Reconsidering the EPP and Spec-TP in Germanic*

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This paper focuses on the longstanding assumption within Chomskyan generative syntax that the Extended Projection Principle (EPP) as originally formulated in Chomsky (1982) is necessarily satisfied by an overt or covert nominal category. Much recent work on languages not belonging to the Germanic family has implicitly or explicitly departed from this assumption in various ways, but Germanic linguists have, for the most part, retained the view that Germanic languages feature a specially designated subject position, Spec-TP, with (non-referential) pro being assumed to satisfy the EPP whenever an overt subject is absent. In this paper, I challenge the view that pro was ever licensed in Germanic and propose that none of the Germanic languages initially featured an EPP-type subject position of the kind that is synchronically identifiable in Modern English. Instead, I argue that Spec-TP was licensed by an alternative XP-raising operation targeting T’s complement which is still operative in Icelandic and the SOV Germanic languages today. Empirical support for this proposal comes from the synchronic and diachronic behaviour of subjects and expletives in the Germanic languages generally and also, more specifically, from word order variation observable in Modern Spoken Afrikaans.

1 Introduction

Since Chomsky (1982), the Extended Projection Principle (EPP) has been widely adopted in Chomskyan circles as the default assumption for all languages. In terms of this principle, every clause must feature a subject-related element in the canonical subject position, Spec-TP (formerly Spec-IP), with expletive elements compensating for the absence of a raised thematic nominal (DP) wherever necessary.

As was observed from the outset (cf. Rizzi 1982 in particular), many of the world’s languages clearly do not, however, exhibit this type of subject behaviour, with both referential pronouns and expletives failing to surface where expected and subject DPs also ostensibly being able to occur “low down” in the syntactic structure. In order to deal with these apparent “problem cases” (so-called null subject languages), it was therefore proposed that the EPP need not be overtly satisfied, but that it is nevertheless covertly satisfied in all apparently problematic instances by means of a “silent” pronominal element dubbed pro (cf. Rizzi op. cit.).

More recently, it has, however, been proposed that the EPP does not, in fact, require an overt or covert D-element to occupy Spec-TP, and that the introduction into the TP-domain of appropriate “argumental” morphology associated with a verb which undergoes raising to T is sufficient (cf. Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou [A&A] 1998). On this analysis, languages featuring appropriately “rich” verbal morphology can therefore satisfy the EPP without the need for the literal extension of lexically required structure (cf. the original Projection Principle), a significant departure from the EPP as it was originally conceived and also from

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the manner in which it is most commonly interpreted in the Minimalist literature\(^1\). From a Minimalist perspective, the fact that A&A’s proposal opens up the possibility of dispensing with the category *pro* is clearly an important and, as I hope to show in the course of this paper, desirable outcome.

The empirical focus of this paper is the diachronic and synchronic behaviour of the Germanic languages which, I argue, clearly shows that it is not justifiable to assume, as has generally been done, that all the members of this family are subject to the same kind of EPP-requirement that has been postulated for its least prototypical member, modern English. Postulation of an *ab initio* positional (i.e. EPP-driven) subject requirement for Germanic is certainly not supported by the empirical evidence, and linguists like Abraham (1993), Haider (1993), van Gelderen (1993) and Rosengren (2002) have previously, as I do in this paper, disputed the synchronic and diachronic validity of imposing an EPP-requirement on Spec-TP in languages like German and Dutch. What is new in the present paper is thus not so much the contention that Spec-TP in certain old(er) and modern Germanic languages is not a subject-related position as the proposal that this slot was and, in some cases, still is licensed by an alternative XP-raising mechanism. As I will show, this proposal facilitates a particularly elegant analysis of the synchronic and diachronic subject- and expletive distribution patterns exhibited by members of the Germanic family. More generally, it is also argued to shed interesting new light on the vexed issue of system-internal syntactic variation (i.e. optionality) and the insight which this “theoretical embarrassment” may, in fact, be able to deliver in the context of Chomskyan syntax.

The structure of the paper is as follows: section 2 briefly outlines the relevant Germanic word order facts and also highlights some important considerations relating to the notion ‘expletive’. Sections 3 and 4 present the data from contemporary and earlier Germanic languages respectively, while section 5 provides a novel account of these facts, the alternative Spec-TP licensing proposal that lies at the heart of this paper. A summary of the major empirical and theoretical points concludes the paper.

## 2 RELEVANT BACKGROUND

### 2.1 Germanic Word Order

Extant data from early Germanic appears to support the reconstruction of Proto-Germanic as a fundamentally verb-final language (cf. Bean 1983: 43ff for an overview of some of the principal studies)\(^2\). Assuming this to be correct, it seems plausible to view the characteristic SOV embedded order which is still exhibited by all the West Germanic languages barring English as a relic of the earliest stages of Germanic. This is the assumption from which I will proceed here.

Furthermore, it should also be noted that the Verb Second (V2) ordering displayed by all the modern Germanic languages with the exception, once again, of English is generally agreed to have become established early on in the history of Germanic. In the case of the

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\(^{1}\) The EPP to which Chomsky (2000, 2001a, 2001b) and others refer in their most recent work differs from the EPP with which we are concerned here in that it is viewed as a general selectional feature which licenses the extension of *any* (functional) structural projection. Whereas the original EPP exclusively guaranteed the generation of a specifier for T, the Minimalist EPP may therefore result in the projection of a specifier for any head whose feature-bundle includes an EPP-feature (leaving aside proposals in terms of which EPP-features may, on a par with A&A’s subject-oriented EPP, be satisfied by head-raising without requiring the projection of a specifier). Cf. Rosengren (2002: 146 – 147) for a very brief overview of the various ways in which EPP-features have been conceptualised during the Minimalist era.

\(^{2}\) Note that the statements relating to word order in this section refer to *surface* ordering only, with there being no suggestion that any of the orderings exhibited by a given language is in any sense “basic” in the manner generally assumed during the Transformational era.
North Germanic group, this early matrix clause (MC) innovation spread to the embedded clauses (ECs), with the result that both the Insular and the Mainland Scandinavian languages (ISc and MSc respectively) became so-called symmetric V2 languages, while the West Germanic group retained the original V2 versus V(erb)-final matrix-embedded asymmetry. Icelandic, a famously conservative language, remains symmetrically V2 today, but embedded V2 in the MSc languages has given way to SVO ordering. The significance of these facts will emerge in section 5 below. For the moment, the synchronic Germanic word order facts are summarised in (1) for ease of reference:

(1) Classification of the modern Germanic languages on the basis of their embedded word order characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOV</th>
<th>SVO</th>
<th>V2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Continental West Germanic:</td>
<td>Mainland Scandinavian (MSc):</td>
<td>Insular Scandinavian (ISc):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German, Dutch, Frisian</td>
<td>Norwegian, Danish, Swedish</td>
<td>Icelandic, Faroese</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Afrikaans            | English              | Yiddish

2.2 The Notion ‘Expletive’

Since Chomsky’s (1982) isolation of English there and it as two semantically empty elements which function to satisfy the EPP in contexts where this would not otherwise have been possible, generativists have tended to accept that these elements are (a) genuine ‘placeholders’ and (b) specifically associated with subject DPs. It is, however, important to bear in mind the fact that expletives are not all equally devoid of semantic content, a consideration which will prove particularly important in the context of this paper. In what follows, I will therefore distinguish “ambient” it-type and “presentational” there-type expletives (cf. Biberauer 2001 for more detailed discussion). The former type has opaque environmental reference, includes generativists’ “weather” it and is, crucially, argumental, whereas the latter retains residual locative/deictic meaning and functions as a “flag”, signalling the fact that the clause in question lacks a topical(isable) subject (cf. also Rosengren 2002 in this connection). So-called “anticipatory” expletives (cf. it in It annoys me that you are always late) are not considered here as it is a well documented fact that the behaviour of these elements is subject to considerable crosslinguistic variation, much of which does not appear to be ascribable to EPP-related considerations.

3 Subjects in the Germanic Languages: the Synchronized Picture

As noted in section 2.1, contemporary Germanic languages differ in respect of the word order patterns that they exhibit. Within the context of this paper, it is particularly relevant that they can be differentiated as:
(a) symmetric V2 languages – Icelandic;
(b) MC V2 and EC SOV languages – German, Dutch and Afrikaans;
(c) MC V2 and EC SVO languages – MSc; and
(d) SVO languages – English.

Also relevant is the fact that I am assuming that V2 clauses are CPs, i.e. that they necessarily involve a finite verb (Vf) located in C. Various alternative analyses have been proposed in

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3 Since there still appears to be a lack of consensus regarding the precise word order characteristics of Faroese and Yiddish, I will not include these languages in the present discussion.
the literature, but these suffer from various difficulties and are therefore rejected here (cf. Schwartz & Vikner 1996 and Biberauer 2003: chapter 2 for overview discussions of the relevant proposals and their associated strengths and weaknesses).

As will be shown in this and the following sections, the subject behaviour of the Germanic languages appears to correlate in what I argue are theoretically significant ways with their respective word order characteristics. In what follows, I will focus primarily on the synchronic distribution of the expletive elements introduced above, i.e. on “ambient” *it*- and *there*-type elements. Before we turn to this matter, however, let us briefly consider the behaviour of thematic subjects in the modern Germanic languages.

