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*Null subjects: from Gothic, Old High German and  
Middle High German to Modern German.  
From pro-drop to semi-pro-drop.<sup>1</sup>*

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**1. Non-anaphoric expletives in Modern German**

The present article investigates the emergence of expletives in the history of German and their stability through time. A rough survey of non-anaphoric expletives in Modern German (MG) leads to the following list (cf. Lenerz 1985: 102f. relying on ample material in a number of previous articles and books; for the classification on a syntactic basis in Modern German see also Leys 1979 and, foremost, Pütz 1975).

- (1) a with strictly intransitive ("null-place") impersonal verbs: *Es schneit* "it snows"; *Es ist kalt* "it is cold"
- b with impersonal verbs governing dative or accusative objects: *Es graut ihm/ihn vor dir* = it-dreads-himDAT/ACC-before-you "he is afraid of you"
- c with impersonal passives: *Es darf gelacht werden* = it-may-laughed-be "there may be laughing"; *Es füttern sich Löwen nicht ohne Risiko* = it-feed-lions-not-without-danger "Feeding lions is not without risk"
- d with extraposed subject clauses: *Es überrascht dich, daß...* "It surprises you that..."
- e with themeless clauses: *Es ritten 3 Reiter zum Tor hinaus* = it-rode-three-riders-by the door-out "Three riders rode past the door"

Quite obviously and before even going into some more sophisticated distributional analyses, the *es*-occurrences in (1) are of different, distinct types: no thematically filled subject in (a-c) vs. referential clausal subjects in (d-e). In (e), moreover, what we have are two subject positions: *es* in the

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canonical fronted position, and another referential one in VP, in rhematic function and position. Notice that the positional subject in (e) does not trigger agreement.

Going through some of the canonical critical distributional tests (clauses with V-2, but some other element, rather than the expletive, in fronted position; V-final with some COMP; and V-1) yields further differences.

(2) *V-initial clauses*

- a Schneit **\*(es)**? "Is it snowing?"
- b Überrascht (es) dich, daß... "Does it surprise you that"
- c Graut (es) ihm/es **\*ihn** vor dir? "Are you afraid of him?"
- d Darf **\*(es)** gelacht werden? "Is it permitted to laugh?"
- e Füttern **\*(es)** sich Löwen leicht? = feed-lions-easily "Is it easy to feed lions?"
- f Ritten **\*(es)** drei Ritter zum Tor hinaus? "Did 3 riders ride past the door?"

The same picture is rendered when distributions in dependent clauses or in non-*es*-topicalizations are looked at: the expletive must not be dropped in the type represented by (a); it is optional in the type represented by (b-c); and it must be deleted in the type in (d-e). For stylistic distinctions in the optional type in (b,c) see Lenerz (1985: 104). They will not concern us here.

We have seen that English has expletive *it* only in subtype (a) (meteorological verbs) and in subtype (b) (expletive for extraposed subject clause). Specifically, the type illustrated by (d-e) is carried by the adverb *there*. Likewise, in the two continental Westgermanic languages, Dutch and Frisian, the type represented by (d) and (e) is not the neuter *het/it* from the pronominal paradigms, but the clitic *er/der*, originally a local adverb (*daar* "there"). For a survey of the distributional restrictions in the Scandinavian Germanic languages, both diachronically and synchronically, cf. Lenerz (1985: 109ff., especially 113). This superficial typological comparison alone would seem to warrant quite distinct analyses of the homonymic phenomena in German.

Null subjects will be found: optional, or in some non-obvious, possibly non-syntactic variation, in all of type III as well as in subtypes of I and II. See (3).

(3) SUBTYPE OF I:

- a Ist (es) bald Weihnachten? "Is it X-mas soon?"
- b Ist (es) dir warm genug? = is-it-youDAT-warm-enough

(4) SUBTYPE OF II:

- a Wichtig ist (es), daß ... "Important is (\*it) that..."

(5) TYPE III:

- a Darf **\*(es)** gelacht werden? = may-it-laughed-be "Is it permitted to laugh?"
- b Überrascht (es) dich, daß ...? = surprises-it-you-that
- c ... weil **\*(es)** sich Löwen nicht so einfach füttert = because-it-itself-lionsACC-not-so-easily-feeds

I and II yield subtypes insofar as predicate and article selections result in different distributions of the expletive

es. Compare (3c), (4b), and (d) below with (3a-b), (4a), and (5a-c) above.

(3)c Ist \*(es) dort zu kalt? "Is it too cold there?"

(4)b Ist (es) sehr wichtig, daß ...?

c Ist \*(es) wichtig, daß ... ?

d Ist ??(es) Bedingung, daß ...? = is-it-requirement-that...

e Ist (es) die Bedingung, daß ...? = is-it-the-requirement-that (5)d ... weil \*(es) sich Löwen nicht so leicht füttern = because-it-itself-lions-not-so-easily-feed

We shall see, however, that (5c) vs. (5d) lends itself to a structural explanation.

## 2. Expletives prior to Modern German

Just like in Old Greek and Latin, personal pronouns in subject function remained implicit, since unambiguously indexed by the verbal morphology, unless under contrastive stress in Gothic, too. See the following parallel from the New Testament.

(6)a GOTHIC (Braune/Ebbinghaus 1961: 138): Matthew V

17 Ni hugaith ei gemjau gatairan witoth aiththau praufetuns; ni gam gatairan, ak usfulljan. 18 amen auk qitha izwis: und thatei usleithith himins jah airtha, jota ains aiththau ains striks ni usleithith af witoda, unte allata wairthith.

b OLD GREEK

17 Me nomisete hoti elthon katalysai ton nomon e tous profetas. ouch elthon katalysai alla plerosai. 18 amen gar lego hymin heos an parelthe ho ouranos kai he ge, iota hen e mia keraia ou me parelthe apo tou nomon, heos an panta genetai.

c MODERN ENGLISH

17 Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. 18 I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the law until everything is accomplished.

It should be clear that such general pro-drop mechanics will, by strict implication, extend to expletives.

It is perhaps noteworthy that the Modern German equivalent for the last biblical clause in 18 above, *panta genetai* and *allata wairthith*, respectively, does employ a presentative, all-rhematic construction, thus requiring the topical expletive *es*: cf. (*bis daß*) *es alles geschehe*.

Behaghel, in his rich survey of the historical development, summarizes soberly and succinctly that "bei unpersönlichen Konstruktionen und Verben hat ursprünglich das Pronomen gefehlt" (1924: 122III, 1928: 444; II). And he adds: "Später tritt im allgemeinen das Pronomen es hinzu, doch es fehlt nicht an Fällen, wonach die pronomenlose Eingliedrigkeit fort-dauert." Let us see whether the threefold distinction in

(1a-e) is still to be found in OLD and MIDDLE HIGH GERMAN (examples from Lenerz (1985: 105 ff.), who drew his material, among others, from Behaghel's rich collection). (7)-(9) lists what would be OHG expletive *iz* "it" in topic position.

(7) WITHOUT THEMATIC SUBJECT

- a *plecchazit* (MSD. XXVII,1,10) = -lightens- "lightening was"
- b *was sambaztag in themo tage* (T. 88,3) = was-Saturday-on-that-day
- c *mir swintilot/mir unmahtit* (N(P)I,17,30) = meDAT-diz-zies/meDAT faints "I feel dizzy/I faint"
- d *unde dunchet mir recht* (N(P)II,507,25) "and deems me right"

(8) POSTPOSED THEMATIC SUBJECT, EXPLETIVE ELEMENT IN TOPIC POSITION

- a *inti uard gitruobit ther chuning* (T. 79,8) = and-was-grieved-the king
- b *ih slahu then hirti, inti uerdent zispreitit thi u scaf* (T. 161,2) = I beat the shepherd, and-were-dispersed-the sheep
- c *ward in [...] leid, thaz ...* (O. V,10,21) = was-themDAT-PL-pity-that "they felt sorry that..."
- d *skinet, taz...* (N(P)I, 105,31) = seems-that "it seems that"

(9) PRESENTATIVE, ALL-RHEMATIC CLAUSES

- a *see, quimit der brutigomo* (Mons. XX,8) = see-comes-the bridegroom "see the bridegroom comes"
- b *uuarun tho hirta in thero lantskeffi uuahante* (T. 6,1) = were-then-shepherds-in that area-waking

There is no clear case of type II (null-expletive for the extraposed subject clause) represented in (7)-(9). None of the illustrations is to be generalized in the sense that there would not be quite numerous cases to be found instantiating the expletive by *iz*.

