



“Expletives” as Discourse Markers: Semantic and Pragmatic Considerations in “It” and “There”

Dr. Amjad Ali

Assistant Professor, Department of English, Islamia College Peshawar

Dr. Rais Gul

Lecturer, Department of Sociology, Islamia College Peshawar

Abstract

This paper explores the syntactic and semantic configurations of expletives “it” and “there.” It attempts to show that expletives are not just syntactic fillers; they are semantic markers and are pragmatically bound NPs that can be co-indexed with covert referents. The study follows a theoretical approach and applies Bolinger’s (1977) *Meaning and Form* model to the syntactic configurations of expletives. The syntactic structures of expletives are based on the syntactic theories of generativist linguists, namely Chomsky (1986). Chomskyan syntactic theories describe the various formal characteristics of expletives without analyzing their semantic and pragmatic implications. This study premises that Bolinger’s theoretical modal can fill these missing gaps and can provide a conclusive yet not final description of these gaps. The study recognizes expletives as discourse bound markers and authenticates their contextual and sociological significance.

Keywords: Expletives, Chomskyan Syntactic Structures, Bolinger’s *Meaning and Form*

1. Introduction

In Chomskyan modules, expletives or “pleonastic elements” (Chomsky 1986, p. 91) are non-referential NPs; that is, they are not co-indexed with any referent in the immediate context. Such NPs also bear no theta roles and hence are thetaless. Arguments, according to theta theory, are assigned Θ -roles by the predicates and as Burzio (1986) says, “A verb (with an object) Case-marks its object if and only if it Θ -marks its subject (p.139),” expletives are not marked with any Θ -role in English sentence. They feature in sentences in which “be” function as predicates. Referring to Burzio’s generalization, Chomsky (1986) also contends, “A verb with a complement assigns Case if and only if it Θ -marks its subject (p.141).” Expletives “it” and “there” are not Case-marked by the predicates and are, therefore, recognized as dummies or slot fillers. Since expletives



serve as syntactic fillers, they are not used in focused structures and cannot be subject to questions the way other theta-marked subjects can be questioned.

This paper provides a linguistic account of expletives and attempts to describe the syntactic and semantic environment wherein expletives find expression. It also discusses the pragmatic considerations of expletives and uses Bolinger’s (1977) *Meaning and Form* model to interpret the given dimensions which do not find a systematic description in the syntactic modules of Chomsky.

2. Literature Review

Postal (1974) regards the insertion of expletives like “it” as pure syntactic requirement with no semantic implications. For him, the inclusion of “it” in meteorological predicates such as “rain, snow” and “sleet” is done as syntactic gap filler. This NP, however, does not have any semantic consideration.

Carnie (2001) cites Extended Projection Principle (EPP) for the insertion of expletives. This principle makes the external argument (subject) an obligatory constituent of the clause. Any clause that does not have a recognized subject is filtered out by EPP, and hence, the addition of expletives assumes obligatory dimension in certain syntactic structures.

Baker (1995) considers existential “there” and “it” quite arbitrary and believe that “it” can replace “there” in certain dialects of English. Hence (1) can be written as (2):

1. “There is a fly in my soup.”
2. “It is a fly in my soup.”

The appearance of “expletives” followed by “Be” does not follow from any grammatical properties of language and should best be viewed as “sentential idiom” whose meanings cannot be determined from the individual words of the combination. Moreover, every sentence that has “there” as a subject should not be marked as expletive; it can be a locative phrase and can receive stress unlike expletive “there” which is always unstressed.

3. “Thére is Jones.”
4. ”Thére goes your brother.”