3.1 The distribution of thematic subjects in contemporary Germanic

It is well documented in the Germanic literature that languages belonging to this family exhibit various structures that present a rather thorny challenge to the traditional view that languages obligatorily feature a specially designated subject position associated with Nominative Case, controlling agreement and so on. Just four cases in point are illustrated in (2 – 4) below:

(2) *“Quirky” or “oblique” subjects in Icelandic* (cf. Sigurðsson 1989)

\[
\text{Þeim var bjargað}
\]

them-DATIVE was-3SING rescued

“They were rescued”

(3) *Nominative objects in Icelandic* (cf. Sigurðsson 1989)

\[
\text{Í gær voru konunginum gefnir hestar}
\]

yesterday were-3PL king-the-DATIVE given horses-NOMINATIVE

“Yesterday horses were given to the king”

(4) *Unraised passive and unaccusative subjects in German and Dutch ECs* (cf. van Gelderen 1993: 149)

a. … daß dem Mann das Buch geschenkt wurde (German)

that the-DATIVE man the-NOMINATIVE book presented became

“… that the book was given to the man (as a present)"

b. Bij dit geluid liepen hem de rillingen over de rug (Dutch)

At this noise leapt him-OBLIQUE the shivers over the back

“At that noise, shivers ran down his spine”

The examples in (2 – 3) illustrate two well documented instances of the rather problematic subject behaviour that surfaces in Icelandic. In (2), the only candidate for subject status (*þeim*) bears dative case, an unexpected state of affairs in view of the fact that this element must, on standard assumptions, raise to clause-initial position (Spec-CP on most analyses) via Spec-TP, a position which is associated with structural Nominative Case. This case/Case clash likewise arises in passive (3) and also in the German passive presented in (4a): in each case, a nominative-marked direct object surfaces in a position to the right of other arguments (i.e. one which cannot be Spec-TP), whereas a dative-marked indirect object appears in what Rosengren (2002) describes as *postfinite* position (i.e. that which is generally identified as Nominative-bearing Spec-TP). The Dutch example in (4b) illustrates a similar point: the agreement-controlling unaccusative subject (*de rillingen*) fails to undergo the raising-to-subject operation that the EPP would lead one to expect, with the consequence that a non-nominative element, the indirect object (*hem*), surfaces in postfinite position. Clearly, therefore, Icelandic, German and Dutch exhibit numerous structures which appear to
challenge the standardly accepted notion that languages universally feature a specially reserved subject position that is associated with Nominative Case and to which subjects obligatorily raise.

3.2 The distribution of expletives in contemporary Germanic

This problem is amplified by the expletive distribution behaviour of the same set of languages and, to some extent, also that of Afrikaans. Unlike English and the MSc languages (i.e. languages which systematically exhibit SVO ordering in either matrix or selected embedded clauses or both), these languages do not consistently require an expletive to be present wherever a thematic subject is absent or where a subject of this kind fails to undergo raising. Once again, therefore, we have cases where it appears to be possible for Spec-TP to remain unoccupied. Let us consider the relevant facts in slightly more detail, focusing first on the distribution of “ambient” expletives and, thereafter, on that of the expletive there-type.

The behaviour of “ambient” expletives in Norwegian, Icelandic and German is illustrated in (5 – 7) below:

(5) a. det regnar igår
    it rained yesterday
    (Norwegian)

   b. Igår regnar *(det)
      yesterday rained *(it)

(6) a. Það rigndi í gær
    it rained yesterday
    (Icelandic)

   b. Í gær rigndi (*það)
      yesterday rained (*it)

(7) a. Es schneit heute
    it snows today
    (German)

   b. Heute schneit *(es)
      today snows *(it)

As the contrast between the (b) examples in (5 – 7) clearly shows, Icelandic differs from both Norwegian and German in banning the overt realisation of an “ambient” expletive in postfinite position. This contrast illustrates the more generally evident difference between Icelandic “ambient” expletive realisation and that instantiated in its Germanic relatives: “ambient” expletives are always obligatory in the latter languages, regardless of whether they surface clause-initially or following an initial non-subject; in Icelandic, by contrast, clause-internal “ambient” expletives are categorically barred.

As far as the there-type expletive facts are concerned, a slightly different picture emerges, with English and the MSc languages once again exhibiting identical, almost exceptionlessly EPP-compliant behaviour, but German, in this case, mirroring the non-compliant Icelandic pattern. The examples in (8 – 10) illustrate the relevant facts:

(8) a. Der er kommet en dreng
    there is come a boy
    (Norwegian)

   b. Igår er *(der) kommet en dreng
      yesterday is *(there) come a boy
As (9) and (10) show, expletives may only occur clause-initially in presentational constructions in Icelandic and German, being systematically barred from postfinite position.

The same pattern emerges in the other major context featuring *there*-type expletives in all the Germanic languages except English, namely impersonal passives. By way of illustration, consider (11 – 13) below.

As (11) illustrates, the MSc languages once again exhibit EPP-compliant behaviour, requiring the presence of an overt expletive to compensate for the absence of a thematic subject that characterises impersonal passives. By contrast, (12 – 13) show that neither Icelandic nor German behaves as the EPP would lead us to expect, with expletives in these languages once again being restricted to clause-initial position. The generalisation regarding the distribution of *there*-type expletives in these languages is therefore that they are systematically barred from surfacing in the position that is usually identified as Spec-TP. This is distinctly surprising in view of the fact that *there*-type expletives are, as noted in section 2.2 above, traditionally assumed to exist precisely to function as a placeholder for subject elements which fail to undergo the raising necessary to satisfy the EPP. If this is indeed the case, one would have expected that the *there*-type expletive that seems to feature in the lexical inventories of both Icelandic and German would explicitly mark the structural importance of the universally mandatory EPP-position, thereby fulfilling its sole purpose as a structural ‘placeholder’. In reality, however, *es* and *það* consistently fail to appear in precisely this position. What I will argue in section 5 below is that these Icelandic and German facts
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cannot, as has frequently been done, be interpreted as evidence that expletive pro is licensed these languages. Instead, I will argue that the facts in question, particularly when considered in tandem with the diachronic expletive facts presented in section 4 below, suggest an entirely different interpretation of the nature of Spec-TP in these languages.

Before I turn to the diachronic facts, however, a word needs to be said about the synchronic expletive distribution patterns exhibited by two SOV Germanic languages that I have not yet considered: Dutch and Afrikaans. Unsurprisingly, both of these languages follow the German pattern in respect of the appearance of “ambient” expletives: whenever a predicate selects an “ambient” argument, it is obligatorily realised, generally as het in Dutch and dit in Afrikaans, regardless of the position in which it appears. Within the Germanic context, Icelandic is therefore the only language that fails to consistently lexicalise its “ambient” arguments. We will return to this point in section 4.2. More interesting for the moment is the rather surprising fact that Dutch and Afrikaans differ from their SOV relative in respect of the distributional characteristics of their there-type expletives.

In presentational contexts, the following possibilities arise:

(14) a. Daar is onderaan ‘n skroef wat jy moet losmaak (Afrikaans)
    there is under-on a screw what you must loose-make

b. Onderaan is (daar) ‘n skroef wat jy moet losmaak
    under-on is (there) a screw what you must loose-make

As (14b) shows, Afrikaans differs from German in permitting its there-type expletive to surface in postfinite position. The same situation obtains in Dutch. What is particularly interesting about both of these languages, however, is the fact that daar/er need not be present in order to ensure that a structure like (14b) is presentationally interpreted: the daar-containing and daar-less variants of (14b) are equally acceptable as an answer to the thetic statement-inducing question “What happened (yesterday/so far this week)?”. In other words, Afrikaans and Dutch can employ either the German/Icelandic strategy of realising a non-subject-initial presentational structure without an (overt) expletive or the MSc strategy in terms of which this kind of expletive is required.

