 (dayton.akorn.net/pipermail/cq-contest/1998-June/014832.htm)
- (130) *There's somebody* been in this soup.
 (www.quotesbase.com/celebs/3146/ -)
- (131) *There's somebody been* in these tomatoes
 (www.council-of-elrond.com/forums/archive/index.php/t-269.html - 375k)
- (132) *there's somebody been* shot in the leg
 (150.theage.com.au/view_bestofarticle.asp?straction=update&inttype=1&intid=421 - 27k)

Many English speakers of dialects other than Belfast English indeed accept examples like (132). It is possible, of course, that these contain a reduced relative clause:

- (133) There's somebody (who has) been shot in the leg.

but it is to be noted that it is a puzzle why this is not available when the associate is plural and the verb shows agreement with the associate:

- (134) *There are some people been shot in the leg.

Rather, it seems as if the transitive expletive structure may be entering other varieties of English, but restricted lexically in most varieties at present to sentences introduced by *there's*. Thus the structure:

⁸ While the existence of 'homomorphic' participles may be a necessary condition for the development of TECs in an English dialect, it cannot be a sufficient condition. Many nonstandard dialects have similarity of participle and preterit, and in no others have TECs been reported. It is nonetheless possible that the syntactic change that this article outlines is one which will become more widespread.

(135) There's X been Y.

appears to be grammatical for many speakers who do not otherwise have transitive expletives.

It is to be noted that a parallel development seems to be occurring in relation to agreement with the associate. Lack of agreement with the associate is a possibility that appears to be spreading in English, but many speakers only accept it with the lexically specific form *there's*,⁹ as in:

(136) There's three books on the table.

(137) *There was three books on the table.

(138) *Is there three books on the table?

9 Conclusion

This article has considered the existence of transitive expletives in Belfast English. It has been shown that most previous accounts of the licensing of transitive expletives do not account for the occurrence of TECs in Belfast English. Rather, it is argued that there needs to be a possible position for the associate as well as the expletive outside VP. In V2 languages there is such a position in Spec/T. In Belfast English, quantified associates may linearize at the left edge of a verbal projection, where quantified constituents associated with the subject are licensed.

The difference between Belfast English and Standard English amounts to the difference in the merge position of *there*. A high merge position for *there* allows transitive expletives. The difference between Belfast English transitive expletives and the classic transitive expletives found in other Germanic languages such as Icelandic – that the associate can occur in a variety of positions – follows from a characteristic of English in general, that it has a possible quantificational position projected below each auxiliary. This affects not only the possible position for the associate, but also the availability of 'floated' quantifiers between auxiliaries in those varieties.

In the course of the study, we have also thrown light on a number of other issues. The unavailability of TECs where the T position is not lexically filled adds further evidence to proposals that T is affixal and must join to the lexical verb, the affixation being blocked by most intervening elements. The difference in this respect between floating quantifiers and quantified associates suggests that the former may indeed be adverbial. The positioning of floating quantifiers and quantified associates suggests that in English each auxiliary may be associated with a phase and that there is a quantificational layer at the phase edge.

⁹ See Henry (2005).

Authors' address:
 School of Communication
 University of Ulster at Jordanstown
 Shore Road
 Newtownabbey BT37 0QB
 N. Ireland
 am.henry@ulster.ac.uk
 cottell@eircom.net

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