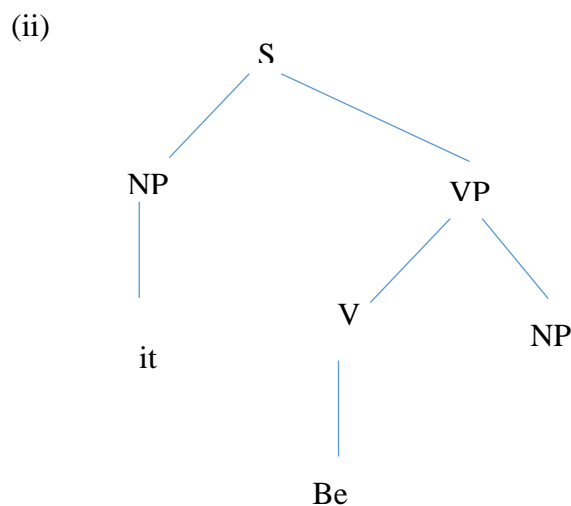
Cook & Newson (2007) locate the insertion of expletives in the poor inflectional property of English. English does not admit inflected verbs in case of all subjects. It’s inflected when third persons singular feature as subjects. The projection of the subject does not find any morphological expression due to poorly inflected property of verb. This makes the phonological realization of subject obligatory in English. Dummy subjects like “it” and “there” are inserted when the sentence lacks any realized NP that can function as the subject of the sentence.

3. The Syntax of Expletive “It”

Syntactically, expletives are considered slot fillers. They are added as subjects when the predicate either does not require or does not have any explicit agent. The projection rule for expletive “it” can be expressed as (i).

- i. “It [BE NP]”

As can be observed in (i), “it” as expletive is marked by verb “be” followed by NP as complement. This projection rule yields a syntactic tree (ii).



(ii) shows that “it” as an expletive is bound by predicate “be.” In other words, predicates “try” or “hit” cannot be the complements of expletive ‘it’ because these predicates are dyadic and must take one external argument (subject) and one internal argument in the form of a complement. This explains the unacceptability of the following sentence.



5. *¹“It tried that Mary opened the door.”

Meteorological predicates like “rain, hail, snow etc.” and “time” bear null theta grade. They are, therefore, expressed with “it” as a syntactic argument.

6. “It snows.”
7. “It’s ten o’ clock.”
8. “It’s too hot today.”

The pronominal “it” assumes a thetaless structure in such constructions because the mentioned predicates do not require any theta marked agentive subject. As stipulated in EPP², a clause without an overt subject is not syntactic viability. The insertion of expletive “it” as a syntactic argument (subject) is done to satisfy EPP.

3.1 Semantic and Pragmatic Configurations of “it”

Bolinger (1980, p. 30), however, does not regard this insertion as a syntactic requirement only, and the idea that the real information is packaged in the verb “raining” and so the external argument bears zero theta also needs a more empirical support.

9. “It’s raining.”

This expletive, however, has the same referential property as “it” in (10) wherein “it” has some obvious referent in the given context.

10. “It’s unsafe down here.”

So the sentence (10) can be presented as (11) at the D³-level.

¹ Asterisks (*) mean unacceptability

² According to EPP, “All clauses must have subjects” (Carnie (2001, p. 173). A sentence without any theta-marked subject can acquire acceptability provided that this gap is filled in by an expletive. EPP will subsequently not filter it out as unacceptable structure.

³ Deep structure.



-
11. “This down-here situation is unsafe.”

Recognizing that an expletive “it” in (9) can be referential as in (10), nothing can be more co-referential than weather. Reference to weather condition is also sometimes made as (12) instead of (13):

12. “Is the outside condition one of rain?”
13. “Is it raining out?”

Similarly, (14) and (15) can be taken as (16) and (17) respectively at the D-level:

14. “It’s ten o’clock.”
15. “It’s raining.”
16. “The time is ten ’o clock.”
17. “The rain is raining.”

As can be seen in the above examples, the expletive “it” anaphorically stands for “time” and “rain” and, therefore, cannot be recognized as syntactically dummy fillers having no semantic significance. It does signify some known information and has anaphoric reference the way one can observe in (18) where “it” has a well-defined antecedent “general circumstances” as shown in (19).

18. “It’s too hot to work.”
19. “General circumstances are difficult for working.”

Hence, its anaphoric significance becomes as obvious as “her” in the following wherein it is very unlikely that Mary will not stick out her own tongue:

20. “Mary stuck out her tongue.”

