

POSITION VS FUNCTION IN SCANDINAVIAN PRESENTATIONAL CONSTRUCTIONS

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## Abstract

In some theoretical approaches, grammatical relations are assumed to be defined structurally, so that the crucial clue to the grammatical relation of an element is its position in the tree. Lexical Functional Grammar, in contrast, does not assume a universal one-to-one mapping between structural position and grammatical relation — though grammatical relations may well be defined structurally in some languages. This means that in languages which do not rely solely on structure, the grammatical relation of a particular element has to be established on grounds other than structure. In this paper, we look in particular at the association between postverbal position and objects. We consider postverbal noun phrases in an information-structurally marked construction in the Scandinavian languages, often referred to as the presentational construction. These postverbal noun phrases have been analysed as objects — largely on positional grounds — in transformational theories and also within LFG analyses. Analysing them as objects does, however, raise a number of problems, in particular in that they lack some crucial object properties and have some properties typical of subjects. In this paper, we provide evidence against an object analysis and formulate an analysis within which the postverbal noun phrase is a subject.

### 1. Introduction\*

In this paper, we are interested in the general issue of the relation between functions and positions. In particular, we are concerned with constructions in which some element is found in a position which is non-canonical given its grammatical function and where this is motivated by the special information-structural conditions which hold for that element. We will look at the specific example of the so-called presentational construction in Swedish and Mainland Scandinavian more generally.

### 2. The issue: grammatical relations in presentational constructions

Presentational constructions in Swedish can occur with monotransitive verbs, both unaccusative (1a) and unergative (1b), with passive transitive verbs, as in (2), and certain ditransitive verbs, as in (3) (cf. Platzack (1983), Falk (1989, 1993) and Vikner (1995) for comparative data across the Scandinavian languages).<sup>1</sup>

- (1) a. **Det** sitter **en kackerlacka** på locket. PAR  
EXPL sit.PRES a cockroach on lid.DEF  
'There is a cockroach on the lid.'
- b. **Det** hade bråkat **folk** på hennes buss. MA  
EXPL have.PST causing.trouble.PRES people on her bus  
'People had been causing trouble on her bus.'

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<sup>1</sup> When an example has been taken from a corpus, a text available on the web or an article, this is indicated by the example. If there is no indication, the example is constructed. Similarly, unless there is an indication to the contrary, examples are from Swedish. A list of web sources is provided after the bibliography.

- (2) a. **Det** sätts **ett tak** på den norska laxproduktionen. PAR  
 EXPL put.PRES.PASS a ceiling on the Norwegian salmon production  
 ‘A ceiling is put on the Norwegian salmon production.’
- b. **Det** äts **många och långa middagar** här. AOS  
 EXPL eat.PRES.PASS many and long dinner.PL here  
 ‘Many a long dinner is eaten here.’
- (3) **Det** väntade mig **någon pinsam episod.** HIST  
 EXPL wait.PST I.ACC some embarrassing episode  
 ‘Some embarrassing episode was lying in wait for me.’

A major concern for any syntactic analysis of such constructions is what grammatical relations to assign to the two noun phrases in bold in each example. This question will be the focus of our paper and in order not to prejudice the issue, we will use terms neutral with respect to grammatical relations to distinguish the two: EXPL(itive)NP and P(ost)V(erbal)NP, respectively.

In traditional approaches to sentences such as those in (1) to (3), subject properties are assumed to be distributed over both EXPLNP and PVNP and terms like FORMAL SUBJECT vs ACTUAL SUBJECT are used to contrast the two (e.g. SAG (4:53) and Faarlund, Lie & Vannebo (1997:827–8)).<sup>2</sup> In generative approaches, on the other hand, PVNP is often assumed to be the object, for instance by Platzack (1983), Askedal (1986) and Vikner (1995) for Scandinavian. Similar assumptions have been made by Lødrup (1999), who provides an analysis within OT-LFG (see also Bresnan & Kanerva 1989, Bresnan 1994 and van der Beek 2003, for arguments in a similar vein relating to other languages). In these approaches, it is assumed that only one of the two phrases can be the subject and hence two lines of arguments can be used to support the idea that the PVNP is the object. Firstly, by arguing that EXPLNP is the subject, it is implicitly argued that PVNP is an object and secondly, these authors claim that PVNP displays object properties.

Both approaches give rise to problems for descriptive as well as theoretical accounts of the data. In one instance, there appear to be two noun phrases filling the subject function. In the other, the noun phrase which fills the object function lacks some typical object properties and displays some other properties which are highly untypical of objects. The problems illustrated here by the presentational focus construction in the Scandinavian languages are by no means unique to these languages. Lambrecht (2000) provides a cross-linguistic study of similar constructions and concludes that the PVNP is, in fact, a subject which has absorbed object properties, hence capturing the conflict we have just described in a different way. In this paper, we will examine the status of EXPLNP and PVNP with respect to Swedish data, with a view to establishing how grammatical relations are distributed. We will also discuss the possibility that some properties which are assumed to be associated with certain grammatical relations are actually in a sense “meta-properties”, in that they are associated with a particular information-structural role which is frequently filled by the grammatical relation in question.

### 3. The status of the expletive

One of the subject properties of EXPLNP is that it appears to show agreement in the same way that a subject would. Finite verbs in Swedish do not show agreement at all, but participles do and the data in (4) suggests that the participle in a presentational focus construction agrees with the subject.

<sup>2</sup> Throughout this paper, we will use SAG to refer to Teleman, Hellberg & Andersson (1999).

