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Optional expletive subjects in Swedish

Elisabet Engdahl

This article investigates the use of non-referential subjects in contemporary Swedish. Given that Swedish has developed a strong subject requirement, expletive subjects are expected to be used in all clauses which lack a referential subject. In spoken Swedish, however, expletive and quasi-argument subjects are optional in utterances where there is an initial *det* 'it' which is linked to an empty position inside a finite or non-finite complement. The paper establishes that there are certain similarities between these examples and *tough* constructions but that the examples involving finite complements cannot be subsumed under a predication analysis which seems appropriate for the *tough* cases. Based on a number of authentic recorded examples, I discuss the processing of utterances with fronted anaphoric pronouns and point to certain similarities with parasitic gaps. The paper closes with a comparison with other Germanic languages.

Keywords expletive, EPP, quasi-argument, subject, Swedish, topicalization, topic drop

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1. INTRODUCTION

A consequence of the symmetric analysis of Germanic verb second (V2) languages – i.e. that the finite verb moves to C^0 in matrix clauses – is that there are two potential subject positions, Spec,TP and Spec,CP (see Koster 1975; den Besten 1977; Platzack 1986, 1998; Vikner 1990, 1995). In non-V2 languages like English, on the other hand, the subject normally appears in Spec,TP. In Germanic, the subject appears in Spec,TP in *yes*/*no*-questions, (1a), and whenever another constituent appears preverbally, (1b). In subject-first matrix declaratives, the subject occupies the Spec,CP position, as illustrated in (1c). The examples are in Swedish, unless otherwise indicated.[1]

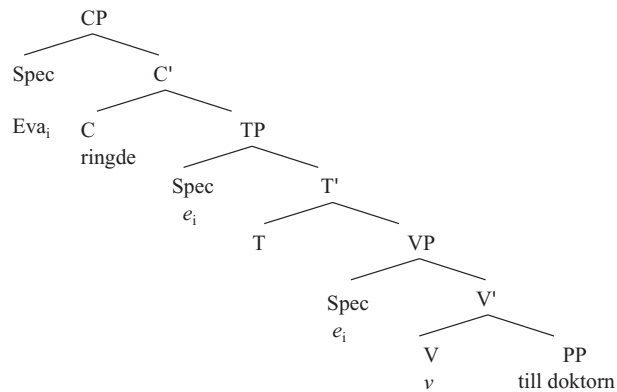
(1) a. Ringde Eva till doktorn?
rang Eva to doctor.DEF
'Did Eva call the doctor?'
b. Sen ringde Eva till doktorn.
then rang Eva to doctor.DEF
'After that Eva called the doctor.'
c. Eva ringde till doktorn.
Eva rang to doctor.DEF
'Eva called the doctor.'

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In this article I explore certain dependencies between Spec,TP and Spec,CP, starting with some data illustrating the strong subject constraint in modern Swedish, Section 2. So-called *tough* constructions, which turn out to be particularly relevant, are discussed in Section 3 and in Section 4, I analyze a new construction in Swedish where expletive subjects are omitted when there is an initial *det* in the clause. The syntactic nature of the strong subject requirement and its connections with the Exended Projection Principle are discussed in Section 5. A characteristic feature of the new construction is the presence of an unbounded dependency and in Section 6, the processing of *det*-initial clauses is addressed. In Section 7, I compare the subject requirement in present-day Swedish with the other Germanic languages.

Throughout the article I adopt a *wysiwyg* version of Thráinsson's (1996) Real Minimalist Principle: Assume only those positions in the syntax for which there is overt evidence in the language.[2] With respect to possible subject positions, this means that I will limit myself to postulating one initial position, which I will refer to as Spec,CP, one position in the part of the clause that follows C, which I will refer to as Spec,TP, and one position in Spec,VP. I thus adopt a tripartite clause structure with a C-domain, a T-domain and a V-domain, similar in many respects to what Platzack (1998, 2011) has proposed for Swedish. The structure for (1c) is shown in (2).

(2)



Furthermore I do not assume that syntactic properties such as agreement or Case, or semantic properties such as tense or mood, or information structural aspects such as topic and focus motivate postulating distinct syntactic projections like AgrP, AspP or FocP.[3] I assume that the semantic-pragmatic contribution of a phrase appearing in Spec,CP as e.g. a contrastive or continued topic is determined by the content and phonological realization of that phrase together with a model of the information states of the discourse participants (Engdahl 2001, 2006; Ginzburg 2012). I believe that this is a more transparent approach, which is compatible with several syntactic frameworks such as Head-Driven Phrase Structure Grammar (Pollard & Sag 1994; Sag, Wasow & Bender 2003), Lexical-Functional Grammar (Bresnan

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2001; Dalrymple 2001; Lødrup 2011) and the Simpler Syntax approach proposed by Culicover & Jackendoff (2005).

2. THE SUBJECT REQUIREMENT

There is general agreement in descriptions and reference grammars of Swedish that a finite clause must contain an overt subject, see e.g. Teleman, Hellberg & Andersson (1999/4:42). This is often referred to as 'the subject requirement' (Sw. *subjektstvånget*). If a clause does not have a lexical (referential) subject, then an expletive subject *det* 'it' is required. Note that I use 'expletive' somewhat loosely for all non-referential occurrences of *det* in this and the following two sections. In Section 4.5 I will make a finer distinction between different types of expletive subjects. In matrix clauses, *det* appears either postverbally, in Spec,TP, or initially, in Spec,CP (but see (7) below).

(3) a. Regnade *(det) i går?
rained it yesterday
'Did it rain yesterday?'
b. *(Det) regnade i går.
it rained yesterday
'It rained yesterday.'

In this respect, the mainland Scandinavian languages differ from Icelandic, where *það* only occurs in Spec,CP (see e.g. Holmberg & Platzack 1995:Chapter 4; Vikner 1995:Chapters 6 and 7; Thráinsson 2007:Chapter 6).

(4) a. Rigndi (*það) í gær? (Ice.)
rained it yesterday
b. *(Það) rigndi í gær.
it rained yesterday

2.1 Null subjects in Spec,CP

Subjects in Spec,CP are sometimes not realized overtly, as shown in (5). This is commonly taken to be an instance of TOPIC DROP, i.e. a topic is not pronounced in a context where the referent is highly accessible (Ross 1982; Cardinaletti 1990; Mörnsjö 2002; Rosenkvist 2010; Sigurðsson & Maling 2010; Sigurðsson 2011).

(5) Q: Vad gjorde Eva?
what did Eva
'What did Eva do?'
A: Ø Ringde till doktorn.
rang to doctor.DEF
'(She) called the doctor.'

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Topic drop is not limited to subjects, see (6a), but, as is well known, it is limited to the initial position (6b).

(6) a. Han visade i alla fall ett visst intresse.
he showed in all cases a certain interest
Ø Ska han ha en eloge för, tycker jag. (Mörnsjö 2002:167)
shall he have a tribute for think I
'He did at least show some interest. He deserves praise for that, I think.'
b. Han ska ha en eloge för *(det), tycker jag.
he shall have a tribute for it think I

Topic drop of an initial constituent, especially a first person pronoun, is quite common in spoken informal Swedish, as well as in blogs and SMS text messages, see (7a). Interestingly initial expletive subjects may also be dropped, as shown in the authentic examples from Mörnsjö (2002) in (7b, c).[4] In these cases it is less appropriate to talk about topic drop, if we assume that topics have to refer to something.

(7) a. Vi kryssade lite i Söderhavet. Så var vi på en liten
we cruised little in South.sea.DEF then were we on a small
ö där. Ø For via Los Angeles dit och via Hong Kong
island there went.via Los Angeles *there and via Hong Kong*
tillbaka. (Mörnsjö 2002:167)
back
'We cruised a little in the South Seas. Then we were on a small island there.
(We) went out via Los Angeles and came back via Hong Kong.'
b. Ø Var kallt och blåsigt. (Mörnsjö 2002:183)
was cold and windy
'(It) was cold and windy.'
c. Är du blyg, Lina? [. . .] Ø var ju längesen jag såg dig.
are you shy Lina was PRT long.ago I saw you
(Mörnsjö 2002:184)
'Are you shy, Lina? (It) is a long time since I saw you.'

In (7a), the first person plural pronoun *vi* is left out in the third sentence. In (7b) the weather *det* is not pronounced and in (7c) the expletive in a cleft construction is missing.

Although the examples in (7) represent an informal register, and may be considered somewhat marked by certain speakers, there is a sharp contrast between examples with a missing initial expletive and examples with a missing expletive in Spec,TP. The latter are judged to be clearly ungrammatical, as shown below.

(8) a. (Det) ska bli gott med kaffe nu.
it shall be good with coffee now
'It will be nice to have coffee now.'

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b. Nu ska *(det) bli gott med kaffe. (Teleman et al. 1999/4:42)
now shall it be good with coffee
'Now it will be nice to have coffee.'

The non-referential subject *det* is also required in cleft constructions, (9), and presentational constructions, (10). It is also used when an infinitival or finite clause is extraposed, as shown in (11). Falk (1993:91ff.) refers to these as clause-anticipating *det* and I will adopt this term here.[5]

(9) a. (Det) var längesen jag såg dig.
it was long.ago I saw you.ACC
'It is a long time since I saw you.'
b. Var *(det) längesen jag såg dig?
was it long.ago I saw you
'Is it a long time since I saw you?'

(10) a. (Det) kan finnas ormar i gräset.
it can be snakes in grass.DEF
'There can be snakes in the grass.'
b. Kan *(det) finnas ormar i gräset?
can it be snakes in grass.DEF
'Can there be snakes in the grass?'

(11) a. (Det) var trevligt att träffa dig / att du kunde komma.
it was nice.NEUT to meet you that you could come
'It is nice to meet you / that you could come.'
b. Därför var *(det) trevligt att träffa dig / att du kunde komma.
therefore was it nice.NEUT to meet you that you could come
'Therefore it is nice to meet you / that you could come.'

2.2 Null subjects in [Spec,TP]?

Judging from the minimal pairs in (8)–(11) it looks like *det* is obligatory in Spec,TP. There is however one context where *det* is frequently left out, viz. when there is a locative adverbial in Spec,CP, as in (12a).

(12) a. I gräset kan (det) finnas ormar. (Falk 1993:282)
in grass.DEF can it be snakes
'In the grass there can be snakes.'
b. På morgonen kan ??(det) finnas ormar i gräset.
in morning.DEF can it be snakes in grass.DEF
'In the morning there may be snakes in the grass.'

This type has been discussed by Sundman (1980:115ff.), Falk (1993:282ff.) and others, and additional examples are given in Teleman et al. (1999/4:54). Most speakers accept examples like (12a) but find structurally similar examples with non-locative initial adverbials, as in (12b), less acceptable. In her 1993 book, Falk assumes that

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'the subject position [in Spec,TP] is empty and licensed by the topicalized phrase, but at the same time connected with the VP-internal argument' (Falk 1993:284). Her analysis is given in (13).

(13) [$_{CP}$ I gräset$_i$ kan [$_{TP}$ t$_{ij}$ [$_{VP}$ *v* finnas ormar$_j$ t$_i$]]]
in grass.DEF can be snakes

The subject position thus acts as a 'link' between the constituent in Spec,CP and an argument in the VP. This analysis, which involves double indexing, is presumably not available on current assumptions about syntactic structure.