He (1977) further argues that numerous instances can be quoted which prove that the expletive “it” has some semantic consideration than being merely a grammatical plug-in marker.



In (21), “it” has co-indexical relation with a referent already broached in the discourse and hence has a prior referent:

21. “I can understand it that the election hurt them.”

Similar observation can be made about (22) where the expletive “it” has almost a pronominal representation and refers to something in the discourse:

22. “It isn’t that he’s a Republican that I find so objectionable.”

In (22), the negation implies the denial of something affirmative because it is very unusual that a person may utter this sentence on his or her entry into the room.

3.2 Extraposition

Extraposition, according to Chomsky (2006, p. 44), is a phenomenon when “it” is introduced as a subject in a sentence that has another constituent as a subject as illustrated in the following examples:

23. “For him to understand this lecture is difficult.”

24. “It is difficult for him to understand this lecture.”

In (24), the phrase “for him to understand this lecture” has been moved outside the subject position and has been replaced with expletive ‘it.’

Extraposition is a syntactic phenomenon that describes the meaningfulness of “it.” The use of expletive “it” is not considered a semantic possibility when cleaving of a sentence happens without any prior information. In an answer to a question (a), a person is not likely to say (b):

25. “Where will she go?”

26. * “It is to Canada that she will go.”

However, in response to (27), (28) is likely:

27. “Where did she go?”

28. “It was to Canada that she went.”

The acceptability of (28) is due to the fact that “it” is inserted as a possible semantic marker for the prior information of where she went.

The following two questions are not the same.

(29). “Who came?”

(30). “Who else came?”



(29) can be answered with an expletive structure as in (31) but (30) cannot be answered with “it” because (29) presupposes mutual understanding between the interlocutors which is missing in (30). In case of latter the arrival of the person is virtually out of the blue and hence the construction cannot take “it” as an anaphoric constituent for something which is thoroughly unexpected.

31. “It was John”

32. *“It was John.”

The same applies to the following wherein “someone” lends known information to the sentence and actuates the use of “it” as a semantic filler.

33. “Someone else came. ---Yes, It was John.”

A prior basis is assumed for the event that has already taken place and “it” is inserted in such constructions in order to describe the event as

34. “It was a pleasure to entertain you.”

35. “I had no trouble at all; it was easy to convince him.”

The expletive “it” attains a pronominal status in situations like the following cleft structure (36) where it represents an understood antecedent. Likewise, there is no overt antecedent in (37) and hence, the insertion of “it” as a semantic filler makes the sentence a questionable acceptance.

36. “It would be inexcusable that they should do such a thing.”

37. (?)“It would be inexcusable that they should run away.”

Moreover, just as “it” as a pronominal neuter is the formal counterpart of definite article “the,” the expletive “it” also bears the notion of specification in a given context. This is illustrated in example (38).

38. “Did you hear *it*?” – Did I hear what?”

“Did you hear *the* noise?”

39. “Not for a minute did I believe *the* story (believe *it*) that John has disappeared.”

The interface between “it” and “the” on the basis of definiteness validates the point that a shared knowledge about a pragmatically specified NP actuates the use of pronominal “it” and the same applies to expletive “it” which is added not as a syntactic filler but a semantically meaningful



constituent for some specified NPs. In (40), “it” may be taken to mean “I can’t stand John’s not being around.”

40. “I can’t stand it when John’s not around.”

But in answer to the question (41), “it” may be interpreted as “I can’t stand this place when John’s not around.”

41. “Why are you leaving?” -- because I can’t stand it here.”

It is even comparable to a demonstrative “this” in a situation like (p):

42. “It’s (this is) nice, isn’t it? –What’s nice?—Sitting around and talking.”

The phonological representation of covert referent is sometimes made within the clause itself as an afterthought as in (43) or something neuter like “things” as in (44):

43. “It’s tough when you have to work all day.”

44. “Things are tough when you have to work all day.”