- (4) a. **Det** blev **inlagt** fyra trafikoffer i går. SAG 4:385  
 EXPL(NT.SG) become.PST admitPRT.SG.NT four traffic casualty.PL yesterday  
 ‘Four traffic casualties were admitted yesterday.’
- b. **Det** blev **skjutet** en älg. Lødrup 1999:206  
 expl(NT.SG) become.pst shoot.prt.SG.NT a.SG.COM moose(COM)  
 ‘A moose was shot.’

However, as we shall see in §4, Lødrup’s statement that ‘The facts are especially clear in Swedish [...]’ (1999:206) is not entirely accurate; even for Swedish, the agreement data is more complex than this.<sup>3</sup>

It is worth pointing out here also that the neuter singular can be considered the default number–gender combination in Swedish (cf. Vincent & Börjars, To appear), so that the behaviour in (4) can be described as a failure to agree, rather than as agreement with the EXPLNP, which can also be described as neuter by default. This is indeed the way in which it is described in SAG (4:385). We will have reason to return to this in §4.

A further argument for the subject status of EXPLNP relates to question formation. In Swedish, as in other verb second languages, phrases fulfilling most functions within the clause can occur clause initially. This is illustrated for subjects in (5a) and for a direct object in (5b). As the parallel examples in (6) show, even though the subject and the object have the same position in the declarative, only the subject can be involved in question formation by inverting with the finite verb.

- (5) a. Oscar gillar honom.  
 Oscar like.FIN he.ACC  
 ‘Oscar likes him.’
- b. Honom gillar Oscar.  
 he.ACC like.FIN Oscar  
 ‘Oscar likes him [TOP/FOC].’
- (6) a. Gillar Oscar honom?  
 like.FIN Oscar he.ACC
- b. \*Gillar honom Oscar?  
 like.FIN he.ACC Oscar  
 ‘Does Oscar like him.’

As the examples in (7) show, the EXPLNP in presentational constructions behaves like a subject in this respect (compare with (1a) and (2a)).

- (7) a. Sitter det en kackerlacka på locket?  
 sit.PRES EXPL a cockroach on lid.DEF  
 ‘Is there a cockroach on the lid?’
- b. Sätts det ett tak på den norska laxproduktionen?  
 put.PRES.PASS EXPL a ceiling on the Norwegian salmon production  
 ‘Is a ceiling put on the Norwegian salmon production?’

<sup>3</sup> Christensen & Taraldsen (1989:58–59) claim that the data is clearcut also in Norwegian, though dialects divide into two types, with some dialects having *det* as the expletive and a non-agreeing participle and other dialects having the expletive *der* and an agreeing participle.

As exemplified in (8), the expletive in these constructions can also function as the subject of a raising verb such as *verka* ‘seem’. It is generally assumed that only the subject of the lower clause can do this (cf. Askedal 1986:27).<sup>4</sup>

- (8) a. Det verkar sitta en kackerlacka på locket.  
 EXPL seem.PRES sit.INF a cockroach on lid.DEF  
 ‘There seems to be a cockroach sitting on the lid.’
- b. Det verkar sättas ett tak på den norska laxproduktionen?  
 EXPL seem.PRES put.INF.PASS a ceiling on the Norwegian salmon production  
 ‘Is a ceiling put on the Norwegian salmon production?’

Further subject properties associated with EXPLNP have been discussed in the literature, but given that the status of the EXPLNP is less disputed than that of the PVNP, we will concentrate the discussion on the latter here.<sup>5</sup>

### 3. The status of the postverbal NP

#### 3.1 Object properties of PVNP suggested in the literature

The argument for object status of the PVNP which is used most commonly in the literature is its position. Askedal (1986:31), for instance, states that their position shows PVNPs ‘quite unequivocally to be direct objects’. In transformational approaches, grammatical relations are derived directly from structural positions and arguments based on position are then to be expected (cf. for instance Platzack (1983) and Åfarli (1992)). In an approach like LFG, on the other hand, where grammatical relations need not be defined configurationally, the object status of the PVNP need not follow from its position. There are, however, languages where functions are defined positionally, English is one example. Lødrup (1999), in his LFG-OT analysis of presentational constructions, assumes this holds also for Scandinavian languages and hence he uses the PVNP’s position to argue for its object status. His argument is not based solely on the PVNP’s position with respect to the verb, but also to the indirect object: ‘A direct object in a presentational focus sentence has the same position as in a non-presentational sentence, it is the sister of V-position after the indirect object if there is one.’ (Lødrup 1999:206) The Norwegian examples he adduces can be found in (9).

- (9) a. **Det** ventet meg **problemer** Lødrup 1999:205  
 EXPL await.PST me problem.PL  
 ‘Problems were awaiting me.’

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<sup>4</sup> The facts are slightly complicated here by the fact that objects and other functions can appear in initial position, preceding a raising verb. However, given that these languages are verb second languages, occurring in initial position is not sufficient for subject status. The crucial property of the initial element in (8) is that it functions as a subject for instance with respect to question formation.

<sup>5</sup> Faarlund, Lie & Vannebo (1997:833) mention in passing some criteria which have not occurred in the theoretical literature as far as we are aware, for instance the fact that whereas EXPLNP can occur in a finite subordinate clauses, it shares with most other subjects the property that it does not occur in non-finite clauses. Also, there is a type of tag question in both Norwegian and Swedish which treats the EXPLNP as the subject.

- b. **Det** ble overrakt barna **en liten gevinst** Lødrup 1999:206  
 EXPL become.PST award.PRT child.PL.DEF a small prize  
 ‘A small prize was given to the children.’