Examples without expletive subjects like (12a) are used in written, often rather formal language, and hardly occur in spoken language. Younger speakers tend to think that they sound old-fashioned and prefer to use an overt expletive. We can summarize the situation in present-day Swedish as follows: All finite clauses require a subject, either a referential subject or the expletive *det*. Subjects in Spec,CP may be left out in informal speech, but neither referential nor expletive subjects in Spec,TP can be omitted.[6]

3. *TOUGH* CONSTRUCTIONS

Let us have a closer look at the structures involved. In a polar interrogative as in (14a), the finite verb appears in C and the expletive *det* occupies Spec,TP. The little *v* indicates the verb positions in TP and VP. In a declarative clause, the expletive is fronted to Spec,CP. For perspicuity I indicate the empty subject position in Spec,TP by a coindexed *e*.

(14) a. [$_{CP}$ [$_{C}$ Regnade] [$_{TP}$ det *v* [$_{VP}$ *v* i går]]]?
rained it yesterday
b. [$_{CP}$ Det$_i$ [$_{C}$ regnade] [$_{TP}$ *e*$_i$ *v* [$_{VP}$ *v* i går]]]
it rained yesterday

In examples with meteorological predicates like (14), the subject *det* is often analysed as a quasi-argument, following Chomsky (1981:325). Just like *it* in English, this *det* is identical to the neuter singular form of the personal pronoun *det*. An initial *det* can hence also function as an anaphoric referential pronoun, as in (15), where coindexing indicates intended coreference.[7]

(15) a. Q: Var är brevet$_i$?
where is letter.DEF
A: Det$_i$ lade jag på byrån.
it put I on dresser.DEF
b. [$_{CP}$ Det$_i$ lade [$_{TP}$ jag *v* [$_{VP}$ *v* *e*$_i$ på byrån]]]
it put I on dresser.DEF

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It is less clear whether examples with extraposed clauses, as in (11), should be treated as co-reference. In order to make the analysis easier to follow, I will annotate such uses with a subscript *x* on the clause-anticipating *det*, the empty subject position and the extraposed clause.

(16) a. Det var trevligt att träffa dig.
it was nice.NEUT to meet you
b. [$_{CP}$Det$_x$ var [$_{TP}$ e_x *v* [$_{VP}$ trevligt [att träffa dig]$_x$]]]

A particularly interesting case is the so-called *tough* construction, where the subject of the predication in the matrix clause is simultaneously interpreted as the object of an embedded predicate, as in (17).

(17) Du är svår att behaga.
you.NOM are hard.COM to please
'You are hard to please.'

This construction has been much discussed in the literature (see e.g. Chomsky 1977:102ff., 1981:308ff.; Nanni 1978, 1980; Bennis 2000; Dalrymple & King 2000; Rezac 2006; Hicks 2009). An analysis on which the matrix subject *du* 'you' has been moved from the object position of *behaga* 'please' runs into problems. *Du* is nominative whereas *behaga* assigns accusative case to its object. Furthermore there is ample evidence from scope and selection that the subject is an argument of a two-place *tough* adjective which also takes an infinitival complement (for an overview, see Dalrymple & King 2000; Rezac 2006). I will here adopt an analysis where the matrix adjective forms a complex property with the infinitival phrase which is predicated of the subject.[8] In (16), *svår* 'hard' composes with the property of being a *k* such that an arbitrary referent (PRO) pleases *k*. See the analysis in (18), where the superscripted *k* indicates predication.[9] Just as in previous examples, the element in Spec,CP is coindexed with an empty subject position in Spec,TP. The adjective *svår* 'hard' agrees with the subject and has the non-neuter common form, as is expected since it is predicated of a non-neuter subject.

(18) [$_{CP}$ ^{k}Du$_i$ är [$_{TP}$ e_i *v* [$_{VP}$ *v* [$_{AP}$ ^{k}svår ^{k}[Op$_k$ att PRO behaga e_k]]]]]
you.NOM are hard.COM to please

Next consider the example in (19) where the initial constituent has been fronted from the object position and is in the accusative case. Here the Spec,TP position is filled with an expletive *det*, presumably the clause-anticipating *det*$_x$. The adjective *svårt* 'hard' is in the neuter form, agreeing with *det*.

(19) a. Dig är det svårt att behaga.
you.ACC is it hard.NEUT to please
'You, it is hard to please.'
b. [$_{CP}$ Dig$_i$ är [$_{TP}$ det$_x$ *v* [$_{VP}$ *v* [$_{AP}$ svårt] [att PRO behaga e_i]$_x$]]]
you.ACC is it hard.NEUT to please

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The agreement patterns here are very clear. Nominative case is not possible if the initial constituent does not act as a subject of the predication, (20a), and the non-neuter form of the adjective is not possible with an initial accusative, non-subject, constituent, (20b).

(20) a. *Du är det svårt att behaga.
you.NOM is it hard.NEUT to please
b. *Dig är svår att behaga.
you.ACC are hard.COM to please

Against this background, the example in (21a) is somewhat unexpected.[10] Here the initial constituent is accusative, indicating that it is not a subject. The adjective has the neuter form, but there is no subject with which it can agree. Given what we have seen so far, the structure must be as shown in (21b). The symbol Ø here marks an empty Spec,TP position.

(21) a. Dig är svårt att behaga.
you.ACC is hard.NEUT to please
'You, it is hard to please.'
b. [$_{CP}$ Dig$_i$ är [$_{TP}$ Ø$_x$ *v* [$_{VP}$ *v* [$_{AP}$ svårt] [att PRO behaga e_i]$_x$]]]
you.ACC is hard.NEUT to please

(21) shows that the generalization expressed at the end of Section 2.2 is not correct; expletive subjects CAN be left out in Spec,TP under certain conditions. Let us look more closely at what these conditions might be. (22) shows an example where the infinitival clause acts as a subject; the adjective obligatorily has the neuter form. (23) shows the extraposed version.

(22) a. Att behaga dig är svårt/*svår.
to please you is hard.NEUT/COM
b. [$_{CP}$ [Att PRO behaga dig]$_i$ är [$_{TP}$ e_i *v* [$_{VP}$ *v* [$_{AP}$ svårt]]]]
to please you is hard.NEUT

(23) a. Det är svårt att behaga dig.
it is hard.NEUT to please you
b. [$_{CP}$ Det$_x$ är [$_{TP}$ e_x *v* [$_{VP}$ *v* [$_{AP}$ svårt] [att PRO behaga dig]$_x$]]]
it is hard.NEUT to please you

In (23b) the clause-anticipating *det*$_x$ acts as a subject, as shown by e_x in Spec,TP. (21b) has a similar structure, but there is no coindexed empty element in Spec,TP, since the accusative *dig* in Spec,CP cannot be analysed as a subject.

We thus have some evidence that examples (17) and (21) differ structurally. The structure of (17), repeated here in (24), involves an initial constituent which acts as a subject of the matrix clause and where the agreeing adjective forms a complex property with the infinitival clause which is predicated of the subject.

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(24) Du är svår att behaga.
you.NOM are hard.COM to please
b. [$_{CP}$ ^{k}Du$_{i}$ är [$_{TP}$ e_{i} *v* [$_{VP}$ *v* [$_{AP}$ ^{k}svår ^{k}[Op$_{k}$ att PRO behaga e_{k}]]]]]
you.NOM are hard.COM to please

In (21b), the initial *dig* does not act as a subject at any point. Presumably it is linked directly to the empty object position in the infinitival clause. The adjective *svårt* does not form a complex property with the infinitival clause *att behaga*; rather *svårt* is predicated of the infinitival clause, as in (22)–(23).

Additional evidence for distinguishing the two structures comes from tests involving fronting of the AP. Modifying and fronting the complex property in (24b) is perfectly grammatical, as shown in (25a). The subject *du* here occupies Spec,TP. Fronting just the infinitival part is not felicitous, (25c).

(25) a. Särskilt svår att behaga är du inte.
particularly hard.COM to please are you.NOM not
'You are not particularly hard to please.'
b. [$_{CP}$ [$_{AP}$ Särskilt ^{k}svår ^{k}[Op$_{k}$ att PRO behaga e_{k}]]$_{i}$ är [$_{TP}$ ^{k}du *v*
particularly hard.COM to please are you.NOM
inte [$_{VP}$ *v* e_{i}]]]
not
c. *Att behaga är du inte svår.
to please are you.NOM not hard.COM

In the other structure, the initial *dig* cannot be analysed as a subject in Spec,TP. Consequently it is not possible to front the AP since *dig* already occupies Spec,CP.

(26) a. *Särskilt svårt att behaga är dig inte.
particularly hard.NEUT to please is you.ACC not
b. *Att behaga är dig inte svårt.
to please is you.ACC not hard.NEUT

In (21) and (24), the case marking of the initial constituent makes it clear that we have two different structures. However, in modern Swedish only certain pronouns have distinct forms in nominative and accusative. Lexical noun phrases are not case marked, but sometimes agreement facts distinguish the two structures, as in (27).

(27) a. Tre barn är omöjliga att ta hand om,
three children are impossible.PL to take hand about
(nämligen A, B och C).
viz. A, B and C
'Three children are impossible to take care of.'
b. Tre barn är omöjligt att ta hand om,
three children is impossible.NEUT to take hand about
(*nämligen A, B och C).
viz. A, B and C
'It is impossible to take care of (as many as) three children.'

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In (27a) the adjective *omöjliga* 'impossible' agrees in number with *tre barn* 'three children', which is interpreted as the subject of the predication of the complex property 'impossible to look after' and which can be distributed over the individual children, cf. the structure in (24b). In (27b) on the other hand, the adjective *omöjligt* is in the singular neuter form and does not agree with the initial plural NP, which means that *tre barn* does not act as a subject in Spec,TP.[11] The absence of agreement suggests the same structure as in (21b), viz. with an empty expletive in Spec,TP. The amount interpretation further supports this analysis; it is the looking after (as many as) three children that is claimed to be impossible. Malmgren (1990:104f.) discusses a similar distinction in interpretation using the pair of examples in (28).

(28) a. Båda hoten är svåra att parera.
both threats are hard.PL to counter
'Each of the threats is hard to counter'
b. Båda hoten är svårt att parera.
both threats is hard.NEUT to counter
'It is hard to counter both threats at the same time.'

In (28a), with the agreeing adjective, the predication is interpreted distributively – it holds for each threat – whereas in (28b) it is the simultaneous countering of the two threats which is judged to be hard.

3.1 Tough constructions with initial *det*

We have thus established that clause-anticipating expletive det_x may be left unrealized in Spec,TP under certain conditions. The crucial factor seems to be that there is a constituent in Spec,CP which is linked to an empty position in an embedded infinitival clause. As shown in (8)–(11), an expletive subject in Spec,TP is required in verb-initial clauses and in declaratives where Spec,CP is occupied by a connecting adverbial like *därför* 'therefore' or temporal adverbials like *nu* 'now'. So far we have looked at examples where the initial constituent is either clearly a non-subject (*dig*) or does not act as a subject (lack of agreement). However, the overwhelming majority of authentic examples are introduced by *det*, which, as we have seen, can be either a referential anaphoric pronoun or an expletive. Sometimes the status of an initial *det* is unambiguous, as in (15), repeated here as (29), where it must be referential, or in (16), repeated here as (30), where it must be analysed as a clause-anticipating expletive *det*.