From a traditional EPP perspective, this state of affairs is particularly problematic for a number of reasons. In the first instance, there is the question of what fills Spec-TP when daar/er is absent. Since Afrikaans and Dutch clearly have an overt there-type expletive and this expletive may, moreover, surface both clause-initially and clause-internally in presentational constructions, one clearly cannot appeal to the kind of account that has frequently been proposed for German and Icelandic in terms of which an overt expletive systematically alternates with expletive pro, with positional considerations determining whether an expletive is spelled out or not (cf. fn. 4, the preceding discussion and also section 5 below). If we abandon the possibility that Spec-TP is in fact filled by expletive pro whenever a daar/er-less structure is interpreted presentationally, another problem arises, however. We cannot simply propose that the subject raises to Spec-TP in this case since there are generally agreed to be interpretational consequences associated with subject-raising to the EPP-position. Specifically, what is commonly assumed is that presentational structures necessarily feature unraised subjects (i.e. subjects which are located within their original Merge domain; cf. Diesing 1992) since this is the clausal domain which guarantees an

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4 Cf. inter alios Haider (1993: 132ff) and Williams (2000: 166ff) for brief overview discussion of the central ideas underlying these proposals. For present purposes, the crucial point is that these analyses ascribe the possibility of licensing expletive pro to the presence of a licensing feature (e.g. [+fin]) in the head immediately dominating expletive pro. In the German case, this scenario arises whenever Spec-TP is dominated by C containing Vf or an overt complementiser. It fails to arise in the case of Spec-CP since Spec-CP constitutes the root of the clause and, as such, cannot ever be dominated by a head bearing the appropriate feature.
existential reading. If this is indeed the case, subjects located in Spec-TP cannot be interpreted existentially and, consequently, structures like *daar*-less (14b) should not be interpretable as presentationals, counter to fact. On the other hand, we cannot just assume that *daar*-er-less presentationals simply feature an unraised subject since this would, once again, raise the question of what is satisfying the EPP. From a more strictly Minimalist perspective, the optionality exhibited by Afrikaans and Dutch in respect of their *daar*-realisation possibilities also poses a number of problems. Chomsky (2000: 109) explicitly states that “[t]he EPP-feature of T might be universal”, thereby registering his continued commitment to his earlier intuition that there is something special about T’s specifier position. Assuming this to be the case, it is clear that all the problems mentioned in the preceding paragraph remain. Additionally, Minimalism’s uncompromising focus on optimal derivations and the idea that lexical material in the Numeration and only this material drives structure-building (cf. the Principle of Inclusiveness) mean that the very fact that Afrikaans and Dutch exhibit optionality also constitutes a particularly awkward explanandum. If derivations are indeed driven solely by the features of the (overt and covert) lexical items in a given Numeration and T is indeed exceptionlessly associated with an EPP-feature, it is unclear why Afrikaans and Dutch should permit overt expletives to surface in postfinite position: the fact that structures like (14b) can be interpreted presentationally without the need for *daar*-er-insertion indicates that the EPP-feature can be satisfied in this case without an overt expletive needing to be merged in Spec-TP. On traditional assumptions, one would postulate the presence of expletive *pro* in this case, but the availability of this covert EPP-satisfaction mechanism raises the question why the covert expletive is ever realised overtly? This question is particularly acute in the context of contemporary Chomskyan theory since expletive *pro*, in Minimalist terms, differs from its overt counterpart only in lacking the relevant PF-features; as far as grammatical features are concerned, the two types of expletive are identical. From the perspective of Narrow Syntax (NS) and LF, therefore, there is no difference between the overt and covert expletive-containing structures. The question therefore arises why a language would allow PF to obscure this fact? From a learnability viewpoint, this is obviously undesirable as it is unclear how acquirers are to establish the underlying grammar when faced with apparent “free variation” of this kind. Moreover, the situation is no less unattractive from a purely theory-internal perspective as it undermines the whole basis for the relationships that have previously been said to hold between overt and covert expletives. All in all, therefore, Afrikaans and Dutch presentational constructions would appear to constitute an insurmountable challenge to current ideas regarding Spec-TP and the manner in which it is filled.

And the same is true of impersonal passives in the two languages. As shown in the representative Afrikaans example in (15) below, the postfinite expletive is once again optional in these structures:

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5 Additionally, the idea that the subject has, in fact, remained within its Merge domain clearly cannot be entertained on a head-initial analysis of Afrikaans and Dutch: to derive the V-final structure of these languages, it is clear that subject DPs in EC presentationals must surface before both the lexical verb (V) and any auxiliary (i.e. T-element; cf. Biberauer 2003: chapter 3) in the structure, a circumstance that entails that these elements must undergo leftward movement across the relevant verbal heads. Biberauer (ibid.) outlines an account of how this can be achieved without sacrificing the so-called Diesing Effects outlined in the main text. Since the precise structure of the vP-domain falls outside the remit of the present paper and the analysis proposed here is compatible with both a head-final and a head-initial analysis of the XPs contained within this domain, I will ignore the matter of the internal structure of the vP here (but cf. Biberauer ibid. for more detailed discussion of how a consistently head-initial analysis might be implemented and Biberauer & Richards 2003 for one which assumes consistently head-final structure within the vP).

6 Cf. also Chomsky (2001a: 41) who categorically states that the semantics of expletive-containing constructions crucially differs from that of structures featuring raised subjects. Assuming this to be universally true, it is clear that expletive *pro* needs to be postulated to account for (14b)’s presentational interpretation, with the fact that this same string is additionally also amenable to a presupposed subject interpretation seemingly underlining the importance of postulating a Numeration-distinguishing *pro* in this case.
(15) By die werk word (daar) voorspel dat dit ’n week sal duur
by the work becomes (there) predicted that it a week shall take

As before, there is no interpretational difference between the expletive-containing and expletive-less alternatives illustrated above, with the consequence that we would seem to be dealing here with yet another instance of learnability-compromising, underlying structure-obscuring “free variation”. Clearly, therefore, the behaviour of Afrikaans and Dutch there-type expletives raises numerous non-trivial problems for traditional EPP-theory and also casts doubt upon the sorts of analyses that have previously been proposed to deal with the superficially apparently less intransigent behaviour exhibited by their SOV relative, German.

3.3 Summary

This section has been concerned with establishing the distributional characteristics of thematic and expletive subjects in a representative sample of the modern Germanic languages.

In the first instance, it was established that those Germanic languages which exhibit SVO ordering as the dominant pattern in their MCs and/or selected ECs generally behave in accordance with the EPP as originally formulated by Chomsky. By contrast, Icelandic, which is a symmetric V2 language, displays two main types of behaviour that ostensibly jar with this Principle, namely:

(a) thematic subjects which fail to undergo raising-to-subject and/or exhibit a morphological case that clashes with the structural Nominative Case traditionally associated with the position they are assumed to occupy; and

(b) the asymmetric distribution of expletives, both the “ambient” and the there-type surfacing in clause-initial position, but, curiously, never in the postfinite (i.e. Spec-TP) position in which they are assumed to be base-generated/merged.

The SOV Germanic languages, German, Dutch and Afrikaans, also fail to behave in accordance with the EPP to varying degrees. Thus German, which is traditionally viewed as the most conservative member of the SOV Germanic subfamily, permits various structures in which subjects have apparently failed to undergo raising-to-subject operations and also requires only its “ambient” expletive to be consistently realised in both clause-initial and clause-internal positions, there-type es being restricted to clause-initial position and therefore, like its Icelandic counterpart, failing to surface in the position in which it is allegedly base-generated/merged. Dutch also permits the “late” occurrence of thematic subjects, although this is not possible in Afrikaans, a point to which I will briefly return in section 5.3 below. Otherwise, parent and daughter exhibit broadly the same subject behaviour, with “ambient” expletives being obligatory in both Spec-TP and Spec-CP in both cases, while there-type expletives in postfinite position may follow either the German pattern of non-EPP-compliant omission or the English/MSc pattern of EPP-compliant realisation.

For ease of reference, (16) summarises the relevant facts:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LANGUAGE</th>
<th>AMBIENT</th>
<th>PRESENTATIONAL</th>
<th>IMPERSONAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MSc</td>
<td>TP CP</td>
<td>TP CP</td>
<td>TP CP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Icelandic</td>
<td>CP</td>
<td>CP</td>
<td>CP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>TP CP</td>
<td>CP</td>
<td>CP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch/Afrikaans</td>
<td>TP CP</td>
<td>(TP) CP</td>
<td>(TP) CP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As was argued in section 3.2, these distributional facts, combined with the non-conformist thematic subject behaviour presented in section 3.1, present a number of stiff challenges to
traditional EPP-theory. Particularly odd is the categorical absence in Icelandic and, to a lesser extent, in German and, optionally, in Dutch and Afrikaans of expletives from the position in which they are allegedly merged. Previous attempts to capture all these facts cannot be regarded as satisfactory, a fact acknowledged by Chomsky (2001b: 25, fn. 45) who states that “[t]he problem of accounting for the distribution of EXPL [i.e. expletives – MTB] in some principled way … remains open”. In the following section, I will present further, diachronic evidence that the distribution of expletives in Germanic is not amenable to an insightful analysis on the basis of current ideas, whereafter I will turn, in section 5, to a new proposal which seeks to address some of the existing problems.

4 SUBJECTS IN THE GERMANIC LANGUAGES: A DIACHRONIC OVERVIEW

4.1 A brief note on the diachronic distribution of thematic subjects in Germanic

As was noted in section 2.1, the earliest extant Germanic records reveal a predominantly SOV language. Interestingly, older varieties of Germanic all appear to have systematically permitted the kinds of structures illustrated in (2 – 4) above, i.e. structures in which the thematic subject exhibits characteristics that one would not expect in terms of traditional EPP-theory. By way of illustration, consider OE (17) and Gothic (18):

(17) ac gode ne licode na heora geleafleast …  \textit{(Aelfric’s Homilies} 21 68)  
but God-DATIVE not liked not their faithlessness-NOMINATIVE  
“But God did not like their unbelief …”

(18) und þatei usleiþiþ himins jah airþa    \textit{(Matthew} 5: 17)  
until that disappear-3SINGULAR-PRESENT heaven and earth  
“But until heaven and earth disappear …”

OE (17) clearly parallels modern Icelandic (2) and consequently raises all the EPP-related problems that (2) does. Gothic (18), in turn, resembles the modern Icelandic and Dutch structures in (3) and (4), featuring two unraised unaccusative subjects and accordingly falling foul of the raising-to-subject requirement that one would expect EPP-compliant languages to exhibit.