Let us now cast a look at the non-clause initial expletive. To make obvious the missing pronoun the OHG examples are paired with their counterparts in Modern German.

(10) NO THEMATIC SUBJECT

WEATHER VERBS

- a *noch regenot nicht mé* (Milst.Gen. 145,29) = 'und <es> regnete <es> nicht mehr' "and it did not rain any more"
- b *duo morgän uuarth* (Mons. XXIII,21) = 'als es Morgen wurde' /when-morning-became wurde "when it dawned"
- c *so heiz wirt ze sumere* (N(P)II, 38,29) = 'So heiß wird es Sommers' /so-hot-turns-in the summer

VERBS OF INDIVIDUAL BODY EXPERIENCE

- d *dar dunchet tir rehto* (N(P)I, 42,25) = 'da dünkt es dich richtig ...' /there-deems-youDAT-correct...
- e *thaz himo hungreda ande thursta, daz ...* (Wiilir. 93,9) = 'daß ihn es (danach) hungerte und dürstete, daß...' /-that-himDAT-hungered and thirsted that ... "that he hungered and thirsted that..."

f ... so nan lústa (O. II,8,39) = 'sofern es einen gelüftet'/if-one-lusts "If someone should find pleasure in"

(11) EXTRAPOSED SUBJECT CLAUSES

- a ... ioh dhar ist Offenliihost chisaget, huueo ... (Is. (H) 25,15) = '... immerdar wird es ganz deutlich gesagt, wie ...'/always-is-very explicitly-said how...
- b uuár ist, dhaz ... (Is.(H) 24,5) = 'wahr ist (es), daß'/true-is-that "It is true that"
- c bi thiú ist nu báz ..., thaz ... (O.(H) 97) = 'um dessen willen ist es nun besser ..., daß'/therefore-is-now-better-that

(12) PURELY RHEMATIC, PRESENTATIVE CLAUSES - IMPERSONAL

PASSIVES AND ERGATIVE CONSTRUCTIONS

- a ... wanta iu nu nót wirdit (O. IV,14,6) = 'warum es euch jetzt mühsam wird'/why-youDAT-PL-now-necessity-becomes "why it will be necessary for you"
- b not ist mánne (N(P)I, 533,12) = 'Mühe ist es dem Menschen/trouble-is-manDAT "It is troublesome for man"
- c thó tág uuás giuortan, ... (T. 70,2) = 'da es Tag geworden war'/when-day-was (had)-become "when it had become daylight"
- d huuanta in ist (gageban ze) archennenne (Mons. VIII, 17f.) = 'denn ihnen ist es gegeben zu erkennen'/since-themDAT-PL-is-given-to-recognize
- e thémo ist giwisso irdéilit (O. II, 12,84) = 'dem ist (es) sicher entschieden'/him-is-certainly-decided "for him it is no doubt decided"

(12b) is just as well an example for Type II (cataphoric expletive for postposed subject clause).

While in OHG each of the three types of expletives could be omitted, in MHG it has almost become the rule that the expletive is phonologically realized as *ez/es*, this being the case with just one type of decreasing certainty, viz.: in V-1 CLAUSES for the verbs of individual experience as in (13); in NON-V-1 CLAUSES in existential clauses, impersonal passives and ergative, purely rhematic (presentative) clauses.

(13) V-1 CLAUSES

- a mir grúset in der hiute (Helibr. 1577) = 'mich graust (es) auf der Haut'/meDAT-shudders-in the skin
- b mich reizet vaste daruzuo (Armer Heinr. 1157) = 'mich reizt es sehr dazu'/meACC-entices-much-thereto
- c in dürestet (Wa. 6,32) = 'ihn dürestet/verlangt (es) (nach)'/himACC thirsts "he craves after"

(14) NON V-1 CLAUSES:

IMPERSONAL PASSIVES

- a besunder wart gegangen in eine kemenäten (Gr. 516f.) = especially-became-walked-into a bed chamber "Especially, there was walking into a bedroom"
- b já wart vrennder geste baz gepflegen nie (Nib. 801,2) = indeed-was-guestsGEN-better-taken care of-never "Alas, they never took better care of foreigners"
- c des wirt noch gelachtet (Wa. 40,4) = thisGEN-becomes-

- still-laughed "There is still laughing about that"  
 d vor der künigin wart vernomn daz ein gast dá solte komn  
 (Pz. 61,29f.) = before-the-queen-was-heard-that-a guest-  
 there-should-come

#### EXISTENTIAL CLAUSES

- e wan bi den liuten ist sô quot (Erec 9438) = 'außer bei  
 den Menschen ist es so gut/except-among-the-people-is-  
 so-good  
 f daz mir was, wie daz ich were uf eime gar hohen berge  
 (Nik.v.B. 319) = that-meDAT-was-as if-I-were-on a very  
 high mountain  
 g nu was dirre lieben gottesfriunde gewonheit, daz si ...  
 (Nik.v.B. 325) = 'nun war es der lieben Gottesfreunde  
 Gewohnheit, daß'/now-was-the dear friendsGEN-PL-usage-  
 that

#### INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCE

- h sins sterbens mich baz luste (Wh. 203,27) "I took plea-  
 sure in his dying"  
 i aller saelden mir gebrast, ... (Pz. 688,24) = 'Es ge-  
 brach mir an allem Glück'/allGEN-PL-blithsGEN-meDAT-  
 failed "I missed all happiness"  
 j dô tete sí als ir waere gâch (Iw. 3612) = 'da tat sie,  
 als wäre es ihr eilig'/then-did-she-as if-were-herDAT-  
 urgent

#### ERGATIVE CONSTRUCTIONS

- k daz dá komen waeren ritter vil gemeit (Nib. 79,2) "that  
 dumb knights had come"

MHG, more or less, had already reached the state of MODERN GERMAN: in clause initial position the expletive *es* cannot be dropped. For non-V-initial positions, the expletive is more or less non-omissible (but for stylistic and sociostratigical exceptions) in the case of the meteorological verbs, the verbs of individual experience, and for existential expressions. Only subtype Ic (impersonal passives) and type III (ergative constructions=purely rhematic, i.e. presentative expressions) do not allow the realized expletive in non-initial position (Lernerz 1985: 109).

- (15)a Darf (\*es) gelacht werden? = may-it-laughed-be? "Is it permitted to laugh?"  
 b Zogen (\*es) drei Burschen wohl über den Rhein? = went-3 guys-well-across-the Rhine "Was it three guys that went across the Rhine?"

### 3. Prior structural accounts

#### 3.1. Modern languages

According to Platzack (1987), the basic distributional difference between Mainland and Insular Scandinavian languages,

namely whether (as in the Mainland Scandinavia) or not (as in Icelandic and Faroese) an expletive is required in presentative constructions, with meteorological verbs, in impersonal passives, and with extraposition, can be exploited to draw a conclusion as to the determining force of the agreement morphology of the finite verb. Null expletives need licensing; such licensing occurs either through lexical or functional government, or by coindexation with respect to the agreement features between the predicate verb and the subject under specific conditions. In the absence of movement of V to INFL, the verbal morphology, distinct with respect to the agreement features of person and number, should safeguard coindexation under the required conditions. This is the case in Icelandic, with a rich verbal morphology, but not in the Mainland Scandinavian languages. Thus, under the Null Subject Parameter formulated by Platzack (1987), the latter languages need the expletive, while Icelandic and Faroese do not. Note that, under this line of argument and heeding Chomsky's Extended Projection Principle ("every finite clause must have a subject"), null subjects are expletive pros. For a different approach to the typological task under the parametrization mechanism see section 4.