(29) $[_{CP}$ Det_i lade $[_{TP}$ jag v $[_{VP}$ v e_i på byrån]]]
it put I on dresser.DEF

(30) $[_{CP}$ Det_x var $[_{TP}$ e_x v $[_{VP}$ trevligt [att träffa dig]$_x$]]]
it was nice.NEUT to meet you

But what about examples like (31)?

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(31) Det är svårt att säga.
it is hard to say

(31) can be analysed in two ways. First, it can be analysed as in (32a), where the complex property 'hard to say' is predicated of the initial det_i, which consequently acts as the subject of the matrix clause, as shown by the coindexed e_i in Spec,TP. Alternatively, it can be analysed as in (32b), where the expected clause-anticipating det_x in Spec,TP is absent and marked by $Ø_x$, as in (21b).

(32) a. $[_{CP}$ ^{k}Det$_i$ är $[_{TP}$ e_i *v* $[_{VP}$ *v* $[_{AP}$ ^{k}svårt ^{k}[Op$_k$ att säga e_k]]]]]
it is hard to say
b. $[_{CP}$ Det$_i$ är $[_{TP}$ $Ø_x$ *v* $[_{VP}$ *v* $[_{AP}$ svårt] [att säga $e_i]_x$]]]
it is hard to say

Thus (31) displays a structural ambiguity. It is either an instance of a *tough* construction where the initial *det* acts as a subject of the *tough* adjective *svårt*, or it is a case of topicalization out of an extraposed infinitival clause, but without the expected overt clause-anticipating det_x in Spec,TP.[12] Inserting such a det_x in (31) is possible, as shown in (33):

(33) Det är det svårt att säga.
it is it hard to say
'It is hard to say.'

(31) and (33) have the same range of interpretations according to the native Swedish speakers I have consulted. Given the strong subject requirement in modern Swedish, one might expect (33) to be preferred, but in fact, this structure with an overt det_x is not very common.[13] Instead the pattern in (31) seems to be extending to other constructions.

4. NOT JUST *TOUGH* CONSTRUCTIONS

In addition to examples like (31) we find examples like (34a), first discussed in Engdahl (2007, 2010), where an initial *det* must be interpreted as the missing object in the embedded finite clause; *sa* 'said' requires an object, as shown in (34b).

(34) a. Det$_i$ var dumt att du sa e_i.
it was stupid.NEUT that you said
'It was stupid that you said it/that.'
b. Jag hörde att du sa *(det).
I heard that you said it
'I heard that you said it/that.'

Note that there is no expletive subject in Spec,TP in the matrix clause. Some additional examples from informal conversations or radio broadcasts are given in (35). Main stress is indicated by ˈ in front of the stressed word.

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(35) a. Det$_i$ är 'klart att du ska göra e_i. (woman, aged 50, 2001)
it is clear.NEUT that you shall do
'Of course you should do it.'

b. Det$_i$ är ju 'roligt om hon får e_i. (man, aged 45, 2003)
it is PRT nice.NEUT if she gets
'It is nice if she gets it.'

c. Det$_i$ är helt 'nödvändigt att dom gör e_i. (Swedish Radio, 1999)
it is wholly necessary.NEUT that they do
'It is absolutely necessary that they do it.'

d. Det$_i$ kan hända att vi 'inte har e_i. (Swedish Radio, 2004)
it may happen that we not have
'Maybe we don't have it.'

In these examples, the matrix clause contains an evaluative or modal adjective or a modal verb together with a finite complement clause. The initial *det* in (34) and (35) must be interpreted as a fronted object. Versions without fronting are of course grammatical, see (36a), where the initial *det* must be analysed as a clause-anticipating *det*$_x$ as in (36b) with e_x in Spec,TP.

(36) a. Det var dumt att du sa det.
it was stupid that you said it
'It was stupid that you said it/that.'

b. [$_{CP}$ Det$_x$ var [$_{TP}$ e_x *v* [$_{VP}$ *v* [$_{AP}$ dumt] [$_{CP}$ att du sa det]$_x$]]]
it was stupid that you said it

(34a), with a fronted referential object *det*, is most plausibly analysed as in (37), with an unrealized expletive subject in Spec,TP.

(37) [$_{CP}$ Det$_i$ var [$_{TP}$ Ø$_x$ *v* [$_{VP}$ *v* [$_{AP}$ dumt] [$_{CP}$ att du sa e_i]$_x$]]]
it was stupid that you said

The structure in (37) is very similar to (32b), the main difference being that in (37) the initial *det*$_i$ is linked to an empty object in a finite complement clause whereas (32b) has an infinitival clause.

In addition to the examples with complement clauses in (34) and (35), there are examples involving what looks like relative clauses, see (38).

(38) a. Det$_i$ är ju så 'många som gör e_i. (woman, aged 50, 2005)
it is PRT so many that do
'There are so many that do it.'

b. Titta en rund potatis! Det$_i$ är inte 'ofta man ser e_i.
look a round potato.COM it is not often one sees
(teenager, March 2003)[14]
'Look a round potato! You don't see that very often.'

c. Det$_i$ är nog bara 'jag som klarar e_i. (Swedish Radio, 2010)
it is probably only I that manage
'I'm probably the only one who can fix that.'

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These examples resemble both cleft and presentational constructions.[15] Just like typical cleft constructions, the main verb is the copula *vara* 'be' and the clefted constituent is stressed. Similar to presentational constructions, the head of the relative clause often consists of an indefinite quantity expression (*många*, *ofta*) and the relative clause contributes new information. This type of clause has been discussed in connection with extractions from relative clauses in the mainland Scandinavian languages (see e.g. Engdahl 1982, 1997; Erteschik-Shir 1982; Lambrecht 1988). But note that the expected version with an extraction would be as in (39), with an expletive *det* in Spec,TP. Recall that in standard Swedish, presentational sentences are introduced by *det*.

(39) Det$_i$ är det ju [$_{DP}$ så många [$_{CP}$ som gör e_i]]
it is it PRT so many that do
'There are so many that do it.'

The type in (39) is used, but it seems to me that the version without an expletive subject is gaining ground. Such utterances are typically used when the speaker provides a comment on how many or which people *do*, *have*, *see* or *participate in* the event that the comment is about and which is often anaphorically referred to by an utterance-initial *det*. The initial *det* is usually unstressed, but utterances with a stressed *det* occur, as in (40), where the speaker, a 12-year old girl, commented on having a newly washed car.

(40) 'Det$_i$ är inte ofta man har e_i. (girl, aged 12, 2002)
it is not often one has
'That, you don't have very often.'

4.1 Examples in context

In order to give the reader a better idea of how and when these constructions are used, I provide a few transcribed examples with more context. The sound files are available via *Språkbanken*.[16] The first two examples come from the popular radio program *Språket* ('The Language') where Lars-Gunnar Andersson, professor of Modern Swedish, answers questions from the listeners. In (41), the topic of the discussion is how come the use of double supine forms is more common in spoken language than in written. In spoken Swedish, *det* is normally pronounced without the final *t*.

(41) Discussion about 'double supine forms' (SR P1 21/9 2008)
L-GA: nä: å de e väl så också att när man eh (.)
no and it is PRT so also that when one eh
läser igenom en text man har skrivit så kanske
reads through a text one has written so maybe
man lägger märke till dom här **de e ju inte**
one lays mark to these.here it is PRT not

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säkert att man gör när man (.) pratar på eh
certain that one does when one speaks on eh
'No, and it is probably the case that when you read through a text you have written, you may notice these ones. It is not certain that you do this when you keep talking.'

First Andersson comments that it is normal to notice these double supines when you read through your text. The initial *de* in the bold segment refers to 'to notice the double supines' and Andersson continues; *de e ju inte säkert att man gör när man pratar på eh* 'it is not certain that you do when you are busy talking'. In the next example, a listener has asked about the expression *koka ner* 'boil down', presumably a direct translation from the English expression. The program host Anna-Lena Ringarp first conveys what the listener has said and then Andersson makes a comment.

(42) Discussion about *koka ner* (SR P1 24/9 2008)
A-LR: ja tycker de låter konstigt säger han
I think it sounds strange says he
'I think it sounds strange, he says.'
L-GA: aa: (.) **å de (.) e väl många som gör först** (.)
yees and it is PRT many that do first
å sen vänjer man sej kanske
and then get.used one SELF maybe
'Yes, and there are probably many who do at first. And then maybe you get used to it.'

Here Andersson's initial *de* presumably refers back to the content of the previous utterance: *think that it sounds strange*. He continues and affirms that there are probably many who find this expression strange. Note that there is clearly a missing object after *gör* in (42), since Swedish does not allow the kind of VP deletion used in the English paraphrase, where the proverb *do* replaces the entire VP *do this*.

In (43) former journalist Barbro Hedvall features in the early morning program *Tankar för dagen* ('Thoughts for the day'), talking about the role of clothes and hair styles in politics.

(43) Barbro Hedvall in *Tankar för dagen* (SR P1 28/1 2010)
BH: skulle alltså okrainska Julia Timosjenko ha sin
should then Ukrainian Julia Timosjenko have her
flätfrisyr av en tillfällighet (.) skulle den inte
braid.hairdo of a coincidence should it not
ha ett budskap (.) **de e klart att den har.**
have a message it is clear that it.COM has
'Is it a coincidence that the Ukrainian Julia Timosjenko sports her special braided hair style? Doesn't it have a message? Of course it does.'

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Hedvall here asks two rhetorical questions about Julia Timosjenko's choice of hair style and then delivers the answer herself at a quicker pace. Hedvall is presumably reading from a manuscript. The initial *de* in her reply refers back to *ett budskap* 'a message' in the preceding question and *den* refers back to *frisyr* 'hair style'. Just like in the previous example, there is clearly a missing object after the verb *har*, a fact that is not conveyed by the English paraphrase.

Until now I have collected approximately 150 examples of *det*-initial utterances with missing expletive subjects from informal conversations and radio broadcasts. In the extracts from the radio which I have been able to analyse more closely, the relevant sequences were produced quickly, with a single intonation contour. I have not found any instances where the speaker interrupts the delivery and corrects him/herself by inserting an expletive subject. I have also not found any signals that the listener has difficulties understanding the utterance. I take this as evidence that the construction type is a normal feature of Modern Swedish.

4.2 *Unexpressed* det

In my collection of attested examples, the most common type is the one exemplified in (43) and in (35a), repeated here as (44a), where the utterance starts with *det e klart* 'it is clear'. In addition, there are also a number of examples as in (44b).

(44) a. Det$_i$ är ˈklart att du ska göra e_i. (woman, aged 50, 2001)
it is clear.NEUT that you shall do
'Of course you should do it.'

b. Klart att du ska göra *e*.
clear.NEUT that you shall do
'Of course you should do it.'

As shown by the English paraphrases, both utterances convey an affirmative reaction, adequately rendered by the utterance-initial *of course* in English.[17] In (44a), the missing object after *göra* 'do' is co-indexed with the topicalized *det*. In (44b), there is no topicalized antecedent. However, it seems plausible that (44b) is the result of topic drop together with a left out copula. As we saw in Section 2.1, anaphoric elements in Spec,CP are often not realized phonetically, cf. (6)–(11). In evaluative utterances, both an initial *det* and the copula are often omitted in spoken Swedish, as pointed out in Teleman et al. (1999/4:966), from where the examples in (45) are taken.

