EXPLETIVES IN MINIMALISM:
Overt versus covert movement
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Since the mid 1980s, *functional categories* have become more and more important in syntactic theory (cf. van Gelderen 1993). In Chomsky (1992) and Pollock (1989), they are responsible for Case, agreement, and variations in word order. There is a lexical core (the VP with its subject and other arguments) and a set of functional categories on top of this lexical core (CP, TP, AGRP, etc.). *Expletives* are typically elements that are not present in the lexical core but are inserted in the Specifiers of functional categories to satisfy the requirement that certain features must be checked before SPELL-OUT.

In this paper, I examine in a Minimalist framework the relationship between the expletive and the element in the lexical core it is related to. My analysis provides evidence for an expletive-replacement analysis as in Chomsky (1986) because regular agreement as well as 'lack' of agreement can be accounted for. It also shows that there is a connection between c/overt movement and morphological forms. This latter point has recently become an important area of research (e.g. Kiparsky 1994, Falk & Platzack 1994). I will also add some speculations about the changes from Old to Modern English. If Old English makes use of fewer functional categories, it will also make less use of Spec-Head agreement and as a result government will be more important in the checking of features. As functional categories are introduced, so is Spec-Head and so are expletives.

1. Minimalism and expletive replacement

In Chomsky (1992), lexical elements are taken out of the lexicon fully specified and check their features by moving into the Specifier position or adjoining to the Head position of a Functional Category. Elements only move because they have to and they will 'procrastinate' as long as possible. Therefore, checking will be done as late as possible, preferably after SPELL-OUT, i.e. through *covert movement*. There are, however, other considerations: the features in the Heads of the Functional Categories must be checked before SPELL-OUT if they are strong. If the features are weak, the checking can wait (must wait) till after SPELL-OUT. Word order differences between languages thus follow from whether features are weak or strong. The features on Verbs and NPs must also be checked: V-features for checking the Tense and AGR of Verbs and N-features for checking the Case

of NPs.

In Chomsky (1992), the expletive *it* is only mentioned in relation to the conflict between shortest and fewest steps (p. 21) and the expletive *there* is just referred to in relation to Last Resort (p. 46-7). Not much is said about the status of *it*. *There*, on the other hand, is seen as inserted in Spec AGRsP to check the strong N-features. Expletive replacement (i.e. NP-adjunction to the expletive at LF as in Chomsky 1986) is assumed.

Since the V-features are weak in English, the Verb only needs to move covertly, except *have* and *be* which move overtly because they are not visible at LF. It is not clear in Chomsky (1992: 43-44) whether in the case of *have* and *be* the features in the functional heads are also erased/checked overtly or whether they are checked covertly. I assume it follows from 'procrastinate' that they are checked at LF, i.e. covertly. The covert rule of expletive-replacement ensures that the features of the Verb must be checked through Spec-Head agreement in AGRsP with those of the expletive-argument pair as in (1). Since the checking occurs after SPELL-OUT, the verbal agreement is with the expletive-argument pair and not just with the expletive:

1. $_{AGRsP}$[There-five manatees$_k$ are$_i$ [t$_i$ t$_k$ in the water]].

The same can be argued for the expletive *it*. There is a debate whether or not *it* is an expletive. I therefore first argue that it is when it occurs in subject position but not when it occurs in object position. Then, the expletive-replacement rule can be applied as in (1) above.

It has been argued (Bennis 1986) that since movement out of the CP is not possible in (2), *it* must be an argument and the CP connected with it an adjunct:

2.   *What$_i$ did I notice it$_k$ yesterday [that he ate t$_i$]$_k$.

There are some problems with this analysis. For instance, the 'argument' *it* cannot be questioned as (3) shows and the optionality of *it* in (4) makes it hard to argue, in a Minimalist framework, that the expletive is inserted to check the strong features of AGRo. These features are assumed to be weak in English because regular NPs do not move to positions preceding the Verb to check the features overtly:

3.   *What did I notice t yesterday that the trees were cut.

4.   I noticed (it) yesterday that the trees had been cut.

I will therefore not consider expletives in object position in this paper but will concentrate on clear expletives, i.e. those in subject position.

It in subject position is (even stronger: must be) inserted to check the N-features of AGRs which are strong in English, as opposed to those of AGRo. Moreover, unlike object expletives as in (2), the CP connected with a subject *it* allows extraction in (5) and *it* is obligatory as the ungrammaticality of (6) shows. Thus, a subject *it* is a real expletive:

5. What_i is it_k important [that he eats $\text{t}_i]_k$.

6.   *What_i is t_k important [that he eats $\text{t}_i]_k$.

The agreement facts follow straightforwardly. The CP in (5) adjoins to *it* covertly but the number feature on CPs is singular and therefore the covertly moved Verb agrees with the expletive-argument pair.