### 3.2. From OHG and MHG to MG

From among the more recent literature on expletives in historical stages of German, Große (1990) fails to mention altogether the phenomenon of omitted expletives, or even asking the question whether or not expletives are dispensable (optional), obligatory or obligatorily null in OHG. By contrast, Lenerz, evaluating also the merits of prior literature on both the typological and the historical question, comes to the following conclusions (Lenerz 1985: 129f.): the clause-initial expletive may be topical *es* (in [Spec,CP], according to modern structural terminology; W.A.) or a subject ([Spec,IP]; for terminology see again the parenthesis above), whereas the clause-medial expletive can only be the subject. The classes 1a, 1b, and 2 (see (1)-(3) above) have a non-thematic subject (which is identical, as far as I can see, with the claim that either they have a structural subject position, or that the subject argument is presupposed lexically in the subcategorizational grid). For 1c, the impersonal passive, no subject is generated (meaning possibly that the intransitive passive in German has no subject position anymore - whatever that presupposes in terms of the triggering mechanisms). Class 3 is taken to have an obligatory lexical (subcategorizational?) subject. The general account for the changing distributions from OHG via MHG to MG is a reanalysis in the subcategorizing grids of the involved lexical elements. The general force behind this reanalysis is a restricted form of cross-paradigmatic analogy (also Lenerz takes great pain in avoiding this term) the restrictions being that the reanalysed elements being of identical category and linearly adjoined (Lenerz 1985: 130).

We shall see that this account leaves open a number of questions entailed by the observational facts. Thus, while Lenerz deserves credit for distinguishing between the exple-

tive in the structural topic position and that in structural subject position, his solution is short, both with respect to the observable data and with respect to the theoretical options, of a true account which satisfies both the typological distributions and the historical differences.

#### 4. Agreement or case as a null subject trigger?

As Haider (1991: 50 *et passim*) has reiterated, the crucial question to be answered is whether or not languages displaying the phenomenon of null subjects do in fact have an obligatory subject position in the first place, or whether the subject position, while superficially empty, is not empty, thus satisfying the ECP in some specific way. The canonic school of thinking (Platzack 1985, Koster 1986, Chomsky 1986, Platzack 1987, Jaeggli/Safir 1989, Cardinaletti 1990, Roberge 1990, Falk 1991), giving credit to Chomsky's Extended Projection Principle, has decidedly chosen the second option thus being forced to assume that there is a null expletive, i.e. an expletive *pro*. Languages with expletive *pros* are termed *semi-pro-drop* languages. *pro-drop* languages have necessarily also null expletives, whereas the reverse does not hold: *semi-pro-drop* languages, with null expletives, need not be full *pro-drop* languages. Modern German is a case in point; from among the crucial four (five) constructional types, it does not display subject expletives in two (three) cases. See (16a-d) below.

- |                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| (16)a PRESENTATIVE: | Gestern sind (*es) Gäste gekommen.<br>yesterday are it guests come   |
| b METEOROLOGICAL:   | Gewittert *(es) hier viel?<br>storms it here a lot   |
| c IMPERS.PASSIVE:   | Wird (*es) viel schigefahren?<br>is it a lot skied   |
| d EXTRAPOSITION:    | Ist (*es) deutlich, was ich meine?<br>is it clear what I mean<br>Ist *(es) überraschend, daß sie weint?<br>is it surprising that she cries   |
| e MEDIAL VOICE:     | Löwen füttert *(es) sich nicht leicht<br>lions-ACC feeds it REFL not easily<br>Dich unterhält *(es) sich angenehm<br>you-ACC entertain it REFL pleasantly<br>"You are pleasant to entertain" |

It is crucial to see that the clause internal expletive subject-*es* is ungrammatical in the case of the impersonal passive, (16c), in that of the presentational construction, (a), and in the medial voice construction, (e) - disregarding the somewhat split picture for extraposition, (d). However, unless its position is filled by an adverb (or, in fact any other clausal constituent), Modern German expletive *es* must occur in clause-initial position. See (17) as compared to (16) above.

- |                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| (17)a PRESENTATIVE: | Es sind die Eltern gekommen.<br>it are the parents come |
|---------------------|---|



b METEOROLOGICAL:	Es gewittert hier viel. it storms here a lot
c IMPERS.PASSIVE:	Es wird hier viel schigefahren. it is here a lot skied
d EXTRAPOSITION:	Es ist nun deutlich, was ich meine. it is now clear what I mean
e MEDIAL VOICE:	Es füttert sich Löwen nicht leicht it feeds REFL lions-ACC not easily Es unterhält sich dich angenehm it entertains REFL you-ACC pleasantly "You are pleasant to entertain"

This would seem to allow the conclusion that Modern German does not have a structurally licensed subject position, but, rather, a structurally licensed Topic position to be filled (also Lenerz' conclusion; see above). In other words, [Spec, CP] may host the expletive *es*, whereas [Spec, IP] remains empty in the cases illustrated under (16). The clearest and most undebatable evidence for this split between the structural positions of topic, on the one hand, and subject, on the other, is, in fact, rendered by the middle voice construction in German and the weather verbs. See (16b,e) and (17b,e). Where we have a topic position filled as in (16e), the expletive enforcing agreement is in the syntactic middle field (i.e. between V-2 in COMP and V-last, the basic position of the predicate and INFL). It is in this [Spec, IP] that INFL, on its way to the verb in COMP, picks up its inflectional agreement features from *es*.

Without looking into further evidence on this assumption about Modern German I adopt Haider's (1987, 1991) position that it does not have an obligatory subject position. In other words, German takes exception to Chomsky's Extended Projection Principle. German is in contradistinction to Dutch and English, whose mode of theta-role assignment is structural (i.e. they require an argument position outside of VP in order for identifying the external argument), whereas Modern German identifies the subject by nominative case irrespective of its structural position (see Reis 1982). In other words, since, given the unambiguous identification by the nominative case, the specific structural position, [Spec, IP], need not be reserved for the subject in languages assigning theta-roles by case-identification.

Beyond the subject-topic condition holding for Modern German it is to be noticed that German, other than English and the Romance and Scandinavian languages, has left-directional government (left-branching). Under right-branching order as in English, the Romance and the Scandinavian languages, movement of the subject-designated, external argument out of its basic VP-position is required to pick up the features of INFL. In a left-branching order (Object-V order) like that of German, however, such raising is string-vacuous since INFL has to accompany V from its basic position within VP in the first place (see Reuland/ Kosmeijer 1989 for Dutch and Bayer 1991 for German). Given that under the Least Effort Principle (Chomsky 1989) string vacuous movement should be avoided and, given further the option of superimposing an empty projection

of let us say [Spec,IP], on a subjacent, homomorphous projection, e.g. [NP,VP] (as devised by Haider 1987), an empty subject position like [Spec,IP] is always satisfied. Thus, even if Modern German had no unambiguous nominative case identifying the subject (*in situ!*), any language providing this matching mechanism would still render superfluous (a number of) clause-internal subject expletives, since the empty category would be satisfied by Haider's node match. This structural property, to all appearances, pairs with a strong, i.e. morphologically rich INFL, and raising movement of V out of VP. This mechanism does not correlate, however, with a weak INFL such as in English, where V stays within VP, i.e. within its basic position, due to the V-Object order (right branching).

Under Haider's configurationality parameter (Haider 1991: 54f.), German and Icelandic share the property of not requiring [Spec,IP], outside of VP, for identification of the subject argument. On the other hand, Icelandic and German differ with respect to the relative basic order of the verb and the objects: VO in Icelandic, OV in German (Sigurðsson 1988). This distinction implies that movement of V into INFL in VO-types are never string vacuous. Consequently, agreement is satisfied under whatever nominal case is present in [Spec,IP] in Icelandic. For German and Dutch, on the other hand, both being of the OV-type, require node matching (Haider 1991) to satisfy the empty subject node ([Spec,IP] superimposed on the VP-structure thereby matching the VP-internal nominative case of the subject in [NP,VP]). The clause-medial position for the expletive is thus always licensed in Icelandic and can therefore remain empty, whereas for German and Dutch different requirements have to be satisfied in order to license empty [Spec,IP]-positions.