(45) a. Bra gjort. Jfr: Det var bra gjort.
'Well done.' Cf. 'That was well done.'

b. Trist att det regnar. Jfr: Det är trist att det regnar.
'Pity that it rains.' Cf. 'It is a pity that it rains.'

Given the tendency to leave out utterance-initial *det är/var* 'it is/was' in spoken Swedish, I assume that (44b) has the structure shown in (46b) with a missing

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topicalized object and a missing finite verb. For perspicuity I have indexed the missing elements (cf. also (37)).

(46) a. Klart att du ska göra *e*.
clear.NEUT that you shall do
b. [$_{CP}$Øi Øv [$_{TP}$ Øx *v* [$_{VP}$ *v* [$_{AP}$ klart] [$_{CP}$ att du ska göra e_i]$_x$]]]

Evidence that (46) involves an empty referential element in Spec,CP and an empty expletive element in Spec,TP comes from data like the following. In (47a) the subject is missing and is conventionally interpreted as first person, as shown in (47b). In (48) the object of the embedded clause is missing, analyzed as an instance of topic drop.

(47) a. Hoppas att ni gör det.
hope that you do it
'(I) hope that you will do it.'
b. [$_{CP}$Ø$_{1p}$ hoppas [$_{TP}$ Ø$_{1p}$ *v* [$_{VP}$ *v* [att ni gör det]]]]

(48) a. Hoppas jag att ni gör *e*.
hope I that you do
'I hope you do.'
b. [$_{CP}$Øi hoppas [$_{TP}$ jag *v* [$_{VP}$ *v* [att ni gör e_i]]]]

Both (47) and (48) are common in ordinary conversation and contrast with (49), which is clearly ungrammatical. As shown in the analysis in (49b), this would involve two empty elements in Spec,CP, which would be unexpected in a V2 language.

(49) a. *Hoppas *e* att ni gör *e*.
hope that you do
b. [$_{CP}$Øi Ø$_{1p}$ hoppas [$_{TP}$ e_{1p} *v* [$_{VP}$ *v* [att ni gör e_i]]]]

4.3 *Comparison with* tough *constructions*

The data discussed in Section 4 show many similarities with the *tough* constructions discussed in Section 3. In both cases, an expletive subject in Spec,TP is not pronounced when there is a referential *det* (overt or silent) in Spec,CP linked to an empty position in an embedded clause. However, there are also some differences. In the case of *tough* constructions, we established that there is a structural ambiguity, shown in (32) and repeated here in (50). The initial *det* is either a subject of the complex predication *är svårt att säga* 'is hard to say' as shown in (50a), or it is the fronted object of *att säga* 'to say' as shown in (50b), in which case the expected expletive subject is missing.

(50) a. [$_{CP}$ ^{k}Det$_i$ är [$_{TP}$ e_i *v* [$_{VP}$ *v* [$_{AP}$ ^{k}svårt ^{k}[Op$_k$ att säga e_k]]]]]
it is hard to say
b. [$_{CP}$ Det$_i$ är [$_{TP}$ Øx *v* [$_{VP}$ *v* [$_{AP}$ svårt] [att säga e_i]$_x$]]]
it is hard to say

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The examples with fronting from finite clauses are not structurally ambiguous. In the proposed structure in (37), repeated here in (51), the initial *det* is analysed as the fronted object of *att du sa* 'that you said'.

(51) $[_{CP}$ Det$_i$ var $[_{TP}$ Ø$_x$ *v* $[_{VP}$ *v* $[_{AP}$ dumt] $[_{CP}$ att du sa $e_i]_x]]]$
it was stupid that you said

There is no alternative analysis corresponding to (50a) where the initial *det* also acts as the subject of the matrix predicate *var dumt* 'was stupid'. Whereas it is semantically plausible to analyse *tough* constructions as composite predications (the property of being hard composes with the property of being an *x* such that it is hard for someone to say *x*), this is not an option for examples like (51). The finite complement clause 'that you said *x*' expresses a proposition (provided that x is given a value) and acts as an argument of the matrix predicate 'was stupid'. It is not possible for an embedded object to raise and become a subject of the matrix clause. Consequently we expect to find grammatical examples where *det* is realized in the Spec,TP subject position in *tough* constructions, but not in the constructions involving finite clauses. This prediction is borne out, as shown in (52) and (53).

(52) a. Är det svårt att säga?
is it hard to say
b. Är du svår att behaga?
are you hard to please

(53) a. *Var det dumt att du sa?
was it stupid that you said
b. *Är det många som gör?
is it many that do

I have no attested examples like the ones in (53) and to my ears they sound ungrammatical.[18] Note that it is impossible to analyze these *yes/no* questions as involving topic drop or to assume that the object has been fronted to Spec,TP.

4.4 Comparison with clause-bounded examples

In Section 2.2, I brought up one type of example where expletive subjects are sometimes left out, viz. (12a), repeated here as (54a) together with an additional example.

(54) a I gräset kan (det) finnas ormar. (Falk 1993:282)
in grass.DEF can it be snakes
'In the grass there can be snakes.'
b. Ledsammast har (det) varit att han aldrig har ställt upp.
saddest has it been that he never has stood up
(Teleman et al. 1999/3:556)
'The saddest thing has been that he has never volunteered.'

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In these examples there is a locative adverbial or a superlative predicative adjective in Spec,CP and there is often a temporal or modal auxiliary.[19] The initial locative is linked to an empty argument position in the VP, as shown in (55a), on the assumption that these locatives actually behave as arguments, in contrast with temporal modifiers (cf. (12b)). The fronted predicative adjective in (55b) is similarly linked to an empty argument position in the VP.

(55) a. [$_{CP}$ I gräset$_i$ kan [$_{TP}$ Ø *v* [$_{VP}$ *v* [$_{VP}$ finnas ormar e_i]]]
in grass.DEF can be snakes

b. [$_{CP}$ Ledsammast$_i$ har [$_{TP}$ Ø$_x$ *v* [$_{VP}$ *v* [$_{VP}$ varit e_i] [$_{CP}$ att han aldrig har
saddest has been that he never has
ställt upp]$_x$]]]
stood up

In addition there are examples with optional expletive subjects where the gap is inside a DP in the matrix clause as in (56a), brought to my attention by Lars-Olof Delsing (p.c. 2008), which presumably has the structure in (56b).

(56) a. Det finns (det) exempel på *e*.
it exist it examples on
'There are examples of that.'

b. [$_{CP}$ Det$_i$ finns [$_{TP}$ Ø *v* [$_{VP}$ *v* [$_{DP}$ exempel på e_i]]]]

If we compare the structures in (55) and (56) with the ones proposed for *tough* constructions in (50) and the *det*-initial constructions with finite complements in (51), we see that they only differ in the position of the empty category that is linked to the constituent in Spec,CP. In (50b), the initial *det* is linked to an empty object in an infinitival complement clause and in (51) there is an empty object in a finite complement clause. In both cases the identification of the initial constituent must involve some non-local mechanism. The structures in (55) and (56) also involve an empty argument, though not an object but a locative, a predicative adjective phrase or a complement of a preposition. Since these examples are all mono-clausal, the interpretation of the initial item can be established locally, within the matrix clause.[20] But what the structures in (50)–(51) and (55)–(56) have in common is that the expletive subject in Spec,TP can be left out precisely when there is a fronted constituent in Spec,CP. Before discussing possible analyses of these examples, we will look at which types of expletive subjects can be left out.

4.5 Expletives and quasi-arguments

So far I have referred to all instances of non-referential *det* as an expletive, disregarding the finer distinctions concerning different types of pleonastic items that have been proposed in the literature. Chomsky (1981:37) introduces the term QUASI-ARGUMENT for the *it* that is used with weather predicates since it behaves like

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an argument with respect to control. Following Hoekstra (1983) and Bennis (1986), Vikner (1990, 1995:Chapter 6) restricts the term expletive to items like English *there* and Danish *der*, which are used in presentational constructions. English *it* and Danish *det* are assumed to be quasi-argumental in nature since they may be involved in theta marking chains.[21] In languages like Faroese, Icelandic and Swedish, which do not use a separate word corresponding to presentational *there*, the single item used (*tað*, *það*, *det*) is hence ambiguous between being a 'real' expletive and a quasi-argument. In her study of the development of non-referential subjects in Swedish, Falk (1993:Chapter 3) makes essentially the same distinction between true expletive *det* and quasi-argumental *det* and takes clause-anticipating *det* to be quasi-argumental.

The question now is whether this distinction between true expletive occurrences of *det* and non-argumental occurrences of *det* plays any role with respect to the possibility of omitting *det*. As we have seen, *det* in Spec,TP may be left out in clause-anticipating constructions, as in (51), and in cleft constructions, as in (38b, c), both of which involve a quasi-argumental *det*, according to Vikner and Falk. In addition, the real expletive *det* may be omitted in presentational constructions, as shown in (38a). Furthermore, in the southern region Skåne, where the expletive used in presentational constructions is *där* 'there' (cf. Danish *der*), examples like (57b) can be heard (L.-O. Delsing p.c. 2008).[22]

(57) a. Finns där många som shoppar på Mobilia?
are there many that shop on Mobilia
'Are there many who shop at Mobilia?'
b. Där$_i$ finns Ø$_x$ många som shoppar e_i.
there are many that shop
'There are many who shop there.'

Given that both quasi-argumental *det* and true expletive *det* can can be omitted when there is a fronted referential *det* in Spec,CP, it does not seem that the factors that condition this optionality in Swedish are sensitive to the proposed distinction between true expletives and qusi-arguments.[23] We return to this issue in Section 7.

5. THE SUBJECT REQUIREMENT AND THE EPP

In much generative work in the 1980s and 1990s, the fact that a clause needs a subject was captured by the so-called Extended Projection Principle (EPP), which still plays a role in Minimalism.[24] The EPP presumably applies universally but languages differ in whether the subject has to be overtly realized or not. In current minimalist analyses, where the syntactic derivation is driven by syntactic features, it is common to assume the existence of an EPP feature which serves to ensure that a subject is overtly realized in the syntactic structure. In his minimalist analysis of Swedish, Platzack (2011) assumes that T, the functional projection where subject agreement is checked, has an unevaluated Φ-feature which is marked EPP (2011:78f., 136–145). This feature must

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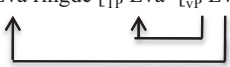
be eliminated before Spell-out by merging a DP in the Spec position, see e.g. (3a). In Icelandic impersonal constructions, where overt expletive subjects in Spec,TP are ungrammatical (see (4a)), Platzack assumes, without further argument, that there is no EPP feature in T and consequently no overt subject is required. Platzack also assumes that Swedish, being a V2-language, has an EPP feature connected to an unevaluated *Fin* feature in C which forces the finite verb to move to C in matrix clauses (2011:82). In addition he assumes, following Chomsky (2008), that C carries an edge feature which has to be eliminated by the merger of a constituent in Spec,CP (2011:93ff., 104ff.). The structure of the subject-initial declarative clauses in (1c) is outlined in (58), where double strike through is used for elements that have moved.[25]

(58) [$_{CP}$ Eva ringde [$_{TP}$ ~~Eva~~ [$_{vP}$ ~~Eva~~ ~~ringde~~ [$_{VP}$ ~~ringde~~ till doktorn]]]]
Eva rang to doctor.DEF

The verb *ringde* is first merged in V, then moved to v and then to C in order to satisfy its Fin^{EPP} feature. The subject *Eva* is first merged in Spec,vP, then moved (internally merged) to Spec,TP in order to satsify the unevaluated Φ-feature in T, and then moved to Spec,CP in order to eliminate the edge-feature of C.