One respect in which early Germanic varieties did differ from their modern counterparts, however, was in respect of their ability to license null referential subjects. This is illustrated in Old High German (OHG) (19) below:

(19) uuili mih dinu speru uuerpan  
want-2-SINGULAR me-DATIVE spear-ABLATIVE throw  
“You want to throw your spear at me”

As is evident from the gloss, OHG was, like its early Germanic relatives, an inflectionally rich language. Consequently, the recoverability of the relevant referential subjects follows unproblematically in terms of Rizzi’s theory of null subjects. As I will show in the next section, the same cannot, however, be said of either the licensing or the recoverability of the null expletive subjects which researchers have long argued were available in earlier Germanic. For the moment, the important point to note is that referential subjects became obligatory in all the Germanic languages long before their (putative) non-referential counterparts. It is therefore usually said that all the Germanic languages went through a period where they displayed what Rizzi (1982) would characterise as \textit{semi-pro-drop}
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behaviour. In the following section, I will consider to what extent this description is accurate and/or insightful.

4.2 The diachronic distribution of expletives in Germanic

OE (20) illustrates two superficially Italian-like structures that surfaced in all of the early Germanic languages and that researchers have frequently said to involve null expletives: a postverbal unaccusative subject structure (cf. also Gothic (18)) and an overt expletive-lacking “weather” construction:

(20) naþ nihtscua, norþan sniwde     (The Seafarer I. 31)
    darkened night-shades, northwards snowed
    “The shades of night grew dark; it snowed in the north”

In section 3.2 above, I noted that various synchronic considerations suggest that the standard, expletive pro-based analysis of structures such as the unaccusative in (20) is problematic. In this section, I will present a variety of diachronic facts which further support the validity of this suggestion.

What is interesting about the rise of expletive subjects in Germanic is the fact that these seem to have become established in precisely the same sequence in the various Germanic languages. Even more interestingly, this sequence, which has been arrested at various points in modern Germanic, did not involve an across-the-board, all-at-once introduction of obligatorily overt expletive elements of the kind that one would expect in terms of Rizzi’s typology of pro-drop languages. As will be shown below, “ambient” expletives had already become a regular feature of all the languages concerned at a time when presentational and impersonal passive there-type expletives were still only sporadically employed. Moreover, the rise of the latter expletive-type appears to have been strongly influenced by positional considerations of precisely the kind that still play a role in modern Icelandic and SOV Germanic. Let us consider the relevant facts.

4.2.1 The diachrony of expletives in German

According to Abraham (1993: 125), expletives of all kinds were only sporadically attested in Old High German (OHG; ca 750 – 1000AD). During the Middle High German period (MHG; ca 1000 – 1350AD), this state of affairs changed, with “ambient” es becoming “more or less non-omissible” (Abraham 1993: 127) in all positions and there-type es also becoming established to some extent in clause-initial position. What would appear to have happened, therefore, is that it became obligatory to lexicalise “ambient” es, with the result that this expletive had to surface wherever “ambient” arguments are required, i.e. Spec-CP in neutral (i.e. subject-initial) declaratives and Spec-TP in non-neutral (i.e. non-subject-initial) declaratives. Whereas the rise of “ambient” es can realistically be ascribed to a change in the lexically specified realisation requirements on “ambient” arguments, i.e. a specifically subject-related change, the introduction and subsequent grammaticalisation of there-type es appears to be directly correlated with a syntactic development that does not, however, specifically relate to the realisation of subjects: the regularisation of V2 structures as the stylistically neutral form for declarative clauses.

As (19) above shows, clauses that would today be rendered as (pronominal) subject-initial V2 structures could take the form of V1 structures in OHG. The same was true for presentational structures and, more generally, also for non-presentational clauses containing passive and unaccusative verbs (cf. Abraham 1993: 123 & 130). During the MHG period, however, the regularisation of the V2 requirement led to the use of expletive es in presentational and impersonal passive constructions, while subject-raising was introduced to provide an appropriate first-position element in the case of the non-presentational clauses.
discussed above. Crucially, therefore, *there*-type *es* in German was introduced to act as a default filler for Spec-CP in the absence of a suitable frontable element. Since the suitable elements in question are subjects, – these being entirely absent in impersonal passives and unsuitable in existentials and presentationals by virtue of their new information (i.e. non-topic) status – it is easy to see why the introduction of *there*-type *es* might, nevertheless, seem to constitute a subject-related development. While this interpretation is hardly surprising in view of prevailing theoretical ideas, it does raise the question why German failed to compensate in a similar fashion for the absence of subjects in postfinite position?

4.2.2 The diachrony of expletives in Icelandic

A similar question arises in the Icelandic case. Like German, this language underwent a change which resulted in previously V1 declaratives becoming V2 structures in the unmarked case. Unlike German, however, V1 declaratives in Icelandic remained licit in certain very restricted narrative contexts (cf. *inter alios* Sigurðsson 1989 and Vikner 1995: 87ff). What is crucial here is that the regularisation of V2 had the same effects in Icelandic as it did in German, making it obligatory for:

(a) referential pronominal subjects to be realised in clause-initial position, a development which ultimately fed through to postfinite pronominal subjects, thereby resulting in the loss of referential *pro-drop*;

(b) passive and unaccusative subjects to raise wherever possible, i.e. wherever these represent old information which is compatible with raising to Spec-CP, a position which, in V2 languages, is generally viewed as being reserved for topical material; and

(c) an expletive element (*það*) to be merged in Spec-CP wherever subject-raising of the kind listed in (a) and (b) is impossible, i.e. wherever topical subjects are unavailable.

One effect which the systematisation of V2 had in Icelandic which it did not, however, have in German relates to the presence of “ambient” expletives. Since Icelandic differs from German (and its other Germanic relatives) in lacking the lexical requirement that “ambient” subjects – and referentially opaque or generic subjects more generally (cf. *inter alios* Falk 1993: 82 and Holmberg 2000: 452) – be overtly realised, the introduction of a V2 requirement on neutral declaratives necessitated the initiation of a “Last Resort” mechanism (the CP-equivalent of the purely structurally oriented EPP that overrides lexical considerations) to supply an appropriate first-position element in structures involving subjects that were otherwise routinely suppressed. This was the merging of the third person singular neuter pronominal, *það*, in Spec-CP. As I will show in section 5.2 below, the fact that “ambient” *það* consistently failed to appear in Spec-TP throughout the history of Icelandic and still fails to do so today (cf. section 3.2 above) strongly suggests that expletive *það* is simply not an element that is available in clause-internal positions. As suggested by numerous authors including Sigurðsson (1989) and Holmberg & Platzack (1995: 103), it would therefore seem realistic to view this *það* as a “topic marker”, rather than as a specifically subject-related element. In terms of more standard theories, however, it is generally assumed that the non-occurrence of *það* in Spec-TP merely reflects the fact that this position is reserved for (two species of) expletive *pro* (cf. fn. 4 above). For present purposes, the vital point is simply that expletives have not, at any stage in the history of Icelandic featured in Spec-TP and also that the logic underlying their introduction is generally agreed to have been purely structural, with Spec-CP rather than Spec-TP being the crucial position in question.

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7 As referential pronominal subjects realise arguments, it is clear that these must be merged within the vP-domain if they are to be overtly realised. The introduction of a requirement that pronominals of this kind be realised clause-initially therefore necessarily entails that they be instantiated within vP, a circumstance which, in turn, entails that they will surface not only clause-initially where their appearance is dictated by a newly established structural imperative, but also in postfinite position where a structural imperative of this kind is absent.

4.2.3 The diachrony of expletives in Swedish

As Falk (1993) shows, the rationale behind the initial introduction of expletives in Swedish appears to have been identical to that which led the rise of the first expletives in German, namely a change in the lexicalisation requirements governing the realisation of “ambient” arguments. Thus “ambient” det was already present, both clause-initially and clause-internally, in approximately 60% of “ambient” argument-containing clauses during the Early Modern Swedish (EMS) period (ca 1500 – 1700AD). Interestingly, there-type det did sporadically appear in clause-initial position throughout this period, but it consistently failed to surface clause-internally (cf. Falk 1993: 252). Even more interestingly, Falk (ibid.) notes that this latter det featured exclusively in existential/presentational constructions prior to 1600AD, impersonal passives continuing to lack expletives and, consequently, continuing to surface as V1 structures wherever appropriate clause-initial situatives were absent until after 1600AD. As far as expletive pro-based theories are concerned, therefore, EMS would seem to present a distinctly intractable challenge. Falk (1993: 250) partially acknowledges this when she observes that the apparent “variation” involving there-type det and expletive pro cannot realistically be viewed as variation between an overt and a covert subject-placeholder, but that this det would, instead, seem to be functioning independently as a “construction signal” flagging presentationals. In other words, Falk proposes, as I did in connection with German and Icelandic above, that Swedish’s there-type expletive initially fulfilled a specifically discourse- (i.e. CP-)oriented function which did not specifically relate to subjects.