In order to extend the typological range and possibly capture new distributional types, let us look more closely at Dutch, which forms a type mediating between the Mainland Scandinavian languages and German (and Icelandic). See (18).

(18) MAINLAND SCAND.: SWEDISH

DUTCH

TYPE

1a	* <b>(Det)</b> regnade i gar. Regnade * <b>(det)</b> i gar?	* <b>(Het)</b> regent. Regent * <b>(het)</b> ?
1b	(Du är redd.) (Är du redd?) (Jag fryser.) (Fryser du?)	(Ik huiver/gruw ervan.) (Huiver/gruw ik ervan?) Ik heb <b>het</b> koud. Heb jij <b>het</b> koud?
1c	* <b>(Det)</b> dansades pa skeppet. Dansades * <b>(det)</b> ?	* <b>(Er)</b> wordt gedanst. Wordt * <b>(er)</b> gedansd?
2	* <b>(Det)</b> är uppenbart att... Nu är * <b>(det)</b> uppenbart att..	<b>Het/Vooral</b> is duidelijk dat Nu is <b>(het)</b> duifdelijk dat
3	* <b>(Det)</b> komma manga lingvister  Idag komma * <b>(det)</b> manga lingvister	* <b>(Er/Vandaag)</b> komen <b>(er)</b> veel linguisten. Komen <b>(er)</b> <b>(vandaag)</b> veel linguisten?

(18) shows that Dutch is somewhat more liberal than Swedish as

far as the expletives is concerned. As opposed to Swedish, in Dutch the clause-medial expletive in extraposed subject clauses and with VP-internal subjects ("ergative subjects") is optional. The null option for the expletive is due to the node matching process, which licenses [Spec,IP] by superimposing the case feature of the basic subject position in [NP,VP].

In conclusion, one can say that the crucial distributional difference between Modern German, on the one hand, and English and the Mainland Scandinavian languages, on the other, is thus: (a) German has a clause-internal expletive only with meteorological verbs and the medial construction, whereas English and the Mainland Scandinavian languages have an expletive throughout; (b) English, other than the rest of the Germanic languages, has no impersonal passive; (c) German has a disambiguating case system, whereas the rest has not; and (d) German is left-branching (object-verb order = strong INFL), whereas English and the Scandinavian languages have V-O (weak INFL). This distributional scenario yields the following typology in structural terms: German needs no structural identification of the arguments for theta-role assignment, as opposed to English and the Scandinavia, which do; German makes use of the matching mechanism in order to avoid non-satisfaction of empty categories and the violation of the ECP, respectively, whereas English and the Mainland Scandinavia lack the movement of V to INFL for lack of agreement features, in the first place.

For the older stages of German, we would thus want to look for the following evidence: (a) do they have distributions of expletives and gaps different from the modern Germanic languages and different from German, in particular? And (b) what is their basic linear order in the first place? We will further, (c), depart from the evidence with respect to the case systems (of Gothic, Old High German, and Middle High German), which are even richer than that of Modern German. And we will have to depart, (d), in our longitudinal survey from the unimpaired pro-drop evidence in Gothic to the specific semi-pro-drop character of Modern German. The following question can thus be asked: what were the changes from Gothic to OHG, to MHG and to Modern German that accompanied, and motivated, the transfer from a pro-drop language to the specific semi-pro drop language of Modern German? When did this, or these, changes take place? And of what nature were they?

##### *5. From Gothic to Modern German: the inflectional paradigms of verb agreement and nominal case distinctions.*

Given that Gothic was a pro-drop language, much like Sanskrit, Old Greek, and Latin, and given further that Modern German has semi-pro drop properties, the following situation has to be faced. According to common assumption (Rizzi 1986, Grewendorf 1986, Platzack 1987; see also Haider 1991: 52), any full pro-drop language, such as Gothic, will also allow null expletives. The inverse relation does not hold: languages whose null expletive system is restricted in that certain expletive types may not be deleted, cannot, by definition and according

to all empirical evidence, possess the full pro-drop property. Since Modern German has a limited range of null expletives ("semi-pro drop"), disallowing therefore the full pro-drop quality, there must have been an evolutionary jump from the full pro-drop quality of Gothic to the semi-pro drop quality of German. The crucial historical step in the German development is obviously that mirrored by the difference between Modern Icelandic with a full null expletive ("full semi-pro drop") system (since thematic pro-drop, in the first place) and the restricted semi-pro drop of Modern German.

### 5.1. Verbal agreement inflection

Jaeggli/Safir (1989: 26ff.) have emphasized the indispensable, though non-sufficient, requirement of rich and uniform agreement paradigms for a language to allow null subjects. Let us see whether the necessary requirement of rich and uniform agreement systems obtained throughout the history of German.

#### GOTHIC (500 B.C.)

Gothic displayed a very uniform inflectional system for the irregular verbs throughout all tenses and moods (Braune/Ebbinghaus 1961: 100 ff.); it had homonymic forms only in the preterite indicative (*nam* "took" 1st=3rd sing.) and the passive present indicative (*nimada* "is taken" for 1st=3rd sing.). For the regular ("weak") verbs the overall picture is somewhat different in so far as the four classes display a limited variety differences of inflectional morphology in the present tense, which is to all appearance what Jaeggli/Safir (1989) mean by lesser paradigmatic uniformity. However, with the exception of the 1st/3rd sing. preterite indicative active form as in *nasi-da* "save", there is not one single homonymic form in the preterite (including the synthetic present (medio-)passive and the imperative forms). Present preterites recruit with the weak preterite paradigm (thus, wholly regular). The verb for *be* is highly irregular in any of the Indo-European languages. *wiljan* "want" is still fully integrated into the inflectional paradigm of the present optative. The overall picture is: almost 100% disambiguating (a lot more so than Modern German), preterite fully uniform, present less so (but highly consistent paradigm internally) - in total, less uniform than Modern German.

#### OLD HIGH GERMAN (500-1100 A.D.)

According to the overview of the inflectional classes (Braune/Mitzka 1963: 264), the only homonymic forms are those between the 1st and 3rd preterite, both indicative and optative as well as both in the strong and the weak paradigms (*nam* "I/(s)he/it took"), *nami* same persons of the optative). The rest is without exception morphologically disambiguated. The uniformity, thus, is higher than in Gothic. Morphological identity is almost 100% warranted.

What distinguishes OHG from its direct predecessor, Gothic, nevertheless is the loss of two main synthetic mor-

phological paradigms: the mediopassive has been fully replaced by the periphrastic passive; and the dual conjugation has been lost altogether. On the other hand, the periphrastic forms rise, and with them the prominence of auxiliary verbs (for the future tense; the periphrastic perfect tense). The number of verbal inflectional paradigms reduced in OHG by one. There was just a trend toward classificatory formal simplification together with a emergence of periphrastically distinguished new classes denoting innovative semantic oppositions. A number of tense distinctions are still guised in aspectual morphological form (Abraham 1991).

It is unclear how this overall picture is to be aligned in Jaeggli/Safir's scenario of reasoning. However, what one can say safely is that person and number disambiguity is not diminished in OHG. The remainder of the innovative developments do not appear to count in the subject-verb agreement scenario.

#### MIDDLE HIGH GERMAN (1100-1450)

The degree of verbal inflectional homonymy, as compared to OHG and Gothic, has grown considerably. These are the paradigmatic forms that are no longer distinguished (Paul/Wiehl/Grosse 1989: 242): 1st/2nd plural present indicative and subjunctive of the irregular verbs; likewise, 1st/2nd sing. present with those verbs that do not display stem umlaut in the indicative (as opposed to the subjunctive). The preterite subjunctive has given up its past meaning. However, this is just a fraction of the syncretism that has been documented from the dialectal versions of MHG (see Paul/ Wiehl/Grosse 1989: 242f., Anm. 1-11). The paradigms of the weak verbs, still extant in OHG, has been given up altogether (Paul/ Wiehl/Grosse 1989: 253). Indicative and subjunctive, still regularly kept distinct in OHG, are not distinguished any more in the preterite.