The analysis in (58) retains an important feature of den Besten's (1977) original proposal: a declarative subject-initial clause involves a chain between the A-bar position Spec,CP and the A-position Spec,TP. More recently this type of 'mixed' chain formation has been questioned. Chomsky (2008) proposes to replace it by so-called parallel movement (see also Hicks 2009; Platzack 2012a). In (58) the movement of *Eva* from Spec,vP to Spec,TP and Spec,CP would take place in parallel, which means that the derivation involves one A-chain (Spec,TP–Spec,vP) and one A-bar chain (Spec,CP–Spec,vP), as shown in (59), but no chain linking Spec,CP and Spec,TP.

(59) [$_{CP}$ Eva ringde [$_{TP}$ ~~Eva~~ [$_{vP}$ ~~Eva~~ ~~ringde~~ [$_{VP}$ ~~ringde~~ till doktorn]]]]



Clearly only one of the chain heads can be pronounced, but exactly what in the system determines that it has to be the instance in Spec,CP remains unclear. Platzack here follows Chomsky (2008) and assumes that it is the subject in Spec,CP that is pronounced (Platzack in press:30).[26]

5.1 Platzack's 'Spurious Topic Drop'

Platzack (in press) argues that Chomsky's parallel movement can be used to account for the missing expletive subjects which are the topic of this article.[27] As shown above, a subject moves in parallel from Spec,vP to Spec,TP and to Spec,CP, but only the subject in Spec,CP is pronounced. Platzack makes a further assumption concerning the CP domain in Swedish. In order to account for the common type

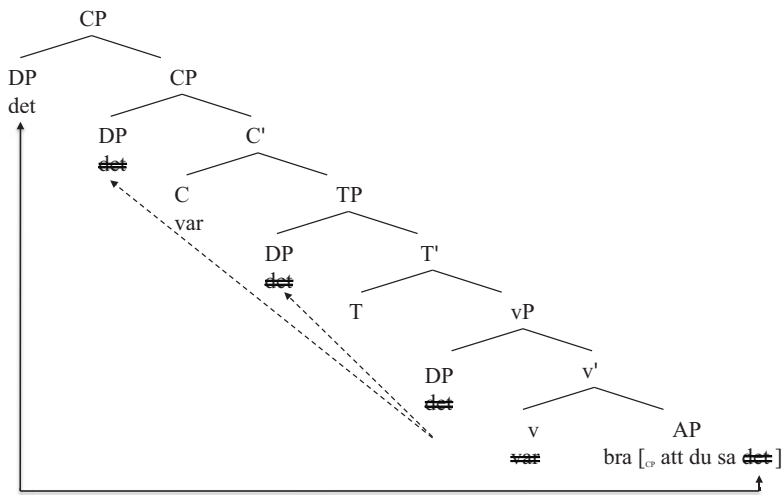
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of example illustrated in (60), he argues that we need to assume that there are two Spec,CPs in Swedish main clauses.

(60) a. 'Cykeln, $_0$den ställde han i köket. (cf. Platzack in press:(8))
bike.DEF it put he in kitchen.DEF
'The bike, he put it in the kitchen.'
b. Sedan $_0$så kommer min syster.
then so comes my sister
'Then my sister comes.'

The initial constituent is normally accented whereas the second (*den*, *så*) is unaccented, as shown in (60). Examples like (60a), with a definite NP and a coreferent pronoun, are quite common. Andersson (1982:34f.) treats them as left dislocation structures followed by what he calls TOPIC MOVEMENT of the pronominal copy. The reference grammar Teleman et al. (1999) assumes a FÖRFÄLT 'prefield', preceding the initial position, for dislocated constituents which are more loosely connected to the clause (Teleman et al. 1999/4:6ff.).[28] Platzack assumes that both positions are specifiers of C; 'the high/first specifier contains a first merged usually stressed element, and the low/second specifier is a position for an internally merged unstressed element' (Platzack in press:32, see also Platzack 2012b:412ff.). He then proposes that the unstressed element in the low Spec,CP may be dropped when the higher Spec,CP is pronounced and introduces the term SPURIOUS TOPIC DROP for this. A consequence of this spurious topic drop is that we may get examples without overt subjects. Platzack's analysis of such an example is given in (61) (cf. the tree in (15) in Platzack in press).

(61)



In this analysis, the initial *det* is first merged (i.e. directly generated) in the high Spec,CP position. An expletive *det* is first merged in Spec,vP and then moved in

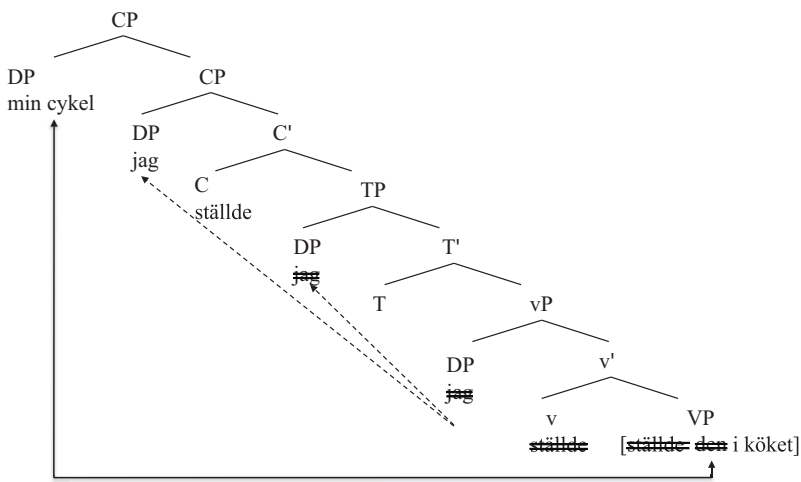
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parallel to Spec,TP and the low Spec,CP. *Det* in Spec,TP is deleted because there is parallel movement (see above). Since *det* in the low Spec,CP is a weak, unstressed element, it can also be dropped, 'giving the impression of a null subject' (Platzack in press:36).

I think there are several problems with this analysis. First, it does not account for the object gap, which is present in all the examples with missing expletive subjects discussed in Sections 3 and 4. Note that the relation between the initial *det* in the high Spec,CP and the unrealized object of *sa* 'said', indicated by a double-headed non-dashed arrow in (61), is a semantic relation, not a syntactic one (Platzack in press:note 10).[29] Since the initial *det* is directly generated (first merged) in the high Spec,CP position, there cannot be any syntactic dependency and the non-pronunciation of the downstairs object is left unexplained. In suggesting that the relation between an initial constituent and a gap inside the clause is semantic and not syntactic, Platzack parts company with most of the generative tradition which has seen *wh*-movement (later A-bar-movement) as one of the clearest examples of a syntactic dependency. In (60a), there is a syntactic dependency between the fronted element in the low Spec,CP position $_0$*den* and a gap in the VP, but this is not the case in (61). Since there is no syntactic dependency between the high Spec,CP and either the low Spec,CP or the gap, we would also expect examples like (62a) to be grammatical, contrary to fact. Following Platzack, the analysis should be as in (63).

(62) a. *Min cykel jag ställde *e* i köket.
my bike I put in kitchen.DEF
b. Min cykel, jag ställde *(den) i köket.
my bike I put it in kitchen.DEF
'My bike, I put it in the kitchen.'

(63)



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If a constituent, in this case the object of *ställde* 'put', can be freely deleted when there is a semantic relation between it and a first merged element in the high Spec,CP, then we would expect (62a) to be grammatical, but it is not. A left dislocation structure, as shown in (62b), would be well-formed, where both Spec,CP positions are filled and where there is an anaphoric pronoun in the VP, agreeing, as expected, with the initial constituent. This pronoun, however, cannot be deleted. It seems to me that Platzack's proposal blurs the distinction between topicalization and left dislocation.

A second problem with Platzack's proposal is the existence of examples like (64a).

(64) a. Vinho verde, det var längesen jag drack *e*. (man, aged 50 2002)
vinho verde it was long.ago I drank
'Vinho verde, it is a long time since I drank it.'
b. [$_{CP}$ Vinho verde [$_{CP}$ det [$_{CP}$ ~~det~~ var [$_{TP}$ ~~det~~ [$_{vP}$ ~~det~~ ~~var~~ längesen jag drack ~~det~~]]]]]

At first glance, (64a) seems to fit very well with the double Spec,CP analysis proposed by Platzack. The accented lexical phrase *vinho verde* is first merged in the high Spec,CP and an unstressed pronoun *det* is moved to the low Spec,CP. But since this *det* is in fact pronounced, Platzack would have to assume yet another Spec,CP, acting as the landing site for parallel movement, in order for spurious topic drop to take place, as shown in (64b).

A third problem with Platzack's proposal is that it is unclear how it would extend to examples like (44b), repeated here as (65), where the initial *det*, the copula and the expletive subject are all missing.

(65) Klart att du ska göra *e*.
clear.NEUT that you shall do
'Of course you should do it.'

According to Platzack, a weak element in low Spec,CP can be dropped by spurious topic drop provided that the element in the high Spec,CP is pronounced. But examples like (65) show that there is no need for an overt topic as long as there is an understood unrealized topicalized constituent (cf. (46b)). I think that Platzack's assumption that there need not be any syntactic dependency between an initial constituent and an empty position in the clause is on the wrong track. Instead I believe that it is precisely the fact that an initial constituent heads a non-local syntactic dependency that is crucial. Before turning to why this is so, I will make a few more comments on the EPP.

5.2 Where does the EPP apply?

The requirement for overt subjects has been assumed to apply to finite clauses given that infinitival clauses lack overt subjects in many languages, including the Scandinavian languages. However, the subject requirement in Swedish seems to be

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independent of finiteness, as shown by the examples in (66), which involve non-finite complements of perception verbs (cf. Teleman et al. 1999/3:575f.) and where both the quasi-argument in (66a) and the real expletive subject in (66b) are obligatory.[30] English counterparts tend to involve finite clauses or avoid the expletive.

(66) a. Jag hörde *(det) regna förskräckligt i går.
I heard it rain terribly yesterday
'I heard that it was raining terribly yesterday.'
b. Vi såg *(det) komma någon på vägen.
we saw it come someone on road.DEF
'We saw someone come down the road.'

Just like in matrix clauses, the expletive *det* in (66) cannot be stressed. Furthermore it cannot be fronted to initial position, as shown in (67a, b), whereas fronting of a referential argument from the same position is fine (67c).

(67) a. *Det_x hörde jag e_x regna förskräckligt i går.
it heard I rain terribly yesterday
b. *Det_x såg vi e_x komma någon på vägen.
it saw we come someone on road.DEF
c. Eva_i/henne_i såg vi e_i komma på vägen.
Eva/her.ACC saw we come on road.DEF

The ungrammaticality of (67a, b) highlights a difference between local and non-local dependencies. Whereas fronting an expletive subject to its closest Spec,CP is unproblematic, as shown in Sections 1 and 2, fronting an expletive across clauses is impossible.

Another interesting observation concerning expletives in small clause structures is that although they cannot be fronted, they can be left unpronounced, as shown in (68) and (69).