EMS lost the EC V2 ordering that characterised all the earlier Scandinavian varieties (cf. section 2.1) during the course of the 16th century. During this period, therefore, subjects would have taken on an importance in the now partially SVO language that they previously would not have had. Against this background, it is therefore interesting to note that:

(a) det began to appear in impersonal passives (i.e. constructions which lack a thematic subject) after 1600AD; and

(b) det also began to appear postverbally in presentational constructions at this point.

The establishment of SVO ordering in EMS therefore appears to give rise to an increase in EPP-compliant behaviour, with det, according to Falk, at this stage becoming grammaticalised as an expletive subject which consistently surfaces in contexts where an appropriate thematic subject is absent.

4.2.4 The diachrony of expletives in English

The distribution of expletives in earlier varieties of English is a topic which has been investigated in considerable detail by numerous researchers, including Breivik (1990), Allen (1995) and Williams (2000). In connection with the “ambient” expletive, Allen (1995: 62) observes that what she designates “weather” hit had become “very nearly obligatory, if not completely obligatory” by the end of the Old English (OE) period (ca 1150 AD). By contrast, Williams (2000: 164) registers the fact that “there (per, pear, etc.) is often missing from existential sentences in which it could grammatically occur” throughout the Middle English (ME) period (ca 1150 – 1450). In fact, the non-occurrence figure that Williams records for there-type expletives in his Early ME (EME) sample, dating from ca 1150 AD until ca 1250 AD is a robust 61%. Clearly, therefore, the rise of “ambient” expletives in English preceded that of there-type expletives in exactly the same manner as that of the corresponding expletives in its Germanic relatives.

Similarly, the introduction and regularisation of there-type expletives during the ME period appears to have proceeded on a positional basis, with these expletives first appearing clause-initially when V1 declaratives were systematically replaced by non-V-initial structures and, thereafter, gradually becoming established in postfinite position too. Thus Williams (2000: 183) notes that the rate of V1 existentials prior to the systematisation during the EME period of a non-V1 requirement for declaratives was “exceptionally high … verb-first
indicatives making up fully 46% (33/71) of existentials with [null] expletive subjects” during the last 100 years of the OE period. During the EME period, this number had, however, dropped dramatically to 2% (1/42), a level beyond which it never again rose. Williams himself correlates the introduction of overt there-type expletives directly with the demise of V1 ordering, proposing that the latter development was responsible for the former by virtue of the fact that it led to the elimination of expletive pro’s licensing configuration (cf. fn. 4). Viewing these empirical phenomena as related and interacting consequences of a change in the status of V1 structures would, however, seem to constitute a more realistic interpretation of the facts, not least as it provides some explanation as to why the number of V1 structures would have decreased so dramatically over such a very short period of time. Furthermore, this interpretation of the facts also tallies extremely well with that which others have noted in connection with the rise of expletives in English’s Germanic relatives (cf. the discussion in the preceding subsections).

What is also clear is that Williams’ expletive pro-centred analysis cannot account for the fact that the introduction of postfinite expletives was not an all-at-once development (cf. inter alios Breivik 1990: 215ff and Haeberli 1999: 406 for discussion). On Williams’ analysis, the absence of V1 structures should immediately result in the categorical absence of expletive pro since this element can no longer be licensed. Instead, as Haeberli (ibid.) expresses it, “empty expletives … do not disappear abruptly”. And what is particularly noteworthy about this statement of Haeberli’s is that it is made in connection with “the late 14th and early 15th century”, i.e. a period approximately 150 years after the disappearance of the structures that, according to Williams, crucially provide the licensing configuration for expletive pro. Clearly, therefore, the final establishment of overtly realised there-expletives as the grammatical norm in English must be dated to a point significantly later in the history of English than that (i.e. 1250AD) which Williams suggests. Moreover, another explanation must clearly be found to account for the final step in the grammaticalisation of overt there-expletives, the development which entailed that these expletives finally began to exhibit fully EPP-compliant behaviour.

A correlation that has often been noted in the literature is that between the loss of V2 and the loss of expletive pro (cf. inter alios Roberts 1993 and Vikner 1995). As it stands, this correlation simply states a relationship between two phenomena; precisely why the relationship in question should hold is not, however, evident. What I would like to suggest is that a simple restatement of this familiar correlation in rather more theoretically neutral terms will serve to highlight the relevant reason. The restatement that I propose is the following: the replacement of V2 by SVO as the dominant word order pattern in English necessarily entailed an increase in the importance of positionally identified subjects which led to the regularisation of obligatory overtly realised there-expletives wherever appropriate subjects are absent. Haeberli (1999: 406) notes that “V2 orders have become the minority overtly realised there-expletives wherever appropriate subjects are absent. Haeberli (1999: 406) notes that “V2 orders have become the minority overtly realised there-expletives” by the 15th century when there-expletives became obligatory; therefore it does seem accurate to reinterpret “the loss of V2”, in the English case at least, as “the establishment of SVO as the dominant word order pattern”, as I am doing here. Furthermore, the establishment of SVO ordering in the ECs of EMS also appears to correlate with the regularisation of the EPP-compliant behaviour exhibited by this language. The specifics of this development will be discussed in greater detail in section 5 below.

4.3 Summary

What the preceding discussion has shown is that all the members of the Germanic family initially permitted a variety of structures that do not ostensibly satisfy the EPP and that the various members of the family have “corrected” this deviant behaviour to varying degrees at various points in their history. The interesting thing about the manner in which this “correction” has taken place is that it has essentially followed the same path in each of the
languages in question, with the only difference being the point on the path at which the language in question has halted the process. With the exception of Icelandic, which has conservatively retained the general lexicalisation principle that referentially opaque arguments need not be overtly realised, “ambient” expletives were introduced and, to some extent at least, regularised in all of the languages before there-type expletives were introduced. Thereafter, there-type expletives started to appear in clause-initial position, presumably on account of a development in terms of which V1-structures become specialised as non-neutral and, for the most part, non-declarative structures. This is the point at which the process halted for German and Icelandic: overt there-type expletives were never introduced in postfinite position in either of these languages. Interestingly, however, the same is not true of those Germanic languages which, at some point in their history, underwent a word order change in terms of which either their ECs or their MCs or both developed SVO order. In the case of these languages, there-type expletives were ultimately introduced in postfinite position, with the consequence that the SVO Germanic languages synchronically exhibit the most systematically EPP-compliant behaviour. Why this should be and also why symmetric V2 languages and SOV languages should have retained a higher degree of non-compliant behaviour, particularly as regards the distribution of their expletives, is the focus of the next section.

5 THE PROPOSED ANALYSIS

The proposal at the heart of this section is that early Germanic lacked the kind of designated subject position that the EPP would lead us to expect and that languages that synchronically exhibit behaviour that is problematic from an EPP perspective still lack this kind of position. More specifically, I propose that Spec-TP in early Germanic is licensed by an XP-raising operation that ostensibly targets T’s complement rather than just, as in the case of English and the MSc languages, the outermost specifier of that complement. The same is argued to be true for modern Icelandic and, to varying degrees, the modern SOV Germanic languages. As noted in the introduction to this paper, my proposal therefore differs substantially from that of researchers who have previously concluded that certain members of the Germanic family lack an English-style EPP-position: they have postulated the total absence of a subject-related TP-domain in the languages in question, whereas I am proposing that this domain, which I assume to be universally present in all languages, simply meets its licensing requirements in a rather different manner from that which has, until now, been assumed for these languages. In section 5.1, I outline the proposal. Section 5.2 indicates how it manages to account for the empirical facts presented in sections 3 and 4 above, and section 5.3 briefly presents additional supporting evidence from Modern Spoken Afrikaans (MSA).

5.1 Licensing Spec-TP in SOV Germanic: the German case

As noted above, the ancestor of the modern Germanic languages appears to have been an SOV language. What I would like to propose is that the modern-day SOV Germanic languages (and, as we shall see in section 5.2, Icelandic too) have all, to some extent, retained the Spec-TP licensing mechanism that obtained in Common Germanic. Let us consider German by way of illustration.

Abstracting away from the details, let us assume that arguments in German are, as in other languages, merged according to a thematic hierarchy of some kind (cf. Biberauer 2003: chapter 3, section 3 for more detailed discussion). More specifically, let us assume that direct objects are, by virtue of their association with hierarchically low thematic roles, merged first

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9 Cf. Chomsky (2000) et seq. who identifies T as one the so-called core functional categories that are assumed to be universally present in all languages.
as sister-to-V, with indirect objects being merged next in Spec-VP, and agentive/external argument-type subjects being merged last in Spec-vP. Since German permits informationally and/or prosodically driven scrambling operations within the so-called Mittelfeld (cf. inter alios Diesing 1992, Haider 1993, Rosengren 2002 and Richards this volume), the Merge order of arguments may be altered in various ways which will, however, not concern us here. The crucial point as far as we are concerned is that this scrambling is assumed to take place in the lexical domain, **below** the inflectional domain. For simplicity’s sake, I will refer to the lexical domain as *vP*, ignoring for the moment the fact that this domain may well be larger than vP in the scrambling case. Likewise, I will, once again for convenience’s sake, refer to the inflectional domain via the cover-term *TP*. For reasons that will become clear in the following two sections in particular, I crucially assume that functional categories are head-initial and that functional verbs (i.e. temporal, passive and modal auxiliaries) are either merged in or moved to T. Finally, it should be noted that, although the VP in (22) is presented as a head-final structure, nothing should be read into this (cf. fn. 5).