Chafe (1970, p. 101) observes that in constructions like (45), the expletive “it” is all encompassing in the sense that the possible antecedent is total environment, not an individual entity inside it.

45. “It’s hot.”

In addition, “it” does not have any role in the semantic structure of the sentence. The sentence, if applied to John, will imply the ambient heat that John feels, not his inner sensation of heat. So the possible paraphrase of the sentence will be (46).

46. “It’s hot with respect to the experience of John.”

For Bolinger (1977, p. 78), “it” in (45) can be recognized as a pronominal that has “environment” as its antecedent in the manner that Chafe (1970) describes it. However, Chafe’s idea of totality needs modification although his idea of ambience sounds logical. Looking it within this perspective, (45) can find S⁴-representation as 47 or 48.

47. “The weather is hot with respect to the experience of John.”

48. “John senses that it is hot.”

If the idea of totality is not abandoned in favour of individuality, (49) can stand to mean (50).

49. “John is thirsty.”

50.* “It’s thirsty with respect to the experience of John.”

⁴ Surface representation



The oddity of (50) is attributable to the inappropriate analysis of expletive “it” within the totality experience.

To sum up, “it” as an expletive is more semantic in its insertion and embraces diverse concepts like weather, time, circumstance or simply whatever is obvious by the nature of reality or the implications of context. If A comes up with (51), B is will interpret “it” as “A’s concern” as the referent of “it.”

51. “It’s over; he’s dead and I am free.”

In much the same way, B will take “it” as the “state of John’s health” if A utters (52).

52. “John looks like a ghost—it’s terrible, but there’s no remedy for it.”

Pragmatic considerations may expand or contract the semantic dimension of “it.” The expletive “it” is a semantically loaded constituent and the generality of meanings, contends Bolinger (1977) that it exhibits must not be described as a subject filler only. Syntactic configurations must not be the predominant occupation while analyzing the expletive “it.” It is oversimplification of the issue to call it a syntactic filler because a deep analysis of the “it” shows that a covert antecedent always lurks in the background with every use of “it.”

4. “There” Construction

“There” as expletive features in a couple of syntactic structures. It dominantly comes as existential “there” and expresses the existence of an NP/NPs in a situation. Different projection rules for existential “there” are given below.

4.1 The Syntax of Existential “there”

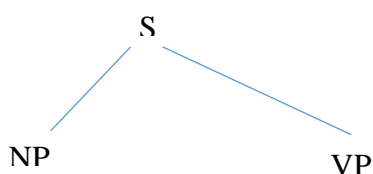
(a). “there [BE NP LocP]”

As illustrated in (a), the existential “there” takes copula as V followed by a locative phrase as an adjunct. “There” in such constructions features as upper subject while the NP that comes the complement of the NP functions follows the verb “be” functions as lower subject. The subject-verb agreement is carried out between the verb and the NP that serves as lower subject as given in (53)

53. “There is a sheep in the barn.”

This rule yields figure (iii) as the tree diagram for (53).

(iii)





is a sheep in the barn

“There” in such constructions also take PP/Adverb Phrase (Adv.P⁵) as an obligatory adjunct.

The second projection rule for existential “there” can be expressed as (b):

(b). “there [BE NP VP Pres Part]”

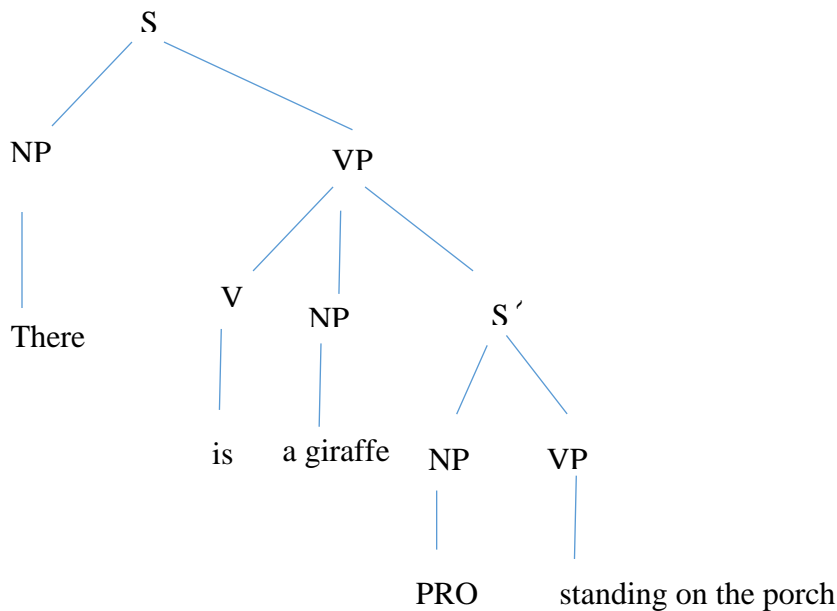
(b) means that existential “there” permits present participle as the complement of verb “be.”