If counted across all verbal paradigms (strong vs. weak, present preterits, *wellen* "will", *tuon* "do", *hân* "have"), tenses (present vs. preterite), and moods (imperative vs. indicative vs. subjunctive), there are 11 homonymic forms (Paul/Wiehl/Grosse 1989: 280 f.) paradigm-internally and some 8 cross-paradigmatic cases of morphological syncretisms. The reduction of classificatory verbal distinctions was further extended.

#### MODERN GERMAN

The very fact that in telegram style and kitchen door/ice box notices, German can employ pro-drop quite extensively is in itself sufficient proof for the claim that Modern German has sufficient agreement distinctions. This conclusion is supported by another observation, namely that the German speaker does not feel at ease, and tries to avoid, cases where both agreement and concordance lead to ambiguity for reasons of morphological syncretisms. See the following illustrations for the first claim.

## TELEGRAM/STICKER NOTICES/COLLOQUIAL SPEECH

- (19) Bin(1sg) (ja) morgen zuhause; Habe(1sg) keinen Heller mehr; Komme(/n)(1sg/pl) gleich wieder
- (20) Kommst(2sg)? Lachst(2sg)? Kommts(2pl)? Lachts(2pl)? Hams(3pl) a? "Haben (sie) welche?" Gemma(1pl) (mia) jetzt hoam "Gehn (wir) jetzt heim"

Two things are to be noted. First, even in the face of such uniquely distinguishing inflectional morphology German is wide of the pro-drop mark in that it can at most omit pronouns in enclitic, but never in proclitic, positions with respect to their hosting category. Note, second, that such inflectional agreement paradigms would, of course, not preclude full, i.e. also proclitic, pro-drop cases in German. Other than MG, the dialects of Bavarian and Austrian (retained ever since MHG), for example, have retained a unique morphological form for the 3rd plural (V-a/ent; MG: V-en!); yet, neither the likewise unambiguous sg nor the pl of the 3rd person are ever used with pro-drop, not even in the licensing styles and jargons.

Suffice that for us to conclude that neither is German a pro-drop language in any stricter sense, nor can agreement distinctions, or the lack thereof, play the universal role that Platzack (1987) and Jaeggli/Safir (1989) have attributed to them. Note also that an agreement mechanics would not account for the fact that, as Haider (1985) has suggested, some obligatory expletives supply a formal antecedent for the reflexive anaphor in the middle construction of MG. This claim is not to be aligned, however, with the non-occurrence of such an expletive binder for the very same reflexive anaphor in impersonal passives. See (21a) vs. (21b).

- (21)a weil \*(es) sich hier gut lebt ... middle construction  
 b weil \*(es) sich hier nicht geschämt werden darf  
 ... intransitive passive

The last observation is just one among many that function as disclaimers to general validity of the assumption, and consequently the parametric status in the sense of Universal Grammar, that an account of null-expletives can be based on morphological agreement distinctions, at least not in the simplified version as provided by Jaeggli/Safir (1989).

## 5.2. Conclusion

It is beyond any doubt, as we shall see presently, that all of the 4 diachronic stages under inspection can identify the subject by way of its case morphology as opposed to all other structural and lexical case forms. This is the common property throughout all historical stages. In other words, the subject can be identified independent of its structural position (Reis 1982; Haider 1991). There is furthermore reason to assume that to the extent that word order was structurally determined at all (see, for such an assumption for OHG, Tomaselli 1989, 1991), there was no VP, the extension of this position being that German has not known a VP, in any strict structural

sense, up to Modern German (Haider 1991, Abraham 1991b). Thus, it is to be expected that, as long as agreement (the structural identification of the subject being excluded by the former assumption, i.e. by force of the lack of a structural subject position throughout the stages under inspection) could be safeguarded, any of the historical stages could sport pro-drop and semi-pro drop. Notice that we keep apart the question whether or not some language must display (semi) pro-drop, and whether it can afford (semi) pro-drop. No answer will be offered concerning the first of the two. See the brief Gothic text below showing both pro-drop and non-pro-drop.

- (22) (Matthew 5): 20 *Qiða auk izwiz ðatei [...], ni ðau qimið in ðiudanguardjai himine. 21 hausideduð ðatei [...]. 22 aððan ik qiða izwis ðatei [...].* "20 Because I tell you that [...], not shall come into heaven's empire. 21 (you) heard that [...]. 22 But I tell you that [...]".

Notice that the Old Greek original had *lego* in 20 and *ego lego* in 22. Old Greek had, in fact, pro-drop quite regularly except for contrastive reasons, which is the case in Matth. 5,22 above.

There is thus no reason to appeal to the stronger identificatory principle inferred on the basis of their data by Jaeggli/Safir (1989: 35) and reformulated in (23), the reason being that the structural, positional Case-governing force appears not to be satisfied in the first place.

- (23) Strong identification by agreement:

AGR can identify an empty category as thematic *pro* iff the category containing AGR Case-governs the empty category.

The concept of Case-government in (23) is a structural, (base)-positionally derived notion. It will no doubt have to be worked out further. Notice that Gothic, which is largely word-order free as Old Greek and, consequently, does not appear to satisfy (23), amply displays pro-drop none-the-less, i.e. no less than the classical modern pro-drop vernacular, Italian. And OHG as well as MHG do partly, though considerably less (Paul/ Wihle/ Grosse 1989: 365ff.). and, where they do, often mirroring the Latin original pro-drop structure (Eggenberger 1961: 165ff.; Lenerz 1983: 104).

If the empty expletive, for languages with some structurally accountable word order, is identified in the sense of an elaborated (23), we shall have to assume some structurally motivated linking mechanism between morphological cases and the theta-roles of the verbal arguments. The morphological distinctions of cases are neither problematic nor implausible. The empirical question, however, will be whether or not sufficient case-morphological distinctions are provided by the four language stages under inspection. If such a direct, positionally unmediated thematic identification by linking is to be assumed, the following licensing condition will apply.

## (24) Identification by case-linking

Morphological case can identify an empty category as thematic *pro* iff the linking relation is unambiguous.

Note, further, that we would want to motivate these linking relations in structural terms. In other words, the structural relation identifying the subject-nominative should be different from the structural-object accusative, and the structural case linkings should be different again from linking of the lexical cases.

What is paramount for the further discussion is the question whether or not all the language stages under inspection provide cases sufficiently distinct to establish unambiguous identifications of theta-roles. This is an empirical question. The theoretical question to be solved has to do with the specific formal linking relations of the different case morphologies. We shall approach these questions in this order.

### 5.3. *The prominence of the nominative in the morphological case paradigms*

I will not repeat the arguments that have led Reis (1982) to the conclusion that the nominative in Modern German is the subject identifier *katexochen*. Suffice it to say that there is no other morphological case that is so unambiguously linkable to some clausal function as the nominative. Notice also that, while the direct object has to appear in the accusative form, there is, first, by no means non-ambiguity with respect to the clausal function and argument-status of the accusative. Second and of equal weight, the structural mechanism of passivization in German is not dependent on the occurrence of the direct object since the triggering function is the agentivity of the subject argument irrespective of some transitive object (impersonal passives). Thus, while the accusative is an ambiguous identifier of the structural DO and not necessary as a passive trigger, the subject nominative is indispensable for passivization and as an identifier of the subject. If there is a nominative in some clause it has to be the subject or else it is a predicative nominative coreferent with the subject. Notice that for the German identification of case there is furthermore the distinct inflectional contribution of the determiner (article, numeral, indefinite pronominal, quantifier) as well as the attributive adjective.

However, while it is plausible to drop the condition of some structural identification of the subject for all stages of German including Gothic, the concept of linking as such is far from clear. Notice that no direct and unambiguous link between morphological case and theta-roles is possible (for direct evidence see Abraham 1972, 1978; indirectly, this is supported by the assumption of a small number of case-identified clause plans in Czepluch 1991). Notice further that the assumption of nominative assignment by default, which has often been appealed even for English, is vague by implication from the above observation (i.e. in the absence of clear links between the non-nominative cases and a limited number of



theta-roles).

The viable alternative to the assumption of some default link of the nominative is to retain the structural government relation for the subject nominative, while, at the same time, abstracting away from the notion of a VP. This appears to meet the evidence of Gothic, OHG, MHG and Modern German. See (25) and (26) (the latter due to Bayer/Kornfilt 1991).