With these preliminaries out of the way, let us now consider the structure of German (21) which is represented in (22):

(21) … daß der Franz der Maria das Buch gegeben hat

… that the-NOMINATIVE Franz the-DATIVE Mary the book gave has

(22) 

As (22) shows, the clause-structure that I am assuming for German differs most substantially from that which is usually proposed for languages like English in respect of the manner in which Spec-TP is licensed: instead of the external argument in Spec-vP raising to this position in accordance with the EPP, the entire complement of T undergoes raising. At first sight, this movement would seem to constitute precisely the kind of Comp-to-Spec movement that researchers such as Pesetsky & Torrego (2001) have rejected as impossible on the grounds that it simply amounts to a remerging of material (vP in this case) with which the head in question has already merged. What I would like to propose, however, is that Comp-to-Spec movement is permissible in this case, and also in the others that I will consider in section 5.2 below, by virtue of the fact that it is actually an element **within** the complement that is targeted, rather than the complement itself. Comp-to-Spec movement then merely follows as
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10. More specifically, I assume (for the moment, but cf. further discussion below) that it is the external argument located in Spec-vP that is targeted in the case of (22), with vP-raising to Spec-TP following as the consequence of the pied-piping operation that obligatorily applies in German. German’s characteristic auxiliary-final order therefore falls out as the result of an XP-raising mechanism that, in actual fact, differs minimally from that which generally applies in English. Auxiliary-less clauses are derived in similar fashion, with the difference being that T is, in this case, devoid of phonetic material.

Having established the nature of the analysis that I assume, let me now turn to the matter of how it fares in accounting for the problematic German data presented in sections 3 and 4 above. In the first instance, it is clear that the vP-raising analysis illustrated in (22) is incompatible with the postulation of expletive pro: if one assumes vP-raising to Spec-TP, this position is filled, with the consequence that expletive pro cannot be accommodated. In view of the expletive pro-related problems highlighted in the preceding sections, this would seem to be a desirable outcome. What remains to be shown is that a clause-structure which lacks a position for expletive pro and subject-elements more generally can account for the peculiar explananda identified in earlier sections of this paper.

Consider, firstly, the distribution of thematic subjects in German. As shown in (4a) above, these need not undergo raising-to-subject operations and appear to be able to remain relatively “low down” in the lexical structure. In terms of the analysis proposed here, this is easily explained: non-agentive subjects are necessarily merged lower than Spec-vP, with the arguments of passive and unaccusative verbs specifically being merged in V-COMP. Since Spec-TP is reserved for vP-raising, these lower-merged subjects cannot undergo subject-raising to Spec-TP, with the result that they surface in their original “low” Merge positions. Since they undergo raising as part of the vP that raises to Spec-TP, however, these subjects are located within the TP-domain and, consequently, surface to left of any auxiliaries in the structure. Note that the fact that non-agentive subjects are located in V-COMP rather than Spec-vP, but that vP-raising still takes place as usual indicates that our original proposal that vP-raising is the consequence of T targeting Spec-vP and subsequently pied-piping the entire vP cannot be entirely accurate. Instead, it would seem that T, in German at least, targets the subject DP, regardless of its location in the structure, with pied-piping of the vP following in each case. We will revisit this matter in section 5.2 below. For the moment, let us continue our consideration of the manner in which a vP-raising analysis can account for the subject-related peculiarities of German.

In the preceding paragraph, we considered the matter of unraised non-agentive subjects. Clearly, a very similar analysis carries over to clauses featuring non-nominative Experiencer subjects (e.g. ... daβ mir die Musik gefällt – ... that me-DATIVE the music pleases, i.e. “... that I like the music” and ... daβ ihm graut vor Dir – ... that him-DATIVE dreads before you, i.e. “... that he is afraid of you”): in each case, the non-nominative subject surfaces in postfinite position because it is the argument located in the highest specifier of the vP that has been raised to Spec-TP. Since we cannot maintain the notion that Spec-TP, as the landing-site for raised vPs, is a position associated with structural Nominative Case, the case/Case clashes discussed in sections 3.1 and 4.1 automatically fall away. In view of the serious doubts that have recently been raised about the validity of postulating structural Case (cf. Haeberli 1999 for overview discussion), proposing a clause-structure which dispenses with positions specifically associated with structural Case would not seem to be unduly problematic.

A particularly desirable feature of a clause-structure that lacks a specially designated Nominative Case-bearing subject position which, in the absence of raised subjects, is filled by

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10 This idea, which captures an intuition that I had had that English-style subject-raising and German-style vP-raising are, in some sense, essentially “the same operation”, was first suggested to me by Marc Richards (cf. Biberauer & Richards 2003 for a more detailed account of the relevant ideas).
expletive *pro*, is that it enables us to account for the puzzling presentational data presented in (14b) above. As noted there, the SOV Germanic languages feature a structure which may be both presentationally and non-presentationally interpreted (cf. also Vikner 1995: 185, fn. 13). A representative German example is presented in (23) below:

(23)  a. Gestern ist ein Schiff versunken
    yesterday is a ship sank

    b. … daß ein Schiff versunken ist
       … that a ship sank is

In terms of the analysis proposed here, it is not difficult to see why the examples in (23) should allow the two interpretations listed above: both of these examples are structurally ambiguous. We are able to obtain a presentational interpretation because the examples in (23) are compatible with an analysis in terms of which *ein Schiff* has simply remained in its Merge position (V-COMP), with the consequence that it is within Diesing’s Domain of Existential Closure. Similarly, a non-presentational interpretation is possible since the examples in (23) are also amenable to an analysis in terms of which the unaccusative subject has undergone information-driven scrambling to a higher (sub-T) specifier position, with the consequence that it is no longer within the Domain of Existential Closure and, accordingly, cannot be interpreted existentially (cf. Rosengren 2002: 172ff for more detailed discussion of the consequences of scrambling operations in German). Crucially, therefore, the present analysis does not assume raising-to-**subject** even in cases where non-agentive subjects have clearly raised out of their Merge positions: whenever raising has taken place, this is assumed to be the consequence of informationally-driven scrambling operations. This is vital since the contention that English-style raising-to-subject is entirely absent in German – and, as we shall see in section 5.2 below, also to varying extents in Dutch and Afrikaans – enables us to account for the fact that superficially very similar structures (i.e. those in which non-agentive subjects have clearly raised out of their Merge positions) may, in fact, be interpretationally very different. Moreover, the non-appearance of expletive *es* in the presentationally interpreted structures illustrated in (23) also follows straightforwardly if one assumes English-style raising-to-subject is not a feature of the grammar of German: as it is not necessary for a subject-element to raise to Spec-TP and vP-raising consistently takes place, regardless of the nature of the subject, there is never any available slot for the kind of expletive that surfaces in comparable English contexts.

On the analysis proposed here, the respective presences and absences of German expletives more generally are likewise readily explicable. In the case of “ambient” *es*, the fact that it surfaces both clause-initially and clause-internally follows from the fact that it is obligatorily merged in Spec-vP, being the selected external argument of verbs which take referentially opaque subjects. Whenever the vP raises, therefore, these expletives will surface as the topmost constituent in the vP now contained in Spec-TP. In other words, they appear to be in Spec-TP by virtue of the fact that they occupy the highest specifier of the raised constituent, but, in reality, they are merely **one** of the elements located in TP’s specifier. From its location as the highest element in Spec-TP, “ambient” *es* is available for raising to Spec-CP and consequently also surfaces in clause-initial position.

Turning to **there-type es**: the diachrony of this element strongly suggests that it has never become specialised as a specifically **subject-related** element. As noted in section 4.2 above, **there-type es** (like its Icelandic counterpart, *það*) appears to have been introduced exclusively to provide a Spec-CP filler in cases where an appropriately topical subject-element is unavailable. Crucially, however, *es* (and *það*) have, throughout their history, consistently failed to surface in postfinite position. Viewed against the backdrop of the analysis that I have sketched out here, this is entirely unsurprising: as the postfinite position...
(Spec-TP) is exceptionlessly filled by a raised vP, regardless of whether this contains a topical subject or not, there is no need for a there-type expletive to appear in this position; in fact, it is positively impossible for one to occur there. This is precisely the desired result.

Having established that the proposal that Spec-TP in German is licensed by means of vP-raising enables us to provide an elegant account of the German subject-facts, let us now turn to a consideration of how it fares in dealing with the varied subject-phenomena exhibited by the remaining Germanic languages under investigation in this paper.