However, it has been argued by Sells (2001) and more strongly by Börjars, Engdahl & Andréasson (2003) that word order in the so-called midfield is not driven purely by syntactic constraints, but that it is heavily influenced by information-structural constraints. In particular, Börjars, Engdahl & Andréasson show that known information tends to precede new information and that this is a more important consideration than the desire for the subject to occur immediately after the verb when something else occupies the pre-verbal slot (2003:54–55). This would then open up an alternative interpretation of the data in (9), namely that the bold PVNP is the subject, but that it follows the indirect object for more widely applicable information-structural reasons, in particular because it is a weak pronoun. This would indeed make examples such as (9) parallel to the example in (10), for which one would not want argue that *Tutankhamun* functions as anything but subject.

- (10) **Därför** gav dem Tutanchamons förbannelse ingen ro. MA  
 therefore give.PST they.ACC Tutanchamon.POSS curse no peace  
 ‘For this reason, Tutankhamun’s curse did not give them any peace.’

If the bold noun phrases in (9) are regular direct objects which follow indirect objects, in line with general word order constraints in the language, then we should expect to find parallel examples where the indirect object is a full noun phrase. However, a search of corpora and the web shows first that constructions parallel to the Norwegian examples in (9) are quite rare in Swedish and second that the indirect objects which occur between the verb and the PVNP in presentational constructions are weak pronouns. Examples are provided in (11).

- (11) a. **Det** gavs dem **ingen tid** till gottgörelse. Portugalien  
 EXPL give.PST.PASS them no time for recompense  
 ‘They were given no time to make amends.’
- b. **Det** gavs honom **goda möjligheter att utarbeta sitt system.** Tektid  
 EXPL give.PST.PASS him good opportunities INF draw up his system  
 ‘He was given good opportunities to work out his system.’

In the majority of presentational constructions which involve a recipient/benefactor, this is expressed through a PP, which follows the PVNP, as in (12) (cf. also examples in SAG 4:385 fn1). If the order in (10) and (11) is simply the result of a general tendency for indirect objects to precede direct objects, then this is surprising. If, on the other hand, the PVNP is a subject, then the fact that the indirect object can only precede it when it is a weak pronoun follows straightforwardly. Example (12b) is especially interesting, since the PVNP is “heavy” and might therefore be expected to occur as far to the right as possible (cf. ‘heavy NP shift’), still the alternative in which the recipient occurs as a pronoun NP immediately following the verb is dispreferred in this case.

- (12) a. **Det** gavs **ingen hjälp** för honom. PAR  
 EXPL give.PASS no help for him  
 ‘No help was given to him.’

- b. **Det** överräcktes **färdryck av bubbelkaraktär samt** TRK  
 EXPL hand over.PST.PASS travel drink of bubble character as well as  
**älgar av den mjukare sorten** till oss.  
 elk of the softer kind to us  
 ‘We were presented with a glass of sparkling wine for the road and some cuddly  
 toy elks.’

We take this to be evidence that the pronouns (and occasionally other non-rhematic NPs) which occur immediately after the verb and precede the PVNP do so for information-structural reasons and no conclusions can be drawn on the basis of this about the grammatical relation associated with PVNP.<sup>6</sup> We conclude then that positional evidence for object status is not reliable for Swedish and we suspect this extends to V2 languages more generally (*pace* van der Beek 2003).<sup>7</sup>

A further argument for the object status of PVNP relates to the non-existence of presentational constructions containing active transitive verbs (cf. Askedal 1986, Lødrup 1999, Mikkelsen 2002). This is illustrated here from Norwegian in (13), but parallel examples in Swedish are also ungrammatical.

- (13) \*Det spiste en mann en kake Lødrup 1999:207  
 EXPL eat.PST a man a cake  
 ‘There was a man eating a cake.’

If PVNPs are themselves direct objects, it is argued, then the requirement for there to be one unique filler of that function would rule out active transitive presentational constructions.<sup>8</sup>

There are, however, factors which weaken this argument. First, for verbs which are optionally transitive, the presentational focus construction is ruled out even when there is no object. It would be inappropriate to analyse a sentence such as (14a) as having the object function filled. This would amount to a kind of object pro-drop analysis which is otherwise unmotivated for Swedish. The ungrammaticality of (14b) can then not be accounted for by reference to a syntactic constraint relating to the co-occurrence of two direct objects. Given that it would be desirable to explain the ungrammaticality of (13) and (14b) in the same terms, relying for an explanation on the assumption that *en mann* is an object in (13) is not satisfactory.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Vikner (1995) and Mikkelsen (2002) both give examples of constructions of the type [EXPLNP — V — non-pronominal IO — PVNP] also in Danish with verbs which have cognates in Swedish; *tillföll* ‘accrue to.PST’ and *skänktes* ‘donate.PST.PASS’. Searches of available corpora and the web have not thrown up any examples of the relevant construction with these verbs. This could be taken as evidence that such constructions do not occur naturally because the information-structural constraints which allow the indirect object to precede the PVNP do not apply to a full noun phrase in the sense that non-rhematic noun phrases would tend to be expressed by a pronoun.

<sup>7</sup> Van der Beek uses the notion of ‘object position’ in her argumentation, but states ‘I will call the complement OBJ, even though I realize that it is not a regular object’ (2003:25).

<sup>8</sup> In some accounts, the same generalisation is stated in terms of Case; only one noun phrase can be assigned Accusative Case (e.g. Mikkelsen 2002:15).