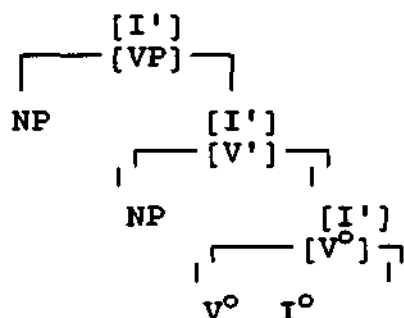
(25) Identification by Agreement Revised

An empty category can be identified as thematic *pro* in any underived clausal position iff INFL fuses with any V-projection from V<sup>o</sup> upwards.

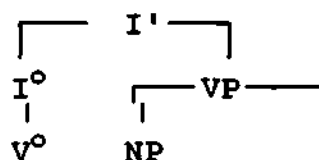
See (26a) and (26b) as far as the INFL-position is concerned.

(26a) is held to be the basic structure of OHG, MHG and MG. No major change has occurred in German with respect to the underlying word order; see, however, (26b) for Modern English, which has undergone a major reanalysis as it started out from something like (26a) for Old English.

(26)a. German



b. English

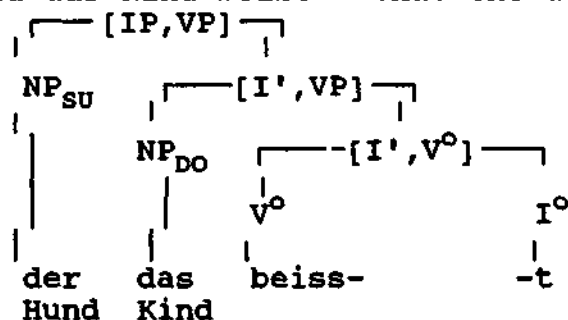


(Bayer/Kornfilt 1991: 20)

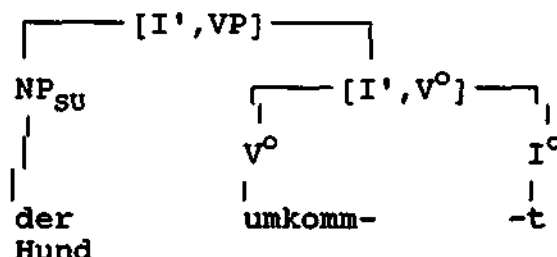
See (27)-(29) for illustrations as to how other clause plans are to be derived.

(27) active two-place (transitive) clause, unmarked order:

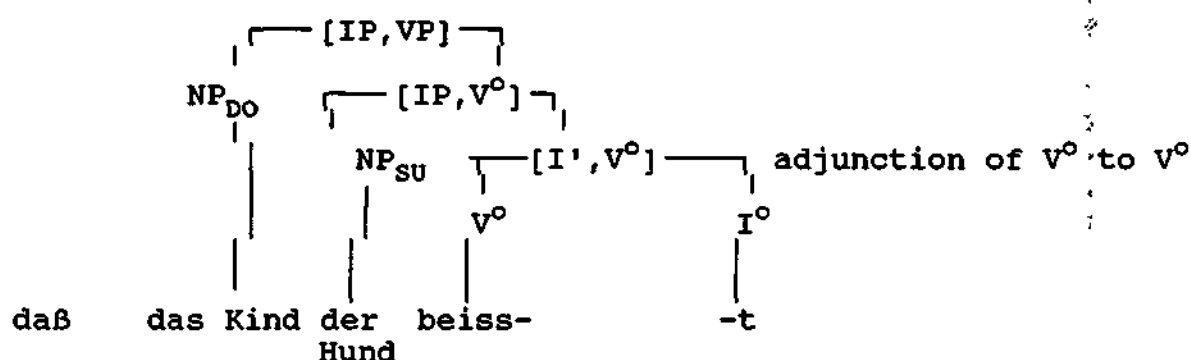
*daß der Hund das Kind beißt* "that the dog bites the child"



(28) unaccusative clause, unmarked order:  
*daß der Hund umkommt* "that the dog dies"



(29) active two-place clause, marked (scrambled) order:  
*daß das Kind der Hund beißt* "that the child bites the dog"



The nominative is thus always an IP-projection, while the accusative is a V'-projection. The base order positions are: IP/VP for the nominative, V'/I' for the structural accusative (other than the adverbial accusative!, which is an adjunction projection within VP!). Scrambled, and thus marked, positions have the following fused categorial features: for nominative within VP: IP/V<sup>0</sup>; for the accusative outside of VP: IP/VP. The restrictions for category fusing are thus: ungrammatical IP/V'; marked position IP/V<sup>0</sup>; restricted to lexical case: I'/VP.

#### 6. Back to Gothic pro-drop as well as the growth of expletives and the decline of null-expletives in OHG, MHG and Modern German: a parametric account

The main goal of this concluding discussion is to provide an account of the following two facts: first, the growing number of expletives as opposed to the absence of any expletive, in the history of German; and, second, the comparison with Icelandic, a clearly configurational language with nevertheless expletiveless constructions.

##### 6.1. Word order restrictions in OHG and MHG

OHG (to a lesser extent possibly also Gothic) and, to an even stronger extent, MHG were subject to a number of striking word order restrictions, which render OHG accountablke in structural terms (see Tomaselli 1991a; as for striking similarities

to OE compare van Kemenade 1987). See (30a-e).

- (30)a V-2 constraint in the main clause (overwhelming in frequency)  
 b V-1 in questions and imperatives, but also in declarative clauses of a strongly rhematic character  
 c V-last not only in dependent sentences, but also in main declaratives.  
 d  $XP/(w-, ne, \delta a)-V_{fin}$ -pronoun in main clauses, but not:  $*(w-, ne, \delta a)$ -pronoun- $V_{fin}$   
 e Comp-pronoun, but not:  $*\text{pronoun-Comp}...$   
 f Comp-Subjpronoun- $V_{fin}$ ..., but not:  $*\text{Comp-0-}V_{fin}$ -SubjNP-...  
 g  $[_{IP} NP_i [_I, [_I^{\circ} \text{clitic}+V_{fin}] VP]]$ ,  
 but not:  $*[_{IP} NP_i [_I, VP [_I^{\circ} \text{clitic}+V_{fin}]]]$ .

(30e,f) imply that the following orders were possible (Tomasselli 1991a: 100).

(31)a Comp .....	$V_{fin}$	V-last
b Comp .....	$V_{fin}$ XP	extraposition
c Comp .....	$V_{fin}$ $V_{fin}$	V-last
d Comp .....	$V_{fin}$ $V_{fin}$	verb raising
e Comp Subj-NP	$V_{fin}$ Obj-NP V	verb phrase raising

The last, but most crucial restriction for all of the forerunner stages of Modern German is that the hypotaxis was only partially developed. Schrodtt (1991), based on scrupulous metrical evidence, comes to the conclusion that certain types of what appear to be dependent clauses are in fact juxtaposed main clauses. The prestigious, most comprisive grammar of MHG, Paul et al. (1989) starts its chapter on complex sentences by emphasizing that the hypotaxis in MHG by formal means was still widely underdeveloped, certainly by comparison with MG (Paul et al. 1989: 406). See for claims to the same effect: Paul (1916), Behaghel (1928: 543-570), Kuhn (1933), and Betten (1987: 85-89). For a wide range of illustrations see Paul et al. (1989: 406-412). Note that this hesitant emergence of hypotaxis repeats the equally lagging development of hypotaxis from Proto-Germanic to OHG (Lenerz 1985: 126) and from Proto-Indoeuropean to the attested classical IE languages (Kiparsky 1990).