(68) a. Det ser jag som min skyldighet att göra.
it see I as my duty to do
'I see it as my duty to do that.'
b. Det_i ser jag [$_{SC}$ (det_x) som min skyldighet [att göra e_i]$_x$]
it see I it as my duty to do

(69) a. Det_i anser jag troligt att hon gör e_i.
it consider I likely that she does
'I consider it likely that she does it.'
b. Det_i anser jag [$_{SC}$ (det_x) troligt [$_{CP}$ att hon gör e_i]$_x$]
it consider I it likely that she does

In both these examples it is possible to have a clause-anticipating *det* in the small clause, as shown in (68b) and (69b). But they can also be left out if there is a fronted referential *det*. In the next section we will look closer at the ways an initial *det* may be interpreted before turning to an analysis.

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6. NON-CLAUSE-BOUNDED DEPENDENCIES

6.1 *The processing of* det-*initial clauses*

The examples we discussed in Sections 3 and 4 all involve clauses beginning with *det* 'it' and many of them start with *det är* 'it is'. According to Allwood (1999:Table 3:1) *det är* is the most common two-word collocation in both spoken and written Swedish, which is maybe not surprising given that *det* has so many functions.[31] In addition to referring to neuter antecedents, as shown in example (15), it is used to refer to properties, propositions and events, like *it* in English. A few examples are given in (70)–(71). In (70b, c) *det* refers back to baking bread, introduced in the question in (70a).

(70) a. Blir du inte trött på att baka bröd?
become you not tired on to bake bread
'Don't you get tired of baking bread?'
b. Nej, det är roligt.
no it is fun.NEUT
c. Nej, det tycker jag *e* är roligt.
no it think I is fun.NEUT

(71) a. Var är brevet?
where is letter.DEF
b. Det ligger på byrån.
it lies on dresser.DEF
c. Det lade jag *e* på byrån.
it put I on dresser.DEF
d. Det minns jag inte var jag lade *e*.
it remember I not where I put

The answers in (70) and (71) illustrate a common pattern in Swedish, viz. to start off a reply, or a further comment, with an unaccented pronoun which refers back to a referent or event introduced in the preceding utterance (see Vallduví & Engdahl 1996:500f.; Engdahl 1997:72f.; Erteschik-Shir 2007:7ff.). The grammatical function of the pronoun may be as a subject (70b), (71b), as a subject in an embedded clasue (70c), as an object in the matrix clause (71c) or as an object in an embedded clause (71d). All of these exeamples are perfectly natural replies, including (71d) which involves fronting from an embedded question. In the given context, the reference of the initial *det* can probably be established quickly, but its grammatical function in the utterance cannot be determined until more of it as been processed and a gap has been detected.

But *det* is also used as a quasi-argument or expletive, as discussed above in Section 4.5. Whether an initial *det* is used anaphorically or as a quasi-argument or expletive is of course determined by the syntactic construction. Very often this cannot be determined until most or all of the sentence has been processed. Consider the

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examples in (72). On the right I have indicated the function of *det*, using det_i for an anaphorically used referential *det* and det_x for *det* used as a clause-anticipating expletive.

(72) a. Det är svårt. → det_i
it is hard
b. Det är svårt att leva. → det_x
it is hard to live
c. Det är svårt att säga *e*. → det_i
it is hard to say
d. Det är svårt att säga sanningen. → det_x
it is hard to say truth.DEF

In (72a), *det* must be interpreted as a referential *det*, but in (72b) the added infinitival clause *att leva* 'to live' forces an interpretation of *det* as an anticipating expletive. If the infinitival clause contains a gap, as in (72c), the initial *det* must be interpreted as referential and as providing the referent for the missing complement of *säga* 'say'. Whether or not the infinitival clause contains a gap may of course not be determined until the whole clause has been processed. In (72d), there is no object gap and the initial *det* consequently must be resolved as an anticipating expletive. The examples with finite complement clauses display the same underdetermination when it comes to the function of the intial *det*.

(73) a. Det var dumt att du kom. → det_x
it was stupid that you came
b. Det var dumt att du sa *e*. → det_i
it was stupid that you said
c. Det är ju så många som gör det. → det_x
it is PRT so many that do it
d. Det är ju så många som gör *e*. → det_i
it is PRT so many that do

In (73a), where the complement *att du kom* 'that you came' is a complete clause, the initial *det* must be interpreted as an anticipating expletive, but in (73b), where the object of *sa* 'said' is missing, the initial *det* can only be interpreted as referential and as providing the antecedent for the object gap. The initial *det* in (73c) must be understood as an expletive, introducing a presentational construction, but in (74d), the object of *gör* 'do' is missing in the relative clause and must be linked to the fronted referential *det*.

The examples in (72) and (73) illustrate how the function of *det* is determined as the sentence is processed. The examples are here presented out of context, but in actual use there are presumably clues in the context and in the delivery which help the listener/reader get the intended interpretation of an initial *det*. As we know, sentence interpretation takes place rapidly and incrementally and starts as soon as the first word is perceived (Marslen-Wilson 1973, 1975). Starting off with an assumption that an initial *det* is an expletive or quasi-argument is probably a good strategy given

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the frequency of impersonal constructions in the language,[32] but in many cases this interpretation will have to be changed during the processing, as shown in (72a, c) and (73b, d).[33]

6.2 Examples in context

An authentic example illustrating how this incremental processing might evolve is provided in (74). This is a transcription of an excerpt from an interview on Swedish Radio. (.) marks a short pause.

(74) A reporter (R) interviews a former heroin addict (B) (SR P1-morgon, 21/1 2011)
R: de kanske e svårare att lägga av ifall att man gör
it maybe is harder to lay off if that one makes
de ännu mer tillgängligt med >narkotiska preparat<.
it even more accessible with narcotic substances
'Maybe it's harder to quit if narcotic substances become even more accessible.'
B: jaa men de där me att lägga av, (.)
yeah but that there with to lay off
de e ju alltid nån å- nån annan som vill (.)
it is PRT always some some else that wants
att man ska göra. (.) själva individen kanske inte
that one shall do self.DEF individual.DEF maybe not
alls (.) vill.
at.all wants
'Yeah, but this thing about quitting, there is always someone else who wants you to (do it). The person himself maybe doesn't want to (do it) at all.'

After the reporter's suggestion that increased accessibility of drugs might make it harder to give them up, B picks up on the topic of quitting, *de där me att lägga av* 'this thing about quitting' and adds a comment starting with *de e ju* 'it is'. In his rather long utterance, there are two potential gap locations which I have marked and indexed in (75).

(75) B: de e ju alltid nån å- nån annan som vill e_1 (.)
it is PRT always some some else that wants
att man ska göra e_2. (.)
that one shall do

B's comment starts off as a presentational construction introducing an indefinite NP, which is interrupted, *nån å-*, and resumed by *nån annan* 'someone else'. The relative clause *som vill* 'that wants' is incomplete; instead of an expressed complement to *vill* 'wants' there is a short pause during which the missing complement e_1 may be identified as the initial *de*. After the short pause, B continues and produces a *that*-clause

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which then provides the missing complemement of *vill*. At the end of the finite clause, there is another pause after the verb *göra* 'do', which in Swedish requires a complement, as we have seen above. Again, the missing complement e_2 must be linked to the initial *de*. During the interpretation of this utterance, a possible initial interpretation of *de* as an expletive must be revised around e_1 where it is reinterpreted as a referential *det*. This interpretation must be rejected when B continues talking and then resumed again when the second gap e_2 is identified. Despite this repeated reinterpretation of *det*, B's comment is not hard to process. There is no indication in this example, or in the previous ones, that the discovery of an object gap causes problems for the language user.

In this respect, the examples discussed here resemble certain parasitic gap (pg) constructions, as in (76) (cf. Engdahl 1983).

(76) a. Köttfärs måste man steka *e* väl innan man äter e_{pg}.
mince must one fry well before one eats
'You have to fry mince properly before you eat it.'
b. Det kan man ju inte gå på *e* om man inte vet om e_{pg}.
it can one PRT not go on if one not knows about
(woman, aged 60, 2012)
'You can't go to it if you don't know about it.'

Although the initial constituent *köttfärs* 'mince' in (76a) has been interpreted as the direct object of *steka* 'fry', it is still accessible and can be used to resolve the missing object of *äter* 'eat' in the adverbial clause. Similarly in (76b), the initial *det*, which referred back to a meeting just must mentioned by the speaker, is first interpreted as the complement of *på* 'on' in the matrix clause but also fills the missing complement of *om* 'about' in the following adverbial clause. This suggests that the activiation of a filler in an unbounded dependency remains after the gap has been located.

In addition to the examples in (72)–(73), we also find examples like (77a), where there is no subject gap in the matrix clause but where there are two embedded clauses, the first with a subject gap and the second with an object gap.[34]

(77) a. Det tycker jag var trevligt att du sa.
it think I was nice that you said
'I think it was nice that you said that.'
b. [$_{CP}$ Det tycker [$_{TP}$ jag *v* [$_{VP}$ *v* e_1 [$_{CP}$ e_2 var trevligt [$_{CP}$ att du sa e_3]]]]]
it think I was nice that you said

When processing (77a), the listener presumably rapidly realizes that *det* is not a plausible subject of *tycker* 'think' but may consider it as a potential object, see e_1 in (77b). However, the recognition of another finite verb *var* 'was' forces the listener to postulate an empty subject (e_2) which may be identified with the initial *det*. This assignment has to be revised when the following *that*-clause is recognized. Finally when the empty object (e_3) is recognized, it can be linked to the initial *det* and the

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whole utterance interpreted, as indicated in the English paraphrase. But what about the missing subject in e_2? This turns out to be an instance of the type of empty expletive subjects ($Ø_x$) which we have encountered before. This expletive subject may be overtly realized, as shown in (78a), where it functions as an anticipating expletive for the extraposed clause. If there is no long-distance dependency, i.e. if there is no gap in the most deeply embedded clause, the expletive subject cannot be left out, see (78b). The only way to interpret this example would be with *det* as linked to the empty subject position e_2, which must be an anticipating expletive subject, given the final extraposed clause *att du sa det* 'that you said it'. But as we saw above in 5.2, expletive subjects cannot be fronted, cf. (67a, b).

(78) a. Det_i tycker jag det_x var trevligt $[_{CP}$ att du sa $e_i]_x$
it think I it was nice that you said
'I think it was nice that you said that.'

b. *Det tycker jag $Ø_x$ var trevligt $[_{CP}$ att du sa det$]_x$
it think I was nice that you said it

c. Det_i tycker jag e_i var trevligt. (.) Att du sa det, vill säga.
it think I was nice that you said it will say
'I think that was nice. That you said it, I mean.'

If there is a pause before the *that*-clause, then a version without an object gap is possible as shown in (78c), but the *that*-clause *att du sa det* 'that you said it' is then interpreted as an afterthought and not as a syntactically integrated complement. The initial *det* is then interpreted as referential, as shown.