Consider (54).

54. “There is a giraffe standing on the porch.”

Syntactic tree for (54) is (iv).

(iv)



⁵ PP means Prepositional Phrase; Adv.P stands for Adverb Phrase.

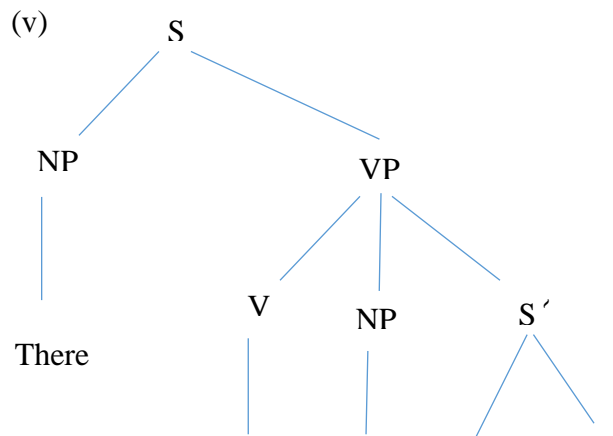


“There” construction also admits passive participle as a complement. This rule has been described as (c) and illustrated in (55).

(c). “there [BE NP PassP]”

55. “There was a purse found at the library.”

(55) will yield figure (v) as the tree diagram.



In addition, there exists another possible syntactic structure in which “be” takes definite NP as a complement.

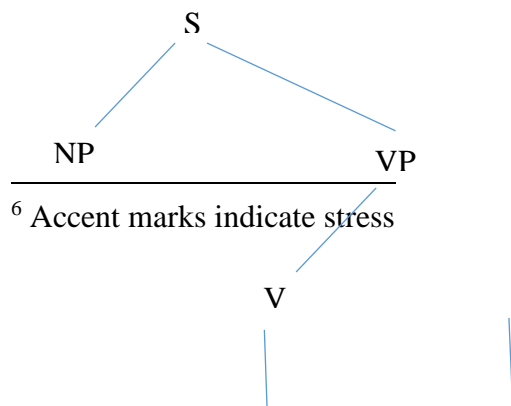
d. “there [BE NP prop]”

Consider (56).

56. “There⁶ is a Santa Claus.”

The tree diagram for (56) will be (vi).

(vi)



⁶ Accent marks indicate stress



is a Santa Claus

In addition to the mentioned patterns, existential “there” can also appear in Unaccusative⁷ predicate constructions. So we can write the fifth projection rule for “there” construction as (e):

(e). “there [V unaccusative]”

Consider the sentence (61).

61. “A package arrived last week.”

The NP “a package” in (61) has no external theta role. “A package” originates as an object and is then raised to subject position to satisfy the case filter. “A package” here is not an agent but an NP

⁷Unaccusative verbs are those which lack an external argument and therefore cannot assign accusative case to their complement-NP. Unaccusative verbs such as “arrive” appear intransitive at the surface level but which has some properties of the transitive verbs. Intransitive verbs cannot appear in “there” construction while unaccusative verbs can:

57. “There arrived a party from Boston.”

58. *“There telephoned a party from Boston.”