<sup>9</sup> The issue is further complicated by the fact that certain non-object complements behave in peculiar ways with respect to presentational constructions too. Even though *vara* ‘be’ is permitted in presentational constructions — indeed even in languages which are restrictive with respect to presentational constructions, BE usually permits it — there are some odd restrictions, compare (i) and (ii):

- (i) a. En intervju med Hans Blix var på TV igår.  
 a interview with Hans Blix be.PST on TV yesterday  
 b. Det var en intervju med Hans Blix på TV igår  
 EXPL be.PST a interview with Hans Blix on TV yesterday

- (14) a. Ett litet barn                                    åt            i köket.  
a.NT small.NT.SG child(NT)    eat.PST    in kitchen.DEF
- b. \*Det     åt            ett litet barn                                    i köket.  
EXPL eat.PST a.NT small.NT.SG child(NT) in kitchen.DEF  
‘A small child was eating in the kitchen.’

It is not clear to us what the restriction is in these cases, but a prohibition against two direct objects does not capture the generalisation correctly and hence this is not an argument for the direct object status of PVNP.

Consider in this context also English locative inversion sentences, which are similar to the presentational focus sentences in the sense that a subject occurs in a non-canonical postverbal position because of marked information-structural properties. Bresnan (1994) argues that the PVNP is the object in these construction, where peculiar effects on argument structure can also be observed. Only intransitive or passivised transitive verbs can occur in locative inversion in English, but it is interesting to see that in the latter case, a *by*-phrase expressing the agent cannot be present as illustrated in (15), from Bresnan (1994:78). This could obviously not be a restriction on the occurrence of two objects.

- (15) ??Among the guests of honour was seated my mother by my friend Rosie.

Askedal argues that VP pronominalisation also provides evidence of the object status of the PVNP: ‘In cases of VP Pronominalization, the indefinite NP is suppressed in exactly the same way as objects of transitive verbs (whereas *det*, being a syntactic subject, is of course retained)’ (Askedal 1986:29). The Norwegian examples to support the argument are found in (16).<sup>10</sup>

- (16) a. (Spiser han kaker?) Ja, han gjør det.                                    Lødrup 1999:207  
eat.PRES he biscuit.PL yes he do.PRES it  
‘(Is he eating biscuits?) Yes he is.’
- b. (Arbeider det en manni skogen?) Ja, det gjør det.  
work.PRES EXPL a man in forest yes EXPL does it  
‘(Is there a man working in the forest?) Yes there is.’

However, whereas we consider this evidence that *det* in (16b) is a subject, just like *han* is in (16a), we would argue that examples such as these do not reveal anything about what type of arguments are contained within the VP. Indeed, as the Norwegian example in (17) shows, the construction is possible also when there is no argument within the VP.

- (17) (Regner det?) Ja, det gjør det.  
rain.PRES EXPL yes EXPL do.PRES it  
‘(Is it raining?) Yes it is.’

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- ‘There was an interview with Hans Blix on TV yesterday.’
- (ii) a. En intervju på TV igår                                    var            så tråkig att somnade.  
an interview on TV yesterday be.PST so boring that I fell asleep
- b. \*Det var en intervju på TV igår                                    så tråkig att jag somnade.  
EXPL be.PST an interview on TV yesterday so boring that I fell asleep  
‘There was an interview on TV yesterday which was so boring that I fell asleep.’

<sup>10</sup> We use the examples from Lødrup (1999:207) rather than Askedal (1986), since there is a clearer parallelism in Lødrup’s examples.

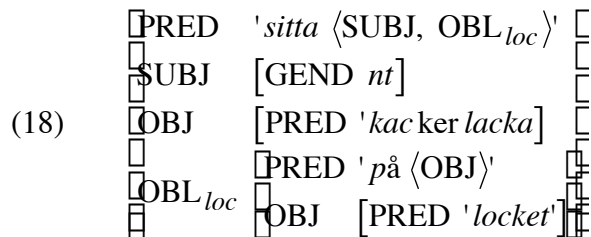


In conclusion, having surveyed some of the arguments used in the literature to support the assumption that the PVNP is the object, we find none of them convincing.

### 3.2 Problems with assigning PVNP object status

The analysis of the PVNP as an object also raises a number of problems for any analysis. First, as has been pointed out in the literature, if the PVNP is the object in sentences such as (1b), the agentive role associated with the verb is mapped to an object, something which is typologically extremely rare.<sup>11</sup> This issue and how to resolve it is at the core of Lødrup (1999). These objects would also fail to show a number of properties normally associated with objects; for instance in that they resist passivisation. Furthermore, as we shall see in §3.3, the PVNP may agree with the verb in Swedish, and this in a language which does not otherwise show object agreement.

Serious issues also arise with the match between selectional properties of the verb and the way in which arguments are realised. We discuss this issue here in terms of LFG, but it will arise within any theory albeit expressed in different terms. The f-structure associated with a sentence such as (1a) would have to be something akin to the simplified representation of given in (18).



In general terms, the problem here is that an argument function required by the verb, namely the subject, does not have a filler with a semantic value and there is an object which is not selected by the verb. In LFG terms, the f-structure in (18) violates Completeness in that the SUBJ function which expresses an argument of the verb does not contain a PRED feature. There is also a violation of Coherence in that the OBJ function found in the f-structure is not selected by the PRED of the verb.

### 3.3 Subject properties of PVNP

A further problem with analysing the PVNP as an object is the fact that the noun phrase actually shows a number of subject properties. For instance, the PVNP can show agreement with the predicate. Although finite verbs in Swedish do not show agreement, in certain constructions a participle may agree with the subject.

The tendency is that if the participle follows the PVNP, then it usually agrees with the PVNP, as in (19a), whereas if the participle precedes the PVNP, as in (4), then it usually occurs in

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<sup>11</sup> Kroeger (1993) argues that Tagalog has agentive objects, but it should be pointed out that grammatical relations have a very different status in Tagalog.

neuter singular.<sup>12</sup> In a constituent question in which the PVNP occurs in clause initial position, either form of the participle is frequent, as (19b) indicates.<sup>13</sup>

- (19) a. Det blev fyra trafikoffer inlagda igår. SAG 4:385  
 EXPL become.PST four casualty.PL admit.PRT.PL yesterday  
 ‘Four traffic casualties were admitted yesterday.’
- b. Hur många brev blev det SAG 4:385  
 how many letter.PL become.PST EXPL  
 skrivet / skrivna igår?  
 write.PRT.NT.SG write.PRT.PL yesterday  
 ‘How many letters were written yesterday?’