What these findings reflect is a realistic, and real-time, picture of the emergence of the dependent clause structure: a stepwise emergence of the dependent structure based on lexical COMP-types and predicate types. In a way, then, the pre-Modern German stages can be said to have only marginal, or no, access to some CP-structure; some major portion of the syntax of Gothic, OHG and MHG restricted its clausal structure to IP (see the sketch on the rise of dependent clause structure from Proto-Indoeuropean to Indo-European and Germanic, in Kiparsky 1990). Notice that such a realistic, lexically and functionally controlled scenario of CP-emergence entails that, unless morphological case distinctions in extensive paradigmatic anchoring are given up simultaneously, the new, unstable

and infrequent CP-projection will coexist, side by side, with pure IP-structures. In other words, there is no need for the declarative main clause to transfer from IP to CP. Notice further that the existence of V-first main clauses is nicely supported by the IP-assumption: the verb moves to the highest projection of INFL - and no further - into the head position leaving open the [Spec,IP] position for other clausal elements, either case specified arguments or adverbial topics. The topic prominency, typical of languages rich in morphological case distinctions, will be retained also in that stage when the CP emerges more widely across sentential types: [Spec,CP] will again be the most typical position for topics, notably in rhematic, presentative sentences, with all lexical material residing in the VP. This is the prototypical distribution of the expletive *iz/ēs/es*.

As Tomaselli (based on previous literature; see 1991a: 103) has shown that the distributions sketched in (30)-(31) are not homogeneous in the primary OHG texts. According to the same distributional criteria, Modern German and Dutch as well as Upper German dialects would seem to have different correlations. See (32). [VR = V-raising]

(32)

	[ <sub>VP</sub> NP V]	V-2	XP-pron.+V <sub>fin</sub>	Comp-NP-V <sub>fin</sub> .V	VR
OHG	+	+	-(+)	+	+
W-Flem.	+	+	-	+	+
Swiss G.	+	+	-	+	+
Dutch	+	+	-	-	+
UpperGerm.	+	+	-	+	+
Mod.Germ.	+	+	-	-	-(+)

The failure to relate to verb raising, as observed for Modern Standard German, leaves verb projection raising as the only option for the data to be accounted for. Modern Standard German, as opposed to Dutch and many of the German dialects, it is held, is not a verb raising language; rather, raising can only take place for verbal projections.

## 6.2. The distribution of expletives vs. null-expletives from OHG through MG

### 6.1. The data

Gothic has no obligatory expletive (it would be "it") under any distributional configuration. This is in line with the implication that pro-drop entails null expletives. For OHG, MHG, and Modern German (MG) the picture is varied, with a clear line of rising expletive. See (33) for the distribution of OHG *iz*, (34) of MHG *es* and (35) of MG *es*. [+/-/0 ... frequent vs. infrequent occurrence vs. non-occurrence of the expletive; sources: Behaghel 1923: 444ff.; Lenerz 1983: 104ff.; 1=impersonal intransitive verbs (iVs); 2=extraposed subject clause; 3=topicless sentence (pure rheme sentence); 0=place verbs under 1 below are meteorological, temperature verbs as well as date reference predicates; 1-place iVs are verbs of

personal feelings and mental state governing datives or accusatives]

(33) OHG	clause-1		non-clause-1	
	frequent	occasional	frequent	occasional
1a 0-place	+	-	+	-
1b 1-place	-	0	-	0
1c imp.passive	-	0	-	0
2 extr.sub.cl.	+	-	+	-
3 topicless S	-	+	-	0

(34) MHG	clause-1		non-clause-1	
	frequent	occasional	frequent	occasional
1a 0-place	+	0	+	-
1b 1-place	+	0	+	-
1c imp.passive	+	-	-	0
2 extr.sub.cl.	+	-	+	-
3 topicless S	+	0	-	0

(35) MG	clause-1		non-clause-1	
	frequent	occasional	frequent	occasional
1a 0-place	+	0	+	0
1b 1-place	+	-	0	+
1c imp.passive	+	-	-	0
2 extr.sub.cl.	+	-	0	+
3 topicless S	+	0	-	0

In less technical terms, (33)-(35) yield the following relative distribution (*Es* clause-initial expletive; *es* clause-medial expletive):

(33') OHG			
1a	frequent <i>Es</i>	=	frequent <i>es</i>
1b	no <i>Es</i>	=	no <i>es</i>
1c	no <i>Es</i>	=	no <i>es</i>
2	frequent <i>Es</i>	=	frequent <i>es</i>
3	infrequent <i>Es</i>	>	no <i>es</i>

(34') MHG			
1a	obligatory <i>Es</i>	>	frequent <i>es</i>
1b	obligatory <i>Es</i>	>	frequent <i>es</i>
1c	frequent <i>Es</i>	>>	no <i>es</i>
2	frequent <i>Es</i>	=	frequent <i>es</i>
3	obligatory <i>Es</i>	/=	no <i>es</i>

(35') MG			
1a	obligatory <i>Es</i>	=	obligatory <i>es</i>
1b	frequent <i>Es</i>	>	infrequent <i>es</i>
1c	frequent <i>Es</i>	>>	no <i>es</i>
2	frequent <i>Es</i>	>>	infrequent <i>es</i>
3	obligatory <i>Es</i>	/=	no <i>es</i>

Discussion of (33)-(35):

Notice, first, that the major change occurs between OHG, on

the one hand, and MHG/MG, on the other hand. This is due to the fact that the OHG inhomogeneity across the clause-1 distributions is aligned in MHG and MG. On the other hand, the homogeneity between clause-1 and non-clause-1 structures in OHG changes to inhomogeneity in MHG/MG. This yields the impression that what is more or less lexically controlled in OHG yields to rather structural conditions in MHG and MG.

Let us briefly see what these lexical and structural properties might be: class 1a of the "weather" verbs is clearly that of syntactic "null"-place iVs, whose expletive, while non-referential and only quasi-thematic, has yet argument status (the German traditional terminology "null-place" thus showing to be a misnomer). The same holds for the extraposed subject clauses: no clausal theta role, but argument status. Class 1b comprises verbs denoting feelings and mental states; they generally govern one argument in the dative or accusative. It is commonly assumed that such verbs have properties of structural ergatives, in some wider sense (Belletti/Rizzi 1986). Class 1c is that of impersonal passives (invariably agentive verbs), likewise unaccusatives, or ergatives, though in a structural sense rather than in a lexical one. Type 3, finally, co-classifies true rhematic structures, i.e. sentences without a theme; it can be argued that such clauses are tensed VPs, or IP/VPs, i.e. structures with a VP-internal subject nominative and, thus, of structural unaccusativity, or ergativity.

The situation from the pro-drop and expletiveless<sup>2</sup> Gothic appears to have changed in so far as expletives were introduced for classes 1a and 2; their common denominator is true intransitivity with one thetaless argument. These two classes are distinct from 1b,c and 3, which are ergative and which have remained expletiveless, i.e. without formal subjects. By contrast, MHG as well as MG do not change a great deal except that they extend the process toward clause-first homogeneity, which means, to all appearance, stabilizing the structural topic position. The best evidence is rendered by the increasing occurrence of deictic (thematic) adverbials of time and place in the clause-initial position that had remained empty in prior historical stages (cf. columns 2, clause-1, from MHG to MG).

OHG and MHG differ clearly with respect to classes/types 1b,c and 3 in clause-1 position. As for 1b, a transfer from OHG lexical eV to MHG iV seems to have taken place; MHG verbs of the "Psych"-class must fill their clause-initial position. This need not mean that they gained a new lexical grid, nor does it imply that MHG went structural with respect to its subject assignment. We argued that the paradigms of verbal agreement morphology do not warrant the assumption that anything changed in this respect in the longitudinal development.

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<sup>2</sup> as far as our knowledge about Gothic goes; note that, while the impression about the pro-drop and the null-expletive characters certainly reflects the general picture of Gothic, it is unclear whether we can say that the language is amenable to a structural account in terms of word order. Note, also, that Gothic has intransitive passives, which pro-drop languages should not have.

Rather, if the assumption of a stepwise, lexically controlled emergence of a CP is correct, the new CP, *ceteris paribus*, created a new topic position leaving unaffected the assignment mechanism of the subject, i.e. either by its case morphological mode (by force of the unambiguous nominative) or by structural assignment in [Spec,IP/VP] (see (27)-(29) above). In other words, unless in the newly emerging dependent clauses, in order to fill V-2 the verb need not climb beyond IP in the main clause; and it did not until the category of Comp emerged as a new functional class, which probably took till late in MHG. As a result of this new CP base a new structural Topic position, [Spec,CP], developed, next to the old [Spec,IP]. It is this scenario of reanalysis and structural ambiguity that we have to deal with from OHG onwards till Early Modern German.