Examples like (77a) show that expletive subjects can be left unrealized also in embedded clauses provided that there is a dependency between an initial *det* and a gap in the embedded clause.[35] If there is no such dependency, as in (78b), the expletive subject cannot be left out. In all the examples discussed so far, there has been such a dependency between an initial *det* and a gap located in an embedded clause, finite or non-finite. I believe that this is the relevant condition for when expletive subject *det* may be left out and in the next section I will outline an analysis which capitalizes on this fact.[36]

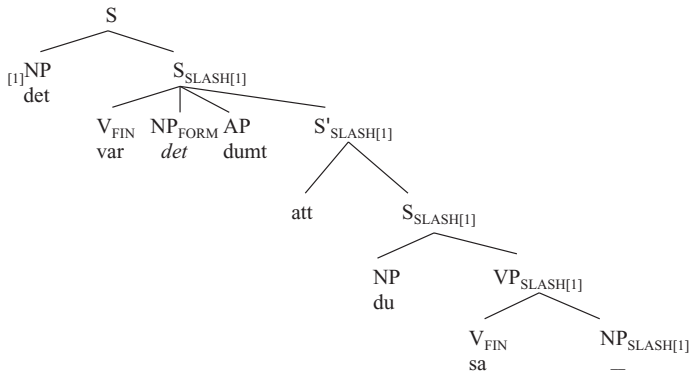
6.3 Towards an analysis without movement

We saw in Section 6.1 that it is very often impossible to determine which role an initial *det* plays until most of the sentence has been processed. The contribution of *det* cannot be fully resolved until a gap – or the absence of an expected argument – is detected. This suggests that the initial constituent is available to the listener/reader while s/he processes the sentence. This is reflected in Gazdar's (1981) account of unbounded dependencies which instead of a movement transformation uses a feature called SLASH which takes a category as value. This feature indicates that there is a gap

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somewhere in the structure dominated by the node marked with this feature. When an initial filler, i.e. a constituent in an A-bar position like Spec,CP, is generated, its sister constituent must have a SLASH feature, taking the initial constituent as value. The feature is then instantiated on subsequent mother and daughter nodes until it bottoms out at an empty node.[37] Using a SLASH feature to account for displaced constituents is an important aspect of HPSG (see Sag et al. 2003). The tree in (79) gives a visualisation of how the dependency between an initial *det* and a missing object is represented in the structure.[38]

(79)



In (79) the information that there is an initial filler, with the phonological/ortographical form *det*, is present at each node on the path that connects the filler with the node dominating the empty object position in the lowest VP. Having recognized the finite verb *var*, the processor proceeds, trying to find a suitable empty argument that matches the filler. Once the transitive verb *sa* in the lowest VP is recognized, the dependency can be resolved. Note that the NP in the matrix subject position has a FORM feature which requires it to be *det*. This FORM feature is instantiated by the lexical rule that also introduces the extraposed S′. Given that in most cases, an initial *det* is fronted from the matrix subject position, it is not implausible that the processor routinely assumes that the initial *det* should be linked to this empty subject position. But as shown by examples like (72c), the processor presumably still keeps the option open to connect an initial *det* with a missing argument later in the sentence. Examples with parasitic gaps, as in (76), confirm that the filler is available for being identified with a subsequent empty argument, even when a match between a detected gap and the SLASH value has been found.

6.4 Other initial constituents

So far most of the examples discussed have been introduced either by an overt *det* or by an unexpressed *det* (see Section 4.2) and these are by far the most common type

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in the spoken data. In written Swedish, I have found examples where the missing expletive is in an embedded clause and where the dependency is introduced by the relative pronoun *vilket*. (80) is from a master's thesis, June 2012.

(80) a. Jag försökte vara så tyst som möjligt under intervjuerna
I tried be so quiet as possible during interviews.PL.DEF
vilket är viktigt att intervjuaren är, enligt
which.NEUT is important.NEUT that interviewer.DEF is according
Denscombe.
Denscombe
'I tried to be as quiet as possible during the interviews, which is important for the interviewer to be, according to Denscombe.'

b. [$_{CP}$ vilket$_i$ [$_{TP}$ Ø$_x$[$_{VP}$ *är* [$_{AP}$ viktigt] [$_{CP}$ att intervjuaren är e_i]$_x$]]]
which is important.NEUT that interviewer.DEF is

I have also come across a few examples where the dependency is introduced by phrases which cannot be anaysed as expletives, see the examples in (81).

(81) a. Dom$_i$ var längesen jag såg e_i. (woman, aged 58, 2008)
3P.PL was long.ago I saw
'It is a long time since I saw them.'

b. Tandborsten$_i$ är bra om du tar med e_i. (woman, aged 52, 2011)
toothbrush.DEF is good if you take with
'It's good if you bring your toothbrush.'

c. Detta$_i$ är bra om man kan gå på e_i. (e-mail 2 March 2010)
this is good if one can go on
'It's good if you can go to this.'

(81a) was uttered by a woman on discovering a pair of trousers at the bottom of the laundry basket. The spoken Swedish form *dom* is used for both subject and object pronouns. The predicative adjective *bra* 'good' in (81b, c) is invariant and shows neither number nor gender agreement. (81c) is one of relatively few written attested examples and is taken from an e-mail message from my head of department. *Detta* is the nominative or accusative neuter singular demonstrative pronoun.[39] The examples in (81) have in common that there is no formal feature of the initial constituent which signals whether it is to be interpreted as a subject or not. Furthermore, the predicative adjective used *bra* 'good', or the temporal adverbial *längesen* 'long ago' do not show any agreement which might resolve whether the initial constituent is a subject or not. If we change the examples slightly so that there is overt agreement between the initial constituent and a predicative adjective, the result is clearly ungrammatical, as shown in (82).

(82) a. *Dom$_i$ var roliga att jag såg e_i.
3P.PL was funny.PL that I saw

b. *Tandborstar$_i$ är lämpliga om du tar med e_i.
toothbrush.PL are suitable.PL if you take with

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If we replace the invariant *bra* 'good' in (81c) with an adjective that shows agreement, using the neuter form as in (83a), the result is not as clearly ungrammatical as in (82) or as in (83b) with plural agreement. This is not surprising as many researchers have found that the neuter form often seems to indicate lack of agreement (cf. Josefsson 2006, 2009). I have, however, not noticed any spontaneous examples like (83a).

(83) a. ??Detta$_i$ är värdefullt om man kan gå på e_i.
this is valuable.NEUT.SG if one can go on
'It's valuable if you can attend this.'
b. *Dessa$_i$ är värdefulla om man kan gå på e_i.
these are valuable.PL if one can go on

Turning the declaratives in (81) into *yes/no* questions, thereby forcing the initial constituent to appear in the Spec,TP subject position, also leads to ungrammaticality, cf. the ungrammatical examples in (53).

(84) *Var dom$_i$ längesen du såg e_i?
were they long.ago you saw

To conclude this section on processing considerations, we have found that expletive subjects may be left out in utterances where there is an initial *det* which can be interpreted as expletive or quasi-argument, although this interpretation has to be revised as more of the sentence is processed. We have also seen that this primarily happens when the initial constituent heads an unbounded dependency and is linked to a gap inside an embedded clause.[40]

7. A GERMANIC COMPARISON

Examples with missing expletive subjects are also attested in spoken Norwegian, see (85).

(85) a. men det er Ø mange som ikke gjør *e* (NoTa 058)
but it is many that not do
'but there are many who don't do it'
b. Det er Ø ikke noen vits at han gjør *e*. (woman, aged 25, 2007)
it is not any point that he does
'There is no point in his doing doing that.'
c. Det er ikke bra å bare holde dataene sine (August 2008)
it is not good to only keep data.DEF.PL REFL.POSS
for seg selv for **det er så innmari mange som gjør** *e*.
for REFL self because it is so very many that do
'It isn't good only to keep one's data for oneself,
there are so many people who do that.'

(85a) comes from the Oslo corpus of spoken Norwegian NoTa compiled in 2005. (85b) was produced by a 25-year-old Norwegian woman and shows that the gap may

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occur inside a noun complement clause. (85c) was uttered by Janne Bondi Johannesen in a discussion about corpus data.

The construction is also found in spoken Finland-Swedish, see the exchange in (86), which Mona Forsskåhl has noted and passed on to me.[41]

(86) Conversation between Mona Forsskåhl and a student at Hanken (a School of Commerce in Helsinki), personal communication 2010.
Student: kan du skicka den ti mig per e-post
can you send it to me via e-mail
'Can you send it to me by e-mail?'
Mona: jaa bara jag kommer ihåg de fortfarande
yees only I remember it still
när jag kommer till min dator
when I come to my computer
'Yes, if only I remember when I get to my computer.'
Student: **de sku vaa jättesnällt om du sku kunna göra** *e*
it should be giant.kind if you should can.INF do
'It would be really kind if you could do that.'

Note that this construction must be distinguished from another type of *det*-omission, which Saaristo (2008) discusses. He has noted that Swedish speakers in Helsinki often leave out *det* in contexts as shown in (87).[42]

(87) Blev han polis? – Ja, han blev *e*. (Saaristo 2008:28)
became he police yes he became
'Did he become a policeman? Yes, he did.'

Note that the missing word after *blev* 'became' is not an expletive but a referential *det*, which refers back to the property of being a policeman. In Sweden such a referential *det* cannot be left out, see (88).

(88) Q: Blev han polis?
became he police
A: Ja, han blev *(det).
yes he became it
A′: Ja, det_i blev han e_i.
yes it became he
'Did he become a policeman? Yes, he did.'

The first answer above, with a realized anaphoric *det* following the verb, is possible in Sweden, but a more common way to answer such a question is to reply as in A′ and front the predicative anaphor *det* to initial position.

Given that the construction is found in both Norwegian and Swedish, one might expect it to be possible in other V2 languages with expletive or quasi-argumental subjects. Somewhat surprisingly, the construction is hardly used in Danish. No spontaneous examples corresponding to e.g. (73b) have been attested and Danish informants judge Danish translations of the Norwegian and Swedish examples as

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ungrammatical, with one interesting exception. Patrizia Paggio (p.c. March 2012) has pointed out that examples where an embedded clause-anticipating subject is unrealized are acceptable. A Danish example is given in (89).[43]

(89) Det$_i$ synes jeg (det) var dumt (at) du sagde e_i. (Dan.)
it find I it was stupid that you said
'I find it stupid that you said that.'

Sten Vikner has suggested that the reason that Danish does not pattern with Norwegian and Swedish might be that Danish makes a clear distinction between the expletive *der* used in presentational constructions and the quasi-argument *det* used in clause-anticipating constructions.[44] But if (89), with a missing quasi-argument *det*, is acceptable, it is not clear why examples with missing matrix quasi-arguments are not used. Furthermore, the expletive *där* is optional in Swedish dialects which make a distinction between presentational *där* and quasi-argument *det* (see (57)). Clearly more research on possible correlations between types of expletives and optionality is needed. Faroese and Icelandic would be particularly interesting to investigate, as would those dialects of Norwegian where there is an alternation between *det* and *der* in presentational constructions (see Søfteland to appear).[45]

The situation in German is very interesting. Although *es* 'it' in German is used as an expletive, a quasi-argument and as a referential neuter pronoun, it has been claimed that an initial *es* cannot be interpreted as a fronted object; instead the demonstrative *das* is used (Travis 1984:168). More recently, Meinunger (2007:555) has shown that an initial object *es* is possible, provided that the subject is low, as shown in (90) (see also van Craenenbroeck & Haegeman 2007).

(90) (Gestern bin ich erstmals ohnmächtig geworden.) (Ger.)
yesterday am I for.the.first.time unconscious become
Es hat zum Glück niemand mitgekriegt.
it has to.the luck nobody realized
'(Yesterday I fainted for the first time.) (Though) luckily, nobody realized it.'