This split agreement behaviour is then similar to that found in English with *There is/are three blokes in the living room*.<sup>14</sup>

Case marking has been used in the literature to argue for the object status of the PVNP. In particular, analyses of Danish and Norwegian within which the PVNP is considered the object appeal to the fact that the PVNP occurs in the object case (cf. Mikkelsen (2002:10) for Danish and Askedal (1986:31) for Norwegian). However, this should not necessarily be taken as evidence that the PVNP is the object in Danish and Norwegian; languages vary as to what case they assign to grammatical relations in non-canonical positions. Furthermore, in Swedish, the PVNP does in fact have to occur in its subject form, as in (20).

- (20) Det var bara hon / \*henne hemma.  
 EXPL be.PST only she.NOM she.ACC at home  
 ‘Only she was at home.’

Given the close similarities in the properties of the PVNPs in these languages, it would seem inappropriate to draw two different conclusions based on this limited data. It is more likely to be attributable to the languages dealing with the notion of default case in different ways.<sup>15</sup>

The PVNP may also show subject-like behaviour in that it can bind reflexives. Swedish has a reflexive determiner *sin*, which can only be bound by a subject and not by a direct object as in (21a). As (22b) shows, it can be bound by the PVNP.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Note that the tendency for the participle to be more likely to agree with the PVNP when it follows it may lead one to consider this a separate type of construction in which the PVNP and the participle form a “small clause” (see also discussion in Mikkelsen 2002:16).

<sup>13</sup> Christensen & Taraldsen (1989:70–72) and Lødrup (1999:206) do discuss Swedish non-agreement, but only compare the agreeing past participle (used with passive *bli*) with the non-agreeing supine form (used with the perfective *have*). They do not discuss the neuter versus non-neuter agreement.

<sup>14</sup> The agreement with *there*, or maybe better the lack of agreement with PVNP in English is often assumed to be a feature of modern informal English, but both types of agreement are mentioned for instance in Krusinga and Erades (1911) and Jespersen (1924:155).

<sup>15</sup> Note for instance the difference in responses to sentences such as *Who wants a beer?*, where Danish would use the object form of the pronoun (like English), whereas Swedish would use the subject form.

<sup>16</sup> Askedal (1986:29) gives examples similar to (18b), marks them with a question mark and comments in a footnote that ‘possibly sentences like (14) [parallel to (18b), KEB/NBV] are so to speak “acceptable by default”’. His argument rests on the fact that the non-reflexive possessive would be totally unacceptable in the same position. This does not, however, strike us as a strong line of argument given that it is a fundamental property of *sin* that it is in complementary distribution with the parallel non-reflexive pronoun and hence always occurs where *hans* is unacceptable.

- (21) a. Peter<sub>i</sub> kittlade Oscar<sub>j</sub> med sin<sub>i/\*j</sub> / hans<sub>\*i/j</sub> fjäder.  
 Peter tickle.PST Oscar with his.REFL.COM his feather  
 ‘Peter tickled Oscar with his feather.’
- b. Det kom en man<sub>i</sub> med sin<sub>i</sub> / \*hans<sub>i</sub> fru.  
 EXPL come.PST a man with his.REFL his wife  
 ‘There came a man with his (own) wife.’

The ability to control subjects of non-finite clauses is commonly assumed to be a property unique to subjects. This is borne out for Swedish by examples like (22a), where the subject of the non-finite verb can only be interpreted as co-referential with the subject of the main clause. As the indices in (22b) shows, the PVNP can function as the controller in such constructions.

- (22) a. Oscar<sub>i</sub> såg en man<sub>j</sub> och pro<sub>i/\*j</sub> vinkade.  
 Oscar see.PST a man and wave.PST  
 ‘Oscar saw a man and waved.’
- b. Det kom en man<sub>i</sub> och pro<sub>i</sub> pratade med mig.  
 EXPL come.PST a man and talk.PST with me  
 ‘There came a man and talked to me.’

With reference to Platzack (1983), Askedal (1986) and Áfarli (1992), Lødrup (1999:207) states that ‘It should be mentioned that this analysis [of the PVNP as a direct object KEB/NBV] is not controversial in Scandinavian generative grammar.’ Our conclusion on the basis of the data we have surveyed is quite the contrary, the status of the PVNP as the object gives rise to a large number of problems. Instead if the PVNP is analysed as a subject, then its unusual properties can be accounted for in terms of its unusual information-structural properties.

## 4. Some potential LFG analyses

### 4.1 The generalisation

In the foregoing we have argued that both the EXPLNP and the PVNP share properties which are usually associated with subjects, and that the PVNP is only object-like in its apparent occupancy of the post-verbal position while in most other respects it does not display prototypical object properties. Indeed, we would suggest that the respects in which the PVNP displays object-like properties, these are not properties of the object per se, but rather properties associated with non-topics and here serve to mark the subject as a non-topic (Lambrecht 2000). Hence we argue that in a sentence such as (1) — repeated here for convenience — the expected subject does not occur in its canonical position because it has marked information-structural properties, and the EXPLNP *det* inherits many but not all of its subject properties.

