There is Secondary Predication in *There*-Existentials

A well-known contrast involves the fact that while non-verbal predicative expressions such as APs, PPs, and count bare singulars occur in typical predicative positions, (1), they are barred in existential *there*-sentences, (2). As McNally (2006) remarks, an analysis that captures the failure of non-nominal property-type expressions and bare singulars to appear in *there*-existentials must resort to a syntactic constraint requiring the postverbal expression to be a DP. This, McNally (2006:8) writes, "is unattractively *ad hoc* given that in other contexts (such as copular constructions) acceptability depends on semantic type rather than on syntactic category". Moreover, the fact that unlike bare singulars bare plurals are not barred in the *there*-construction, as in (3), adds to the complexity of the matter, since (existential) bare plurals are argued to be the plural counterparts of bare singulars in that: (i) semantically they denote properties (type <e,t>); and (ii) syntactically they are not DPs with a morphologically null D^0 but NPs lacking a D-layer (Hellan 1986, Kallulli 1999, Pereltsvaig 2006). While, as matters stand, McNally's point is indeed a valid one, the goal of this paper is to provide an analysis that converts this unattractive adhocness into a motivated requirement. That is, we will insist on the idea that the postverbal expression in existential *there*-constructions if not a full DP (with a null D) is at least larger than an NP. Crucially however, we contend that the reasons for this are structural. Specifically, the central claim that we put forward is that the constraint requiring the postverbal expression to be a DP has to do with the position in which the postverbal constituent has been merged, namely as the subject of a (secondary) predicate. While this claim is reminiscent of the small-clause analysis (Stowell 1981, Safir 1982), our analysis differs from it in that we take *there* to be a genuine subject (Williams 1994, 2006, Hazout 2004). Further, we submit that in spite of appearances to the contrary (see (4) and (5)), it is precisely this secondary predication that provides the stage-levelness, which as Kratzer (1995) argues is necessarily involved in *there*-existentials. (Secondary predication is also involved in (4) and (5) albeit in an implicit manner; (4) asserts the existence of certain things in a certain location specified by the context, at a specific time; similarly, (5) has an implicit locational attribute, namely something like: *in the set of natural numbers*.) Following Kratzer, we do not commit to the precise nature of the event argument; it may not be an event argument but just an argument for spatio-temporal location, which would explain the (quasi-)obligatory presence of locatives in such sentences (Dobrovie-Sorin&Laca 1996). Hence, stage-levelness may be defined in terms of secondary predication, the latter providing the temporal or locational anchoring necessary for the former.

Turning to the syntactic encoding, we adopt the proposal in Kallulli (1999) according to which bare singulars are precluded from specifier positions by virtue of their being NPs (and not DPs, or something in between). Properties of bare singulars such as their invariable narrow scope and non-specific interpretation are thus straightforwardly accounted for. Kallulli (1999) points out that: (i) even in languages where bare singulars may occur as direct objects, they cannot serve as subjects of secondary predicates – see (6); and (ii) while direct objects may be instantiated by bare singulars, subjects and datives (i.e. arguments that are commonly assumed to merge in specifier positions – Marantz 1993, Chomsky 1995) cannot.

The fact that, unlike bare singulars, bare plurals may occur in *there*-existentials is in this account tied to the existence of a functional layer (responsible for number) above the NP (cf. Beyssade & Dobrovie-Sorin 2005). Similarly, a variety of facts converge in showing that, unlike count bare singulars, mass nouns are not NPs, but DPs with a morphologically null D.

The analysis outlined above is incompatible with the view that split topicalization as in (7) involves base-generation of the clause-initial nominal (Fanselow 1988, Van Riemsdijk 1989, Tappe 1989). We argue that such structures are however a result of movement, and account for the noted mismatches between the split constituents (which constitute the basis of base-generation approaches) in terms of Distributed Morphology (cf. Giurgia 2006).

Examples

(1) a. She was happy. b. She is professor of philosophy at Yale.
(2) a. *There was happy. b. *There is professor of philosophy at Yale.
(3) There are kids (playing) in the garden.
(4) There were ants, dogs and all sorts of things.
(5) There is an infinite number of primes.

(6) a. *Hun kjøpte bil.* (Norwegian)
she bought car
'She bought a car.'
b. **Hun kjøpte bil ny.*
she bought car new
'She bought a car new.'
c. *Hun kjøpte bil-en ny.*
she bought car-the new
'She bought the car new.'
d. *Hun kjøpte en bil ny og en annen brukt.*
she bought a car new and a other used
'She bought a car new and another used.'

(7) *Auto gibt es keines.* (German)
car is it/there none
'As for cars, there is none.'

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