Moreover, intransitive verbs can take special objects which in a sense duplicates the meaning of the verb known as cognate objects:

59. “He died a terrible death.”

Unaccusative verbs, on the other hand, cannot take cognate objects, a property they share with transitive verbs.

60. *“He arrived an arrival.”

(See Cook & Newson (2007, p. 123)



that itself undergoes the process of change in terms of position and has been moved to subject position in order to satisfy EPP.

(61) can be expressed as (62).

62. “There arrived a package last week.”

This existential pattern cannot be used with every verb. So we can say (63), but not (64).

63. “Three men bought a book.”

64. “*There three men bought book.”

Burzio (1986, p. 159) says that “there”-construction is restricted to one-argument verbs of movement and change of state: “arise, emerge, ensue, begin, exist, occur, follow.”

4.2 The Formal Structures of “there”

Cattell (2006, p. 185) considers existential “there” an NP with zero Θ -role. Like “it,” expletive “there” is inserted when the sentence does not have any understood subject. It, however, does not act as external argument of the sentence and is therefore Θ -less. The generative approach to “there” constructions is that it is a semantically empty constituent and its insertion is carried out with no semantic implications. Its addition, therefore, is a purely syntactic phenomenon and is licensed under EPP (Cook & Newson 2007, p. 87). Moreover, as mentioned in projection rule (a), “there” constructions admit two subjects: upper and lower. Though existential “there” appears as an upper subject, it is the lower subject that undergoes agreement with the verb. Consider the following sentences.

65. “There is a student in the class.”

66. “There are students in the class.”

In (65), the verb “is” appears in inflected form because the NP following the verb is singular. The uninflected verb “are” in (66), however, is licensed by the plural NP “students.” These examples show that existential “there” takes subject slot in the sentence but the true subject in both cases is the lower subject –the NP that comes as the complement of the verb “be.”

Moreover, as illustrated in the projection rules above, “there” cannot occur with every predicate:

67. * “There offered to join the movement.”

Definite NPs also do not occur in “there” construction:

68. * “There are they in the room.”



69. “There are some in the room.”
70. “There is somebody in the room.”
71. *“There is John in the room.”

(68) and (71) both contain definite NPs –they and John—and so the sentences have been marked ungrammatical. However, definite NPs can be complement of “be” when one or more alternatives are suggested in response to a question. This usage has been illustrated in (72) and (73).

(72) Question: “Who can we get to watch the children?”

Answer: “Well, there's *John*.”

(73) Question: “What can we read to them?”

Answer: ‘Well, there's *this book*, and there's *the book about Snow White*, and there's *Fred's autobiography*.’”

The italicized NPs in (72) and (73) are all definite and their occurrence in “there” structures are due to pragmatic considerations –alternate questions in the present case.

NPs with universal quantifiers like “every, each, all” etc. also do not occur in “there” structures (Baker 1995, p. 430).

74. *“There is every apple on the table.”
75. *“There is each flower in a pot.”
76. *“There are all guests in the lounge.”

“There” constructions are syntactic variants for those structures wherein an indefinite NP can be the external argument of the sentence. Hence, these constructions offer a choice for speakers to use a more natural form (77) instead of less natural (78):

77. “There is a chair in the kitchen.”
78. (?)“A chair is in the kitchen.”

But NPs with universal quantifiers cannot serve as a subject in “there-less” construction. (74), for example, cannot take the following form:

79. *“Every apple is on the table.”

It must also be recognized that every sentence that starts with “there” must not be considered existential “there” constructions. Regarding principle (d), the definite NP can be the lower subject



but "there" in such constructions, according to Baker (1995, p 426), serves as a locative phrase. Following this mode of analysis, "there" in (56) is locative, not existential. Due to its locative nature, the sentence also does not take obligatory adjunct.

80. "*There is a Santa Clause in the room."

This locative "there" is also stressed while existential "there" is always unstressed. Moreover, as Haegeman (1994) contends, existential "there," unlike place adjuncts, cannot be questioned:

81 (a). "I saw Bill there last week."