- (1) a. **Det** sitter **en kackerlacka** på locket. PAR  
 EXPL sit.PRES a cockroach on lid.DEF  
 ‘There is a cockroach on the lid.’

b. **Det** hade bråkat **folk** på hennes buss. MA  
 EXPL have.PST causing.trouble.PRES people on her bus  
 ‘People had been causing trouble on her bus.’

This claim is in accord with what traditional grammarians have claimed. Thus SAG says: ‘The expletive pronoun *det* functions as the subject a number of clause types. In most cases, the construction appears to be a way of allowing a phrase which would otherwise have functioned as the subject associated with the predicate a place in the rhematic part of the clause.’ (SAG 4:53)<sup>17</sup> However, it is also in line with the idea behind some modern theoretical analyses as expressed by Falk (1993: 250): ‘I will argue that topic *det* has a pragmatic function of signalling a non-topic subject...’.<sup>18</sup>

The consequence of these arguments is that we reject an analysis in which EXPLNP is assigned the SUBJ function and the PVNP the OBJ function, at least for Swedish and in all likelihood by parity of argument for the other Mainland Scandinavian languages as well.<sup>19</sup> In this section we review some alternative analyses, and consider their implications for the architecture of LFG.

#### 4.2 PRESFOC and anticipatory pronoun: a syntactic account

On what we will call the syntactic account, the EXPLNP *det/der* is assigned the SUBJ function. The PVNP is also assigned the function SUBJ. The latter does not occur in its canonical position because it has information-structural properties not compatible with being on the left edge of the clause. To capture this additional property, we assign a discourse function PRESFOC to PVNP.<sup>20</sup> The f-structure link between SUBJ and PRESFOC is established by the following rules, which in turn assume the general clause structure argued for in Börjars, Engdahl & Andréasson (2003):

<sup>17</sup> Translated from Swedish: ‘Det expletiva pronomenet *det* fungerar som subjekt i olika satstyper. I de flesta fallen verkar konstruktionen vara ett sätt att ge det led som annars skulle ha fungerat som subject vid satsens predikat en plats i satsens rematiska del.’

<sup>18</sup> The historical development is as follows. In OSw, *det* occurs frequently as an introduction to a new story; ‘*Det* clearly has the function of an introductory marker, not only of a clause with a non-topical subject, but of a whole story.’ (Falk 1993:256) At this stage, as Falk shows, *det* occurs only with the verb ‘be’ and the NP is often followed by a relative clause. By the early Modern Swedish stage, *det* has developed into a marker of non-topical subjects and the construction is no longer restricted to one particular verb. At this stage, Falk (1993:260–263) argues that *det* does not yet function as a subject, for instance in that it is not obligatory. However, when Swedish develops into a non-pro-drop languages, *det* does develop into an expletive subject.

<sup>19</sup> See Bresnan (1982: 72-80) for an early LFG account along these lines of the English *there* construction. In conference discussion Joan Bresnan reiterated her preference for this analysis citing in support the fact that in English the NP in the *there* construction cannot trigger deletion of a co-referential co-ordinate subject, hence the ungrammaticality of \**there were two children in the room and played quietly together*. How, she asks, is this to be explained if *the children* is treated as SUBJ? The solution to this apparent paradox, we suggest, is once again to be found in information structure. Although *two children* here is SUBJ, informationally it has a different status from the subject of the following clause. It is plausible to suppose that it is this lack of informational parallelism which blocks deletion in these circumstances.

<sup>20</sup> The term PRESFOC is a convenient but in some respects arbitrary label, and another term may be more appropriate if this analysis were to be developed within a more fully worked out approach to information structure. For the sake of simplicity, we will treat PRESFOC as an attribute within the f-structure. However, it may well be more appropriately located in a separate and more elaborate i(nformation)-structure or d(iscourse)-structure (compare for instance King 1997; Choi 1999; Dahlstrom 2003; O’Connor 2004). This is an issue which we will not pursue here.

- (23) a.  $F'' \sqsupset F', NP$   
 $\uparrow=\square \quad \uparrow GDF=\square$
- b.  $F' \sqsupset F, \dots, NP$   
 $\uparrow=\square, \dots, \uparrow PRESFOC=\square, \dots$   
 $\uparrow SUBJ=\square$

This account is actually a schematic way of representing our approach. Assuming the general principles argued for in Börjars, Engdahl & Andréasson (2003) with respect to the interaction between c-structure rules and alignment constraints, in a more articulated version of this analysis, the most appropriate way of accounting for the positioning of the PVNP, may not be to explicitly introduce its status as PRESFOC through the c-structure rule in (21). Instead, the particular information-structural properties of this subject would be accounted for in terms of alignment constraints referring both to grammatical relations and discourse functions.

We are proposing then that in presentational focus sentences like the ones we deal with here, both the EXPLNP and the PVNP contribute to the subject function; *det* is introduced by (23a) and the GDF is instantiated as SUBJ and the PVNP is introduced by (23b). This may appear to lead to problems in that a feature clash would be expected as two elements in the c-structure are associated with one f-structure function. The PVNP, being a full noun phrase, will have a semantic value (expressed in LFG as a value for the PRED feature) as well as agreement features such as number and gender. If the EXPLNP has conflicting features, a clash would clearly arise. However, in section 2, we pointed out that the form which has been described in the literature (e.g. Lødrup 1999) as agreeing with the expletive, is in fact the default number and gender form, so that it could also be described as a non-agreeing form. A default form is the form in which a category, in this case an adjective or a participle, occurs when the filler of the function with which it would normally agree does not carry the relevant feature. For instance, a clause would not normally be assumed to have gender and number features and an adjective agreeing with a clause would then go into the default form, in Swedish singular neuter.<sup>21</sup> Now, if we claim that the participles in (3) do in fact not agree, but occur in a default, then this amounts to claiming that the element it might be expected to agree with does not have the relevant features.<sup>22</sup> Of course, since the expletive *det* is homophonous to the third person singular neuter pronoun in Swedish, it is tempting to say that there is agreement. However, just like adjectives which would in principle agree with a clause occurs in the default gender and number form, so does a pronoun which refers to a clause. Furthermore, in some varieties of Swedish and Norwegian and in Danish, the expletive used is *där* (*der*), homophonous with a distal adverb (cf. SAG 4:54). In these cases, one would not want to ascribe the features singular and neuter to the expletive. In fact, since this expletive can be combined with a proximal adverb in such dialects, as in (24), it is clear that it does not have a proximal/distal feature either.