## 6.2. The account

6.2.1. Class 1a, subclass of the impersonal verbs, includes weather verbs and temperature adjectivals. Our summaries in (33)-(35) and (33')-(35'), respectively, lead us to the conclusion that this verbal class has been subcategorized for quasi-thematic, though non-referential subjects all along from early on. This appears to be in line with early personal constructions, viz. Latin (*Jupiter pluit*), which may have carried over to OHG (see Lenerz 1983: 102 for a survey of the pertinent literature). This explains its unrelenting representation in all stages of the historical development.

The fact that modern Icelandic construes real null-subject verbs in this class, just like true pro-drop languages (compare, for example, Italian: *piove* "it rains", *fa freddo* makes-cold "it is cold), can nevertheless not be taken to prove its unimpaired pro-drop property. Note that Icelandic has intransitive passives (*Var dansað* was-danced "Was there dancing?"), a property totally absent in true pro-drop languages.

6.2.2. Class 1c, the syntactic type of intransitive passives: The fact that OHG through MG has clause-medial null-subjects with intransitive passives can be taken to be indicative of its persistent history as a language without a structural subject position, [Spec,IP]. Likewise, the fact that simultaneously the clause-initial expletive is realized from MHG onwards indicates an important structural reanalysis from OHG to MHG: the growth of a structural topic position, [Spec,CP]. Note that this is in line with the often attested observation that hypotaxis emerges slowly in the course of OHG till well into the MHG period. *es* in clause-initial position is the structural topic position in the newly emerging sentential structure.

6.2.3. Class 1b, *verba sentiendi* and verbs of feeling: The conclusion drawn for class 1c carries over to 1b. Initial *es* is not the subject expletive, but the topic *es* in [Spec,CP], which is not the subject position. See the missing clause-medial representation of the middle in MG as opposed to MHG

and MG.

6.2.4. **Class 2.** The distribution between OHG and MHG/MG is striking and apparently non-alignable with the general trend of the expletive-growth through time everywhere else. Compare the frequent expletive representations, clause-medial as well as clause-initial, in OHG and MHG, whereas they clearly reduce clause-medially in MG. Yet, this has an explanation which is alignable with the rest of the scenario. Remember that we pointed at the reluctant emergence of the CP-structure, together with hypotactic COMP, in OHG and MHG, which prompted the emergence of topic-es. The clause-medial es of this type, then, in the OHG and MHG periods is not in [Spec,IP], but VP-internal, i.e. in its base position, [NP,VP].

Since there is a certain number of occurrences without expletives in this class of extraposed subject clauses, we may assume an inhomogeneous overall stage of OHG development, with new CP-structures without the clause-medial subject, but only the clause-initial, topic expletive, on the one hand, and old IP-structures with both realizations.

6.2.5. **Class 3.** The MHG and MG distribution yields the best possible evidence of the historical reanalysis from the (pre-)OHG IP-clause structure to the MHG/MG CP-structure. To the extent that the subject-NPs are non-definite, or non-specific, their position is no doubt VP-internal ("ergative" triggered by the specific definiteness property). In other words, there is no reason, nor is there a structural position, for the expletive to turn up in VP.

The picture in OHG and MHG, however, merits a more scrupulous analysis. Note, first, that the indefinite article, in its specific opposition with the definite article, does not develop until late in MHG (Braune/Mitzka 1963: 231). In the majority of the cases, the indefinite article remained unrealized leaving the N determinerless. See the illustration in (36).

(36) Tatian 57 (Matthew XII) and the Latin original

39.	Thô antlinginti quad in:	Qui respondens ait illis:
	'ubil cunni inti furlegan	generatio mala et adultera
	suohhit zehhan, inti	signum querit, et signum
	zehhan ni uirdit imo	non dabitur ei nisi
	gigeban, nibi zehhan	signum Ionaë prophete.
	Ionases thes uufzagen`.	

By contrast, the same section from Matthew XII from the Monsee Vienna Fragments (Braune/Ebbinghaus 1965: 24) runs as follows:

(37) 2. Hench VI. VII. (Fragm. theot. IV. V.)

39. Er antuurta, quaat im:  
 'ubil manchunni enti  
 urtriuuui sôhhit zehhan,  
 enti [ ] ni uirdit imo  
 gageban, nibu zehhan  
 Ione dhes forasagin.`



The marking of the gap, [\_\_], has been added to the original text by myself (W.A.). In this gap, the subject pronoun referring to the antecedent *zeihhan* has been omitted, which, unless we conjecture a scribe's mistake, would be indicative of a true pro-drop instance. The crucial observation, however, is the following: the first instance of *zeihhan* has an indefinite reading; so are its second and third instances. Note, however, that this second occurrence is not in VP, but in topic position (either in [Spec,CP] or in [Spec,IP]). We may assume that for an ergative, indefinite subject, the same alternative under topicalization existed in OHG as in MG (in MG obligatorily marked by marked rhematic accent). This marked focus signals both Theme and Rheme status of the moved element (Abraham 1991b for MG).

What this amounts to is the general conclusion that OHG, in the absence of a systematic paradigmatic status of the indefinite article, crucially reduces the possibility of marking on some subject-NP the fused discourse-functional status of Theme and Rheme within VP. The mechanism to which it resorts to express this fused function is topicalization. This, beyond doubt, reduces severely the observational range for VP-internal subjects.

#### *7. Concluding remarks and alternative perspectives*

Our account for the emergence, and of the restrictions, of the occurrence of null subjects in the history of German rests crucially on two main assumptions: first, that OHG and MHG are to be accounted for in structural (configurational) terms; and, second, that the dependent clause structure was not as pervasive as in MG, or that it was heavily underdeveloped. Both assumptions need further commenting.

According to Tomaselli (1989, 1991), there is no doubt about the structural accountability of OHG. From this we may legitimately conclude that MHG, with its medial status of development between OHG and MG, is structural, too. Notice that no such claim appears to be warranted so far for Gothic.

As for the reduced hypotaxis, several scenarios are imaginable. Note, in the first place, that there is no need to assume that the CP-structure had to be generalized to cover the independent clause, too. In fact, there are claims to the effect that Modern German has an IP-structure for the independent clause (van Stechow/Sternefeld 1988: 375ff.). Note that one can even gain plausibility, for the well-attested lagging emergence of the hypotaxis in the histories of Indoeuropean and Germanic, by assuming a structural split between independent and dependent clauses - something that is also a viable assumption for Modern German, Frisian, and Dutch, to say the least. Under such a scenario the assumption that CP was historically extended, step by step and based on a number of lexical and structural conditions, to partly, but never totally, replace what used to be the exclusive structure, viz. IP,

in the first place<sup>3</sup>, comes as a natural course of development.

What appears to be an attractive option to the attempt presented here is the parametric account of expletives in the Germanic languages presented by Brandner (1991). The gist of Brandner's story is that the distribution of expletives in sundry European languages can be accounted for on the basis of two independently motivated principles: the Agreement Realization Principle (ARP) and the Visibility Condition for functional categories together with a parameter about the optional clause-mateship of TP. Brandner distinguishes pronominal and local expletives: the former ones serve to instantiate ARP; the latter help to project AGR in those languages which possess but a weak inflection. This assumption is motivated by a general visibility principle for functional categories. What makes this approach promising is the fact that the tensing paradigm in OHG and MHG developed with a considerable lag and replaced but slowly the original aspectually based time reference. The same holds for Gothic (Abraham 1991c). This scenario would allow to exploit Brandner's conclusions that rest on TP. On the other hand, it is unclear at present how aspectual features, pervasive as they are in the older stages of German, should be accounted for in the present state of generative syntax (Abraham 1991a).

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<sup>3</sup> I would like to claim that this assumption is fully alignable with Tomaselli's conclusions to the structural accountability of OHG, especially her exploitation of Rizzi's wh-filter. See Tomaselli 1991.

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