5.2 Explaining the synchronic and diachronic data

In view of the fact that Icelandic behaves in a very similar manner to German (cf. sections 3 and 4 above), very little needs to be said about the subject-behaviour of this language. What is worth noting here is the fact that Icelandic differs from German in terms of the lexicalisation principle it applies to referentially opaque subjects. As noted in section 4.2 above, these need not be overtly lexicalised in Icelandic. Consequently, agitative subject-containing Spec-vP need not be realised in contexts involving referentially opaque “agents”, a state of affairs which, in turn, explains why “weather” arguments, for example, fail to surface in postfinite position: they are simply not part of the vP which raises to Spec-TP. Barring the consideration that Icelandic VPs are unambiguously head-initial and that the raised vP therefore generally features VO rather than OV orderings, the analysis outlined in section 5.1 above would, however, seem to be straightforwardly transferrable to the Icelandic case.

More does, however, need to be said about the SVO languages that we have considered in this paper. As noted in sections 4.2.3 and 4.2.4 respectively, English and the MSc languages systematically featured “ambient” expletives both clause-initially and clause-internally well before there-type expletives had even started to appear with any kind of regularity in the first position where this expletive gained a foothold, Spec-CP. In terms of my analysis, therefore, these languages developed grammars requiring “ambient” arguments to be merged in Spec-vP at a relatively early stage in their history. Crucially, they also subsequently developed dominant SVO ordering in at least one major clausal context. Precisely how this came about is not a question that will detain us here, but it is clear that considerations such as the fact that subjects overwhelmingly predominate as first-position elements in V2 clauses and also the fact that many V2 clauses are, in fact, structurally ambiguous, being amenable to analysis as either V2 or SVO-clauses\[11\], would have played some role. These factors, and also the observation that languages which ultimately develop SVO ordering tend to exhibit copious amounts of “leaking”\[12\] while they are still essentially SOV, have frequently been registered by the many authors who have previously investigated the rise of SVO ordering in Germanic (and other) languages. What is particularly interesting about the analysis proposed here is that it enables us to offer a natural account of why fundamentally SOV languages might nevertheless sanction “leaking” that delivers structures, even in the presence of a head-final VP, that superficially exhibit SVO-type ordering. Consider the case of an auxiliary-less structure such as that in (24) below:

(24) She read the book

Self-evidently, this is a perfectly grammatical sentence in modern English. If we forget this fact and also the fact that (24) is, therefore, the output of a particular SVO grammar, various

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\[11\] By way of example, consider clauses featuring unmodified passives (e.g. The article was submitted) and unergative and unaccusative subjects and simple tense Vfs (e.g. She sang/arrived).

\[12\] By leeking, I mean the phenomenon in terms of which material that generally appears preverbally in rigidly SOV languages – notably adverbial PPs and prosodically and/or informationally “heavy” objects – “seeps” past the clause-final verb.
other potential analyses of the string in question can also be entertained. One of these is that the clause is, in fact, a V2 clause, *she* occupying Spec-CP and *read* being located in C, and another is that the clause is a Romance-style SVO clause, featuring a raised Vf. In the context of the analysis presented in the preceding section, there is, however, a third, rather less obvious alternative that also presents itself, and it is this alternative that, I argue, can plausibly be assumed to have played a significant role in the development of SVO ordering in languages like English.

The alternative that I have in mind is that (24) is, in fact, the product of an SOV grammar such as that ascribed to German in section 5.1. As noted there, my analysis entails that German’s characteristically Aux-final ordering is the product of a grammar that actually differs minimally from the one generally assumed for English: whereas English exceptionlessly requires vP’s topmost specifier to contain a subject-element which then undergoes raising to Spec-TP (see below), Spec-TP in German attracts subjects located in the topmost specifier of vP (and elsewhere, as noted above), but ultimately also pied-pipes along all the material in the lexical domain containing the targeted element, thereby disguising its underlying similarity to English. What I would like to propose is that languages which satisfy their Spec-TP licensing requirement via a German-style vP-raising strategy may, under certain circumstances (cf. Biberauer & Richards 2003 for further discussion), begin to permit structures which are the product of “failed pied-piping”, i.e. of English-style outer Spec-vP raising that “strands” the material that is usually pied-piped. In the following section, I briefly argue that MSA and colloquial Dutch are languages of this type. For the moment, however, the crucial point is that pied-piping (i.e. vP-raising) in languages of this kind appears to be normatively prescribed: in other words, it is dictated by system-external conventions that obscure the fact that what the grammars of the languages in question vitally require is a filled outer Spec-vP which can be targeted for raising, with the precise manner in which this is achieved (i.e. either with or without pied-piping) being in at least some senses of secondary importance.13 Assuming this also to have been true of earlier varieties of English which, as is well known, were not subject to normative constraints of the kind that apply to modern-day SOV Germanic languages, it is not difficult to see how an SOV grammar of the kind proposed in section 5.1 could, ultimately, have given way to an SVO grammar of the familiar modern English kind. Once the original vP-raising mechanism has been reanalysed as an essentially spec-vP-oriented one which may be satisfied either via pied-piping or via “failed pied-piping”, there will clearly be greater pressure on the outermost Spec-vP to contain an independently raisable element: whereas the original mechanism simply requires a subject to appear somewhere within the vP-domain, the Spec-vP-oriented one specifically requires this subject to be located in vP’s outermost specifier. And it is this pressure that, I argue, led to the rise in English and MSc – and also, as we will see in section 5.3 below, to a lesser extent in Afrikaans and Dutch – of postfinite *there*-type expletives.14

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13 As pointed out to me by Marc Richards, languages which, like Russian, allow *wh*-related Left Branch “violations” to alternate with *wh*-pied-piping would seem to instantiate another situation in which the same grammatical scenario obtains. See Biberauer & Richards (2003) for further discussion.

14 Clearly, something also needs to be said about the internal structure of the vP and, specifically, about the vP-internal change that led to the demise of OV-structures in English and MSc and their replacement by VO-structures. This independent development clearly played a crucial role in the ultimate replacement of the original vP-raising Spec-TP satisfaction mechanism by the Spec-vP (i.e. DP)-raising one as it would have been responsible for the elimination from the input of a structure (namely, OV-clauses) that previously provided the “cue” for retaining the pied-piping EPP-satisfaction mechanism, even after Spec-vP had begun to be filled more consistently, with the consequence that “failed pied-piping” would actually have been sufficient to satisfy the EPP. In other words, the demise of OV-structures in English and MSc effectively removed the motivation for sustaining the vP-pied-piping mechanism, leading to its replacement by the familiar modern DP-raising mechanism as there was no empirical imperative to retain the original mode of EPP-satisfaction. As I will show in section 5.3, this empirical imperative does, however, obtain in modern Afrikaans and Dutch, both of which are still robustly V-final languages. Consequently, both of these languages exhibit stable optionality in respect of the manner in which the EPP is satisfied.
As noted in sections 4.2.3 and 4.2.4 above, *there*-type expletives in MSc and English were initially no different from their counterparts in the other Germanic languages, appearing first in Spec-CP and then only gradually becoming established in the position in which they are traditionally assumed to be merged. What I would like to suggest is that these expletives started off as elements whose function was essentially topic-related (cf. the discussion in sections 2.2, 4.2.2 and fn. 8), but that the various factors that conspired in these languages to raise the prominence of the subject and, particularly, the reanalysis of the original vP-raising Spec-TP licensing mechanism, led to their being grammaticalised as subject-related D-elements. In other words, what I am proposing is that the rise and ultimate grammaticalisation of *there*-type expletives in MSc and English should be viewed as the consequence of a change over time in the mechanism via which Spec-TP was licensed. Ultimately, the “failed pied-piping” (vP-stranding) strategy won out and was therefore reanalysed as the familiar modern English Spec-vP raising strategy, a reanalysis which finally, after an extended period of optionality, resulted in the obligatory merging of *there*-type expletives whenever an appropriate subject is absent.

In the final substantive section of this paper, I will consider data from MSA that suggests that the analysis outlined in the preceding paragraphs is, in fact, a plausible one and that, moreover, this kind of analysis can account not only for variation that ultimately results in change, but also for variation that remains stable in the long-term.

5.3 Further evidence from Modern Spoken Afrikaans (MSA)

The main purpose of this short section is to address the matter of two types of optionality that are synchronically observable in both Afrikaans and Dutch. The first of these – namely that surrounding the presence versus absence of *daar/er* in presentational and impersonal passive constructions – was introduced in section 3.2 above. The second is illustrated by means of the representative Modern Spoken Afrikaans (MSA) example in (25) below (the standardly required positioning of Vf is indicated in brackets):

(25) Ek weet dat sy het dikwels Chopin gespeel (het)
     I know that she has often Chopin played (has)

(25) illustrates a phenomenon that superficially appears to be “embedded V2” of the kind that is found in symmetric (or at least partially symmetric) V2 languages (cf. section 2.1 above and also Vikner 1995: chapter 4). In my doctoral dissertation, I show that structures of this kind are not, in fact, genuine V-in-C V2 structures, but that, instead, they represent a particular species of SVO structure that surfaces with quite considerable regularity in MSA. More specifically, I showed that clauses of this kind display two properties that suggest that a genuine V2 analysis cannot be justified. Firstly, the first-position elements that appear in these structures are exclusively subjects, whereas the initial position in V2 clauses may famously be occupied by XPs of any kind. Secondly, the MSA structures only feature auxiliaries in second position, another very curious fact if these are indeed V2 structures since the nature of the second-position Vf in V2 clauses is as unrestricted as that of the first-position constituent. On the basis of the restrictions to which the MSA structures are subject, I therefore concluded that the structures in question are Vf-in-T structures which, contrary to the usual requirement that Spec-TP be licensed in the manner outlined in section 5.1 above, had in fact been derived via the minimally different “failed pied-piping” (vP-stranding) strategy outlined in section 5.2 above. Interestingly, various Dutch linguists have noted that similar structures occur in colloquial and dialectal Dutch (cf. *inter alios* Zwart 1997: 230ff

15 216 of the 628 or 34.4% of the *dat-* (“that”) clauses in the MSA corpus that I investigated superficially exhibited the order illustrated in (25).
and references cited there, and also the various discussions of so-called Verb Projection Raising (VPR) in the literature).