- (24) a. Där finns gott om plats här.  
EXPL exist.PRES good of place here  
‘There is plenty of space here.’

<sup>21</sup> For further discussion of adjectives and default forms in Swedish, see Vincent & Börjars (To appear).

<sup>22</sup> For a very different analysis of Norwegian which also relies on the assumption that the neuter singular forms are there as default forms, see Christensen & Taraldsen (1989:61–63). Note, however, that they assume that *det* in Norwegian has inherent gender and number features, whereas we assume it lacks them. Their analysis of Swedish also differs from ours with respect to default and agreeing forms (1989:70–72).

There are then a number of reasons to assume that the expletive *det* is not the third person singular neuter pronoun, but instead it is a pronoun with no person, number or gender features. This then means that it would not contribute any agreement features to the SUBJ function and hence it would not cause a clash. If we assume also that expletives do not have any semantic content, *det* would not have a PRED feature value, again avoiding a clash with the features of the PVNP. The expletive is still appropriately described as the subject, since it has the positional features associated with a subject, for instance in that it is the element which can invert with the finite verb to form a question. Preverbal elements which are not subjects cannot do this.<sup>23</sup>

The analysis we have proposed here is akin to the focus analysis which could be proposed for English sentences with a fronted focus and a resumptive pronoun; *Beans, I like them*. A big difference with the constructions we have analysed here is that in the presentational focus, the relation between the two elements which contribute to the same function is always local and limited to subjects. Hence an analysis in terms of functional uncertainty is not required.

### 4.3 OT accounts

Two other OT accounts of this construction exist in the literature. The first is proposed by Lødrup (1999) and depends on marking the presentational focus in the input and then postulating a constraint, REALIZE FOCUS, which ‘says that an argument that is marked as presentational focus in the input should be realized in the presentational focus position, which is object position in Norwegian.’ (Lødrup 1999:213). Independently of the empirical arguments we have adduced against this analysis in §3 above, there is clearly some circularity here since the behaviour we are seeking to explain is written in both to the input and to the definition of the constraint. The fact that this analysis leads to agents being realised as objects is dealt with by assuming for the grammar of Norwegian a ranking in which REALIZE FOCUS takes precedence over \*AGENTIVE OBJ, which universally disprefers the association of Agent with Object.

The second OT-based analysis, by Mikkelsen (2002), is not conceived within LFG but the leading ideas translate straightforwardly enough. Her account differs from Lødrup’s in that what she proposes to mark in the input is not presentational focus but definiteness. This feeds into the following constraint ranking (somewhat simplified here for expository purposes):

(25) SUBJ » \*EXPLETIVE » \*SUBJ/DEF

In other words, it is more important that there should be a subject than that the language should avoid using expletives, but when there is a definite subject available it is better to avoid expletives. From this it follows that: ‘Where previous analyses posit a restriction on what can appear in the pivot position, the present analysis treats the definiteness effect as an epiphenomenon arising from the interaction of constraints governing the subject position’ (Mikkelsen 2002: 29).

From our point of view, Mikkelsen’s account is an improvement on Lødrup’s since she does not fall into the trap of circularity, since for her presentational focus now follows interpretively and is not stated as a separate DF.<sup>24</sup> Instead what she appears to have done is to replace the definiteness effect in postverbal position with indefiniteness effect in subject position, which is

<sup>23</sup> We will also assume that there should be no need to stipulate that *det* cannot bear a DF (contrast Sells (this volume) on Icelandic) since this should follow from the properties we assume are associated with the expletive.

<sup>24</sup> Since she is working within a Chomskyan framework the problem of agentive objects does not directly arise as such. Instead she has to ensure that accusative Case is checked on the DP in postverbal position.

equally stipulative. The epiphenomenal effect which she rightly seeks is, we would argue, better handled in the account we offer in §4.2 where the linear ordering of constituents follows from the fact that there is a contradiction between being definite and expressing rhematic information.

#### 4.4 Discontinuous subjects: a morphological account?

A near relation of the analysis we have proposed in §4.2 treats *det* and its ‘associate’ as a discontinuous realization of the single GF SUBJ, in some respects similar to clitic doubling. In effect such an analysis moves the resolution of the problem into the domain of morphology and sees the initial expletive as a kind of anticipatory agreement. If both *det* and its associate are SUBJ, then we once again get the problem of feature clashing in that *det* is neuter but the subject may well not be. In Danish and Norwegian but not in Swedish there is also a case clash since *det* is presumably nominative but the postverbal argument is accusative (*der var kun hende/\*hun tilbage* ‘there was only her/\*she left’; Mikkelsen 2002: 10). This clashing feature problem can however be resolved in the same way as we propose under 4.2.