2.   'Lack of agreement' in expletive constructions

If the above account of a connection between covert Verb-movement, expletive replacement, and agreement is correct, there must also be languages or stages in which the Verb moves overtly and where, as a result, the agreement facts are different. An instance of this is earlier English. The prediction is that when V-movement occurs overtly, the Verb will only have the agreement features of the expletive, not of the NP (which moves later):

7.   North's *Plutarch,*

        There was at the beginning certaine light suspitions and accusations put up against him (cf. Abbott, 1872: 237)

8.   Shakespeare, *Othello* I, 1

        Is there not charms.

In (7) and (8), the postverbal subject and the Verb do not agree because the Verb, having moved overtly, is checked before SPELL-OUT, at a point when the post-verbal NP has not raised to adjoin to the expletive yet.

This lack of agreement in (7) and (8) can be related to other cases of inversion of the subject and the finite Verb where agreement is 'deficient' as in (9):

9.   *Mandeville's Travels* 71-18

In that cytee was the sittynges of the .xij. tribes of Israel. (van der Meer 1929: 150)

In (9), the Verb moves overtly to check its V-features but is not overtly in a Spec-Head relationship with its subject. This, I argue, is the reason the Verb need not agree with its subject.

3.   Other cases of overt vs covert movement

It has been known for some time that in Arabic the subject and the Verb in SV structures display more agreement than in VS structures (see the references in e.g. Koopman and Sportiche 1991). This could be accounted for by assuming that covert NP-movement as in VS structures results in agreement of the Verb with an empty (default) set of features just as in the English cases above where the Verb agrees (checks) with the expletive. Rather than discussing the Arabic data, I will discuss some other early Modern English cases of overt Verb-movement with no overt NP-movement. One could argue that the Verb is in C and that the NP remains in its original position. The V-features are then checked in C but the n-features are checked under government.

Agreement on the Verb 'breaks down' in interrogatives as in (10) and in imperatives as in (11) and (12) in e.g. 14th century texts. The examples given are from Caxton (cf. Kellner, 1905: 133ff):

10.   Aymon 91, 25
       What be you, fayre knyghte.
11.   Blanchardyn and Eglantine, 60, 28
       Come you with me.
12.   Idem, 157, 32
       Defye you hym on my behalfe

Not only does the Verb not agree with the subject *you* in (10) to (12), the Case on the subject is accusative rather than nominative *yee*. Of course, throughout Middle English *yee*

is losing ground, but it is interesting that the environment in which this occurs is when the Verb precedes the subject. I will not examine the 'breakdown' of Case to the subject in this paper, just that of agreement. Spekker (1881: 53-4) also mentions 15 instances in Shakespeare where Verb-movement occurs with agreement as in (13) and (14):

13.   Shakespeare, Caes. I, 3, 148

       Is Decius Brutus and Trebonius there?

14.   Idem, John II, 1, 543

       Where is she and her son?

Millward (1966) studies pronominal Case in imperatives in Shakespeare. The Case expected in the subject of an imperative is nominative, i.e. *yee* and *thou* rather than the accusative *you* and *thee*. This is not what is found. Millward concludes that there are only 35 imperatives with the correct *ye*, whereas *you* is found over 500 times. *Thou* and *thee* are used equally as often. As mentioned, I do not examine the Case. The main point is that the Verb does not agree with the subject in (15) and (16) as a result of the overt movement of the Verb:

15.   Shakespeare, *Winter's Tale*, II, 2

       Do not you feare.

16.   Idem, *Taming Shrew*, III, 1

       Seize thee that List.

In all of these sentences ((10) to (16)), the Verb moves to a position where overt Spec-Head agreement between the subject and the Verb does not occur. Thus, government is relevant for the checking of the N-features but the checking of the V-features is with C.

4.   Speculative remarks

In Old English, there are no expletives (cf. Butler 1980). There is also evidence that functional categories such as T are not used (e.g. *to* is still a prefix and modals are main Verbs, cf. van Gelderen 1993). Since, Verb-second occurs, one might argue that the subject checks its Case under government of the element in C. With the activation of functional categories between 1300 and 1380, the use of Spec-Head also increases. Expletives are

introduced in the time of Chaucer (1380s), as in (17), to occupy the Specifier position:

17.   *Canterbury Tales, Prologue* 134

that in hir coppe ther was no ferthyng sene.

In (17), *ther* is an unlikely locative because a location (*in hir coppe*) is explicitly mentioned. Expletive use is plausible.

Spec-Head is not introduced from one moment to the next as sentences such as (9) to (16) indicate in which government still plays a role for the checking of the N-features. Authors such as Chaucer and Mandeville use an English that is in transition.

5.   Conclusion

I conclude that V-movement being overt *or* covert has ramifications for agreement in the case of expletives. If moved overtly, the Verb agrees with the expletive as shown in section 2 or it checks its features with C as in section 3. If moved covertly, the Verb agrees with the expletive-argument pair. This is demonstrated in section 1. In section 5, I speculate on the changes that may have occurred in Chaucer's time in regard to functional categories.

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