What I would like to suggest here is that the two kinds of optionality that are observed in Afrikaans and Dutch are, in fact, reflexes of a single underlying consideration: the manner in which Spec-TP is licensed in these languages. As I indicated in section 5.2, certain languages appear to develop the option of achieving this not only via vP-raising, but also via a minimally different specifically Spec-vP-oriented mechanism which may on occasion give rise to “failed pied-piping” structures. Crucially, this latter mechanism (unlike the former which is unconcerned with the precise location of the subject) relies on the presence of an appropriate subject-XP in the topmost vP-specifier. In cases where an XP of this kind is absent, the language therefore has two options – either:

(a) it makes use of the original vP-raising mechanism since it is not possible to employ the Spec-vP-raising alternative; or

(b) it innovates some mechanism to supply the appropriate subject-element.

What needs to be remembered here is that both Afrikaans and Dutch are languages with a strong normative tradition. Consequently, the indications that the standard varieties of these languages will give that they are, in fact, operating on the basis of a Spec-vP-oriented rather than a German-style vP-raising basis will generally not be of the “failed pied-piping” kind outlined for ME and EMS above: normative prescriptions which dictate that the languages in question are OV languages suppress this possibility in a manner which the absence of similar constraints in ME and EMS presumably did not (cf. fn. 14 above).

That it is nevertheless correct to postulate that innovations of the (b) kind have taken place in languages like Afrikaans and Dutch is strongly indicated by the fact that both of these languages exhibit structures that appear to be the output of a vP-raising system that is operating under slightly altered circumstances – specifically, one in which the outermost vP-specifier is frequently or consistently occupied by a subject-element that would not previously have been there. Let us consider the languages in turn.

In most cases, Dutch appears to have opted for option (a) above. Thus structures lacking raising-to-subject such as that illustrated in (4b) still, according to researchers like van Gelderen (1993), represent the unmarked norm in the language. Structures in which the subject does appear to have undergone raising of this kind (but cf. the scrambling discussion in section 5.1 above) are certainly not unacceptable, however, and, under certain circumstances, they are, of course, obligatory (cf. the aforementioned scrambling discussion). Further evidence of Dutch’s adherence to the (a)-type Spec-TP licensing mechanism is supplied by the fact that the standard language does not permit “failed pied-piping”-generated SVO structures of the kind illustrated in (25) above. Interestingly, however, the standard does optionally permit structures featuring postfinite *er*, a state of affairs which, as I showed in section 5.2, results when a Spec-vP-oriented Spec-TP licensing strategy becomes available. Additionally and, as I will argue below, also very significantly, SVO structures like that in (25) do occur in non-standard varieties of Dutch.

In the Afrikaans case, there is a great deal more evidence that speakers have postulated a spec-vP-oriented vP-raising analysis for their language. In the first instance, this language standardly requires what appears to be raising-to-subject in the context of passive and unaccusative subjects. Consequently, it is, as has been noted in previous sections, essentially impossible for a non-subject to appear in postfinite position. Standard Afrikaans also optionally permits *daar* to surface in postfinite position, with this option being

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16 So-called ‘comma-intonation’ structures involving an interpollated adverbial phrase constitute one exception to this generalisation (cf. Biberauer 2003: chapter 4) for discussion. This option is, however, also available in English (cf. *She said that, when she was finally finished, she would take a long holiday*) and, as such, would therefore not seem to constitute a genuine exception to the restriction on elements surfacing in postfinite position. Constructions of this kind do, of course, raise several interesting questions regarding the syntactic status of adjuncts, but these fall well beyond the scope of this article.
particularly common in MSA. Finally and very significantly, non-standard varieties of Afrikaans also permit structures such as that illustrated in (25) above which evidently cannot be the product of the original vP-raising operation. What should be noted about these structures, however, is that they are, despite their superficial SVO ordering, still very clearly the product of an underlyingly OV grammar (cf. the final placement of the past participle in (25)), precisely what we would expect in terms of the “failed pied-piping” operation outlined for ME in section 5.2 above.

To conclude this section, I would like to mention one last noteworthy aspect of the optional structures that I have considered here, namely that they appear to be optional in a relatively stable manner: native-speakers are aware of the fact that the alternatives discussed in this section exist in their languages and also that the respective alternatives are, in each case, functionally equivalent. Furthermore, researchers have noted that these structures have existed side-by-side for some time now, with no indication that the languages in question are “changing” in any clearly defined, unidirectional manner. In other words, the situation in Afrikaans and Dutch and, similarly that which evidently existed over an extended period in ME and EMS (cf. sections 4.2.3, 4.2.4 and 5.2 above), constitutes precisely the kind of optionality scenario that has come to be such a theoretical headache for Chomskyans generally and Minimalists in particular. Contrary to prevailing wisdom on the subject, I would like to suggest here that systematic optionality of the kind I have outlined in this section and also in that which preceded it represents potentially one of the most valuable sources of evidence available to the generatively oriented syntactician. Specifically, I submit that optionality of this kind provides a unique window on aspects of the workings of the underlying system that are otherwise obscured.

6 CONCLUSION

The chief empirical and theoretical focus of this paper has been the EPP and the manner in which this has been satisfied at various points in the history of Germanic, up to and including the present. The proposal that lies at the heart of this paper is that Spec-TP in Germanic did not start off as a primarily subject-oriented position and that, contra assumptions in the literature, various members of the Germanic family currently still cannot be said to exhibit an English-style licensing requirement on Spec-TP.

More specifically, I proposed that Spec-TP was originally, in the common (SOV) ancestor of the modern-day Germanic languages, licensed by means of an XP-raising operation that targets T’s complement. Instead of a single DP undergoing raising-to-subject from within the vP-domain to Spec-TP, the proposal is that the entire vP undergoes this operation in Germanic languages which have been observed to lack canonical subject position effects (notably, German and Icelandic). Since the external argument is the XP which is merged in the outermost specifier of vP, vP-raising will in many cases unproblematically give rise to subject-initial structures of the kind that the traditional EPP-based analysis would lead us to expect. Additionally, however, the proposal that it is vP- rather than subject-raising that takes place also enables us to account for a range of synchronic and diachronic data in which a (nominative-marked) subject or an expletive fails to surface in the expected position.

Diachronic evidence from the manner in which expletives of two main kinds (“ambient” and presentational/existential) arose and became established in the various Germanic languages lends further support to the analysis: assuming a universally operative subject-related EPP, one cannot plausibly account for the extensive periods during which the predecessors of today’s Germanic languages allowed Spec-TP to be only optionally filled, nor can one explain why the rise of obligatorily overt expletives appears to have followed the same route in all the Germanic languages, with the process halting at different points along
the route in the various languages. In this connection in particular, an expletive pro-based analysis was shown to fail comprehensively.

An analysis which relies on the postulation of expletive pro also completely fails to account for the expletive-related synchronic variation exhibited by languages like Afrikaans and Dutch and, at earlier stages of their history, also by English and the MSc languages. By contrast, a minimal refinement of the pro-less analysis outlined above can account for the relevant data and, additionally, also for further Afrikaans and Dutch variation data which, at first sight, may not appear to be related to our central concern. Furthermore, it enables us to give an account of how a vP-raising Spec-TP licensing mechanism such as that proposed for SOV Germanic can ultimately, via successive stages of reanalysis, come to be reanalysed as the familiar English-style licensing mechanism.

Crucially, this insight is not derivable if one adopts the view that variation-free linguistic systems are the only ones worth investigating or, indeed, that a coherent linguistic system cannot permit optionality. In this paper, I have argued that particular kinds of variation data can provide a unique “window” on the underlying workings of the system under investigation, one which is lost if we simply assume that a single Numeration can only deliver a unique output and that clauses containing identical (overt) lexical items and expressing identical meanings, but nevertheless exhibiting different surface orders, must therefore be the output of different Numerations. Specifically, I have suggested that some of the officially proscribed structures that nevertheless surface in spoken and non-standard(ised) varieties of a language and, in particular, those which regularly alternate with their officially sanctioned counterparts (i.e. those that are clearly the product of the same system as the standard variants), should not, as currently mostly seems to be the case, be viewed as a theoretical embarrassment. Instead, I argue that they constitute a particularly rich source of data for generative syntacticians, one which may enable them to identify subtleties in the workings of the grammar that would not otherwise be so easily detectable and one which, crucially, may provide significant insight into the vexed issue of how languages may ultimately “change”.

REFERENCES


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