#### 4.5 Resumption/anticipation and resource management: a semantic account?

So far we have discussed alternative analyses which work at different levels, involving one or more of syntax, morphology and discourse. If only for completeness’ sake, it is natural to ask in addition whether a semantic account might not also be possible. Consider as a point of departure the treatment of resumptive pronouns in Asudeh (2004). Cross-linguistically these occur in long distance dependency constructions such as relative clauses and constituent questions, as in the Swedish example (26) analysed in detail by Asudeh (2004: chap 7.1 )

- (26) Vilken elev<sub>i</sub> trodde Maria att han<sub>i</sub> skulle fuska?  
‘Which student did Maria think that (he) would cheat?’

The problem here is to avoid both the questioned constituent *vilken elev* and the resumptive pronoun *han* making independent contributions to the overall interpretation of the sentence since this would lead to a violation of uniqueness. Instead of handling this problem, as is traditionally done, at the level of syntax, Asudeh proposes an account of resumptive pronouns which treats them at f-structure simply as pronouns with their own PRED feature but with the resource logic removing them from the computation of the semantic value of the clause.

The construction we have been discussing shows some clear analogies with this situation since the pronominal *det* has what might be called as a ‘presumptive’ or cataphoric function but does not make an independent contribution to the argument structure of the clause. Although we have neither the space nor the time to work out the details, it is possible that the presentational construction would yield to a similar, resource logic based account. The crucial thing from the present perspective is that once again *det* and the PVNP would both be assigned the f-structure role SUBJ and so the apparent paradox of agentive objects would disappear.

### 5. Consequences of alternative analyses

In this section we highlight the consequences of our arguments for our understanding of the presentational constructions both in the modern Mainland Scandinavian languages and more widely, while in the next section we will briefly review the implications for LFG as a model of natural language structure.

A first issue concerns the status of the arguments within presentational clauses, and in particular whether it is legitimate in this instance to talk of agentive objects. As we have already noted, there is a strong cross-linguistic dispreference for realizing agents as objects. In the literature the Scandinavian presentational construction is one of those most frequently cited in support of the idea that nonetheless there are special circumstances in which an agent can surface as an object. While we cannot claim to have refuted potential instances in other languages, we believe that we have provided sufficient evidence that the items in question are not objects.

It is also possible to question whether they are even agents, that is to say whether movement to the postverbal position does not in fact trigger a process of deagentivization. The fact that agent oriented adverbs are odd in *there* constructions have been used as evidence for this claim. However, as Engdahl (To appear, 37–38) points out, this cannot be a true semantic constraint since agentive modification can be added in a second clause, as in (27b).

- (27) a. \*Det arbetar motvilligt 5000 lärare på universitetet. Engdahl To app:37  
 EXPL work.PRES reluctantly 5000 teacher.PL at university.DEF  
 ‘5000 teachers work reluctantly at the University.’
- b. Det arbetar 5000 lärare på universitetet, Engdahl To app:38  
 EXPL workPRES 5000 teachers at the.university  
 flera av dem ganska motvilligt.  
 several of them rather reluctantly  
 ‘5000 teachers work at the University, several of them reluctantly.’

See also Lødrup (1999:211–2) for references and critical evaluation of deagentivisation.

Once it is accepted that the PVNP is not an object but that both it and the EXPLNP are in some partial and complementary respects subjects, then the question that naturally arises is: what are the principles that trigger the construction? For Lødrup it is a matter of a special type of so-called presentational focus, whereas for Mikkelsen the question relates to definiteness. There are genuine insights in both these approaches. We would argue that our approach captures the best of both in that it allows the information structure, and the alignment conditions relating it, to derive the linear positioning. Properties such as definiteness can then be related to information-structural notions relating to newness as appropriate and hence have an indirect relation with the conditions on the construction.

## 6. Implications for LFG

Perhaps the most obvious implication for LFG lies in the treatment of expletives, which on our analysis are allowed to share their grammatical function with a substantive and semantically complete item (i.e one which has its own PRED feature) elsewhere in the clause. This is not a property which is limited to subjects; consider for example the sentences in (28):



- (28) a. I hate you(r) being rude to your uncle.  
 b. I hate \*(it) when you are rude to your uncle  
 c. Konstbevattningen gjorde det möjligt PAR  
 irrigation.DEF make.PST EXPL possible
- att i stället få ut tre risskördar varje år  
 INF instead get out three rice harvests every year  
 ‘The irrigation made it possible instead to get three harvests of rice per year.’

On the assumption that the string *you(r) being rude to your uncle* is to be assigned the function COMP it would be natural to treat *it* as a COMP-expletive just like *det* is a SUBJ-expletive. A similar argument holds for (28c) and parallel constructions in a number of languages.<sup>25</sup> This in turn would require a generalized mechanism for connecting expletives and their ‘associates’.

Casting the net wider, there is scope for further research into what exactly constitutes an expletive and how it relates to other types of pronoun. We have assumed here that an expletive lacks features altogether. In particular, we have treated an expletive as having no PRED feature but Asudeh’s (2004) account of resumptive pronouns, which in some respects are similar to expletives, assigns all pronouns the PRED feature ‘pro’ and deals with the consequences of this move at the level of the resource logic. We have also suggested that even the apparent positive specifications of such pronouns for number and gender are in fact the consequences of featural absence. However, as Louise Mycock (p.c.) reminds us, some expletives seem to need to have other morphosyntactic features such as the [+ wh] property in so-called *wh*-expletive constructions (see Mycock 2004 for references and discussion).

Finally, our arguments add further weight to the case for exploring and refining the ways grammatical and discourse functions interact within the architecture of LFG, and how in turn these functions map onto linearly defined positions within the clause.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> The alternative analysis would treat clausal complements as bearing functions like SUBJ and OBJ, as proposed in Alsina, Mohanan & Mohanan (this volume).

<sup>26</sup> Compare in this connection the work of Dalrymple & Nikolaeva (2005).

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