81 (b). "Where did you see Bill last week? "There."

82. "*Where are three horses escaping?"

In 81(b), the locative "there" has been questioned while the same cannot be attempted about existential "there" as in (82).

4.3 Bolinger on Expletive "There"

Syntactically, the insertion or deletion of existential "there" is something optional and the constructions that take "there" can conveniently be expressed by assigning the subject slot to the lower subject as shown in case of sentence (53).

83. "The sheep is in the barn."

Bolinger (1977, p. 91), however, views this insertion in a different perspective. For him existential "there" may be considered the extension of locative "there" with a meaning that refers to a generalized location. It is not a dummy operator or a redundant word but a fully functional word that can better be recognized by its absence in the sentence.

The insertion of "there" as expletive is unmarkedly done in case of those events about which no prior assumptions are made. It is quite unnatural to start a story like (84):

84. *"In Xanadu once lived a king."

Rather the more natural form will be "there" construction as in (85):

85. "In Xanadu there once lived a king."

The use of "there" assumes a mandatory dimension when no background knowledge has been provided about the scene and "there" presentative is introduced with the intention of orienting the listener to the scene. However, once the stage has been set and the scene established, then "there-less" presentative works well as in (86):



86. "In Xanadu there once lived a king. Near him lived a princess whose name was Diana."

In (86), the first clause is "there" presentative because no prior knowledge is available about the scene, but the second clause is without "there" due to the availability of requisite knowledge about the scene.

Likewise, in an answer to a query (87), the listener may very likely say (88) because the question aims at identifying the person, not his presence which has already been established in the discourse.

87. "Who's in the next room?"

88. "John is."

Contrary to this, the question (89) may receive the answer with "there" construction as (90). A question like this does not presume any prior information about the supper and hence, "there" presentative is an acceptable form for the description of such events.

89. "What's for supper tonight?"

90. "There's bread and beans."

Similarly, "grocery" in (91) is to be taken literal but mental in (92):

91. "Across the street is a grocery."

92. "Across the street there's a grocery."

A construction like (92) foregrounds knowledge about the grocery in the consciousness of the listener. The more vivid an event is, the less likely "there" construction becomes as illustrated in the examples below:

93. "Out of nowhere appeared a mysterious figure."

94. *"Out of nowhere there appeared a mysterious figure."

"There" is inserted when something is out of sight and is unlikely to be referred to with a pointing gesture.

If in a given situation, John has a pencil in his open palm extended forward and an eraser in his clenched fist holding behind his back, he will come up with (95):

95. "In my right hand is a pencil, and in my left there's an eraser."

In (95), the listener cannot see the eraser, so "there" construction works better in this case.



But if John offers a book to Harry, the book is before Harry’s eyes, that’s why John is not likely to say (96) but will say (97).

96. *“Here there is the book.”

97. “Here is the book.”

“There” construction is canonically used when an object is out of the sight and mind of the listener and the speaker desires to bring it into his/her consciousness. Any pragmatic context for “there” is therefore an occasion for indefiniteness⁸:

98. *“In a house on a hill lived a ghost.”

99. “In a house on a hill there lived a ghost.”

In (99), the determinate NPs “a house, a hill” and “a ghost” are all indefinite owing to the determiner “a.” The sentence, therefore, is well expressed with “there” presentative.

However, once the objects have been particularized with definite determiner “the,” “there” is no longer required as shown in (100).

100. “In the house on the hill lived a ghost.”

“There” presentative in such a situation will add to the oddity of the structure,

101. *“In the house on the hill there lived a ghost.”

The particularization of objects with “the” creates a type of island NP⁹ situation for “there,” and the construction subsequently cannot find expression in existential “there” structure. The definiteness of NPs also abolishes the need of bringing something into awareness or creating an abstract stage when the concrete one is missing. Since “there” presentative works best in bringing

⁸ Postal (1974, p. 369) also says that existential “there” takes indefinite NP: “There is a man in your bed.”

⁹ This phenomenon, first observed by Ross (1967), is also generally referred to as the Complex NP Island phenomenon. Just as there are restricted movements within the confines of Islands, so islands in syntax are the same. A constituent cannot move out of an island but can move around within it.



something into consciousness, it is unusual to use it in situations where the identity of an object has already been identified with definite determiner "the."

The "there-less" presentative in (102) is acceptable provided that a ranger tells a party of picnickers about pragmatically defined tables that can even be pointed to.

102. "Across the road are some picnic tables."

(103), on the other hand, will create a great deal of confusion.

103. *"Ten miles down the road are some picnic tables."

Sentence (103) will become logical if it is expressed in "there" construction. This will also dispel the vagueness of the holiday makers.

Syntactically, "there" as expletive admits passive participle as shown in (c), the passive structure, according to Bolinger (1977, p. 103), is either agentless or the agent is appended as an afterthought. Consider the following sentences.

104. "In the morning there were brought in, by the students, some half dozen boxes of books."

105. *"In the morning there were brought in by the students some half dozen boxes of books."

In (105), the agent "by the students" has been expressed as an integral part, not as an afterthought. This leads to the ungrammaticality of the sentence. The same holds for (106) and (107)¹⁰.

106. "There were shown to us, by the diggers, several interesting specimens."

107. *"There were shown to us by the diggers several interesting specimens."

¹⁰ The corresponding active structures of (104) and (106) will be (108) and (109) respectively.

108. "In the morning there were some half dozen boxes of books the students brought in."

109. "There were several interesting specimens the diggers showed to us."



The passive structures also follow the same paradigms that actives follow: indefinite NPs (“some half dozen boxes of books” and “several interesting specimens”) and “there” with locative meaning.

5. Conclusions

The study derives the following conclusive findings about the expletive markers “it” and “there.”

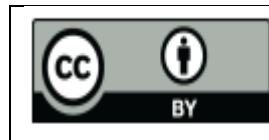
- a. “It” as a syntactic argument is not a null NP void of any theta grade.
- b. “It” is inserted with semantic considerations and has the referential property of pronominal “it” at D-structure.
- c. As expletive “it” bears prior information and hence takes an understood antecedent in the discourse.
- d. Existential “there” marks events that carry no prior information. Hence, its use assumes a sociological character.
- e. As expletive, “there” is recognized by indefinite NPs, universal quantifiers and unaccusative verbs.
- f. Determinate NPs marked with “the” cannot be the complement of “be” in “there” constructions. This happens because a definite NP can attain subject slot in a finite clause but indefinite NPs marked with indefinite articles are characteristically expressed in “there” structures. Certain grammatical contexts like alternate questions, however, admit definite NPs in “there” constructions.
- g. “There” construction can undergo passive transformation provided that the transformed structures are either agentless or the agent is punctuated as an afterthought.

References

- Baker, C.L. (1995). *English Syntax*. Cambridge & London: MIT Press.
- Bolinger, D. (1977). *Meaning and Form*. London and New York: Longman group.
- Bolinger, D. (1980). *Language-- the loaded weapon: The use and abuse of language today*. London and New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis group.
- Burzio, Luigi (1986). *Italian Syntax*. Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel Publishing Company.



- Carnie, A. (2000). *Syntax*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.
- Cattell, R. (2006). *An introduction to mind, consciousness and language*. London: Continuum.
- Chafe, L. W. (1970). *Meaning and the structure of language*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Chomsky, N. (1986). *Knowledge of language: Its nature, origin, and use*. Connecticut: Praeger.
- Cook, V. J. & Newson, M. (2007). *Chomsky's universal grammar: An introduction*. (3rd ed.). Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.
- Haegeman, L. (1994). *Introduction to government and binding theory*. (2nd ed.). Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing
- Postal, M.P. (1974). *On raising: One rule of English grammar and its theoretical implications*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Ross, J. (1967). “On the cyclic nature of English pronominalization.” *In to honor Roman Jakobson*. New York: Humanities.



@ 2021 by the author. Licensee University of Chitral, Journal of Linguistics & Literature, Pakistan. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).