Frey (2004) argues that the German middle field has a topic and a non-topic region. A low subject, like *niemand* 'nobody' in (90), would then be a non-topic. Theiler & Bouma (to appear) point out that the fronting of a weak object *es* is possible in precisely the types of sentences which could also have been introduced by a 'placeholder' *es*, i.e. sentences there the subject is not topical, as in their example in (91), taken from a body building blog.[46]

(91) Wir könnten dir helfen aber: ich denke, es wird keiner machen.
we could you.DAT help but I think it will nobody do
(Ger.)
'We could help you, but I think nobody will.'

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There are clearly similarities between the German data in (90) and (91) and the Swedish constructions without expletive subjects. One notable difference is that the Swedish construction often involves a non-clause-bounded fronting of *det* whereas German *es* cannot be fronted from a subordinate clause.

8. CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this article we have seen that expletive and quasi-argument subject *det* in present-day Swedish is optional, sometimes even dispreferred, when there is an instance of a homphonous *det* in initial position, in Spec,CP. This happens in *tough* constructions like (31), repeated here as (92a), which was shown to be structurally ambiguous. The initial *det* is either a real subject of the predicative adjective (92b) or it is the fronted object from the infinitival clause, in which case the expected expletive subject *det* is left out (92c).

(92) a. Det är svårt att säga.
it is hard to say
'It is hard to say.'
b. [$_{CP}$ ^{k}Det$_{i}$ är [$_{TP}$ e_{i} *v* [$_{VP}$ *v* [$_{AP}$ ^{k}svårt ^{k}[Op$_{k}$ att säga e_{k}]]]]]
it is hard to say
c. [$_{CP}$ Det$_{i}$ är [$_{TP}$ Ø$_{x}$ *v* [$_{VP}$ *v* [$_{AP}$ svårt] [att säga e_{i}]$_{x}$]]]
it is hard to say

The pattern with unrealized expletive and quasi-argument subjects also extends to sentences with finite complement clauses as in (34a), repeated here as (93a). In this case there is no evidence that the initial *det* acts as a subject of the matrix clause; hence there is only one possible structure, shown in (93b).

(93) a. Det$_{i}$ var dumt att du sa e_{i}.
it was stupid.NEUT that you said
'It was stupid that you said it/that.'
b. [$_{CP}$ Det$_{i}$ var [$_{TP}$ Ø$_{x}$ *v* [$_{VP}$ *v* [$_{AP}$ dumt] [$_{CP}$ att du sa e_{i}]$_{x}$]]]
it was stupid that you said

In (92) and (93) an expletive subject in the matrix clause is not pronounced. Expletive subjects in embedded clauses can also be unrealized, provided that there is an unbounded dependency headed by *det*, as in (77a), repeated here as (94a).

(94) a. Det tycker jag var trevligt att du sa.
it think I was nice that you said
'I think it was nice that you said that.'
b. [$_{CP}$ Det$_{i}$ tycker [$_{TP}$ jag *v* [$_{VP}$ *v* [$_{CP}$ Ø$_{x}$ var trevligt [$_{CP}$ att du sa e_{i}]$_{x}$]]]]
it think I was nice that you said

The constructions in (92)–(94) are interesting since they may shed some light on the relation between grammar and processing. As discussed in Section 6, the

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processor must be able to keep several interpretive options for an inital *det* available during the processing of the sentence. The construction with finite complements seems to be gaining ground in Swedish and is now found also in written texts. The lack of corpora of spoken Swedish from earlier periods makes it hard to investigate the extent to which it has been used earlier.[47] As shown in Section 7, it is used productively in Swedish and Norwegian, but in Danish it is limited to the embedded type shown in (94). The construction thus provides an interesting area for comparative research as well as for investigating how a novel syntactic pattern spreads in a speech community. Whether or not the pattern will become productive with other initial constituents besides *det* is also an interesting line of inquiry. If it does, we may expect this to trigger a more drastic reanalysis of Swedish clause structure.

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APPENDIX

Transcription symbols

(.)	micro pause
> <	talk inside faster than surrounding talk
nej	underline indicates stressed syllable or word
a-	interrupted word
.	falling terminal intonation
,	continuing intonation
?	rising intonation

NOTES

1. The data in this paper represent standard Swedish, as spoken in Sweden. For ease of presentation, some constructed examples are used, as in (1). All examples have been discussed with several Swedish linguists who have confirmed the author's judgments.

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2. Thráinssons's principle concerns the proliferation of functional projections and states: 'Assume only those functional categories that you have evidence for' (1996:261).
3. Phenomena like case and agreement marking, which often are taken as evidence for these projections, should, in my view, be handled by local feature checking, possibly using unification as in constraint-based approaches such as HPSG and LFG.
4. (7a) is from a session recorded with three young women in 1999, (7b) is from a 2001 Swedish radio broadcast and (7c) from the Gothenburg Spoken Language Corpus.
5. Sundman (1980:46) uses the Swedish term *anteciperande det* 'anticipating it'.
6. Subjects are also obligatory in Spec,TP in embedded clauses.

   (i) Jag minns att *(det) regnade i går.
   I remember that it rained yesterday

   (ii) Alla tyckte att *(det) skulle bli gott med kaffe.
   all thought that it should be good with coffee

7. The question–answer pair in (15) illustrates the kind of focus–topic chaining that is common in Scandinavian languages, cf. Engdahl (1997:72f.), Erteschik-Shir (2007:7ff.). This is further discussed in Section 6.1.
8. My analysis is similar in spirit to the one proposed within LFG in Dalrymple & King (2000). On this analysis, the subject of the *tough* predicate is linked via anaphoric control to an unexpressed topic in the infinitival complement clause which in turn controls the gap via functional control. See also Culicover & Jackendoff (2005:342–347).
9. The operator in the infinitival clause which binds the missing object corresponds semantically to lambda abstraction, i.e. it forms the property of being a *k* such that an arbitrary referent pleases *k*.
10. Examples like (21) are not very common, but authentic versions can be found e.g. in blogs.

    (i) Dig är svårt att inte älska.
    you.ACC is hard.NEUT.NEUT to not love
    'It is hard not to love you.'

    (http://debatt.passagen.se/show.fcgi?category=6400000000000006&conference=10500000000000703&posting=19500000005753245, accessed 14 September 2012)
11. There is a large literature on non-agreeing predicative constructions in Swedish. See Cooper 1986; Källström 1993; Enger 2004; Josefsson 2006, 2009, and references therein.
12. Ambiguous sentences like (31) have been attested at least since the 16th century. Falk (1993:241f.) discusses the example in (i) from Peder Swart's chronicle, written approximately 1560.

    (i) thet wille wara för longt förtelia
    it would be too long tell
    'It would take too long to tell.'

    Falk comments: '[(i)] can be analysed as a *det*-less. clause-anticipating construction where the object of the infinitive verb is topicalized . . . It can also be analyzed as an instance of *tough*-movement, where the object of the inifinitive verb is moved to the subject position of the main clause'.
13. (33) sounds more natural if the initial *det* is stressed, as in (i), where stress is indicated by ˈ and lack of stress by a subscript 0. Expletive subjects are never stressed. When the expletive subject is absent, both stressed and unstressed initial *det* is possible, as in (iii).

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(i) 'det är $_0$det svårt att säga
it is it hard to say
(ii) $^{??}{}_0$det är $_0$det svårt att säga
(iii) {$_0$det/'det} är Ø svårt att säga.

Note that corresponding examples in English with overt topicalization are not felicitous:

(iv) *That/*it, it is hard to say.

One reviewer finds (iv) OK if *that*/*it* refers to a CP *whether*-clause.

14. In this example, the initial *det* does not refer to any particular potato; rather it acts as a type anaphor, see Borthen 2004.
15. Åshild Søfteland has made similar observations concerning spoken Norwegian, see Søfteland (to appear).
16. <http://spraakdata.gu.se/sveee/Engdahl_2010-subjektsloshet/>. I use the Courier font for transcribed examples. See Appendix for transcription conventions. The examples come from Programme 1 on the Swedish Radio, abbreviated SR P1.
17. Hellberg (2001) analyses examples like (44b) as being introduced by an invariant clause type marker. Some problems with this analysis are discussed in Julien (2009) and Engdahl (2010).
18. One reviewer finds a contrast between (53a) which is not quite impossible, provided that *det* is stressed, and (53b) which is completely out. It is worth watching whether structures like (53a) do indeed show up spontaneously.
19. Based on a corpus study of presentational constructions, Roberts (1999) noted that a majority of the examples without overt *det* were in the perfect tense. See also Falk (1993:269–273).
20. For Falk's analysis (1993:282ff.), it is essential that the initial constituent be linked to a VP-internal position as shown in (13). It is unclear how this analysis can be extended to (51)–(52).
21. Much of the argumentation involves theta role assignment (cf. Bennis 1986:93ff., 171ff.; Falk 1993:284ff.) and is not directly transferable to contemporary analyses within Minimalism.
22. See Larsson (to appear) for an overview of the use of different expletive forms in the Nordic Dialect Corpus and the Nordic Syntactic Judgment Database.
23. The quasi-argument *det* used with meteorological predicates can never be omitted in Spec,TP (see (3a)). This is not surprising since such predicates do not take complement clauses and consequently there can be no fronting of an object *det* to Spec,CP. In impersonal passives like in (i), *det* is optional in Spec,TP if there is a locative argument in Spec,CP, much like the example in (12a) and (55).

(i) Här dansas (det) varje midsommar.
here dance.PASS it every midsummer
'Here people dance every midsummer.'

See also Biberauer & Richards (2006), who disuss cases of optional expletives in impersonal passives in Afrikaans and Faroese.
For the type of example shown in (8), it is possible to construct versions with fronted referential *det*. I have not heard any examples like this and the constructed example in (iii) is judged to be ungrammatical without the second *det*.

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(ii) Vill du ha lite kaffe?
want you have some coffee
'Do you want some coffee?'

(iii) Det_i ska *(det) bli gott med e_i.
it shall it be good with
'It will be nice to have some.'

For the non-clause-bounded attested examples, the conditioning factor appears to be the presence of a *det* in Spec,CP which has been fronted from an embedded clause, finite or non-finite. The question then arises whether the examples in (56)–(57), which only involve a local dependency in the matrix clause, should be analysed in a different way.

24. See Svenonius (2002:9ff.) for an overview of the development of the EPP. The term was first used by Chomsky (1982:10) but the idea that every clause must have a subject was made explicit already in Chomsky (1981:26), where it was referred to as 'Principle P', as one reviewer pointed out. Richards & Biberauer (2005) explicitly address the role of EPP with respect to expletives in Germanic.
25. For details see Platzack (2011). The theoretical status of EPP features in Minimalism remains somewhat unclear.
26. It seems to me that parallel chains introduce a very powerful mechanism into the grammar. It is not clear what the limitations on parallel chains are, nor on what computation is required in order to establish, for a given element, whether there is a parallel chain whose head is pronounced or not.
27. Platzack also discusses the construction with initial locatives, shown here in (12), split topicalization and relative clauses, but I will limit myself to discussing his alternative proposal for the type of missing expletive subjects that is the main topic of this article.
28. Eide (2011) uses the term Copy Left Dislocation (CLD) for these constructions. Her CLD-Topic position presumably corresponds to Platzack's high Spec,CP and her CLD-copy position to Platzack's low Spec,CP.
29. I have retained the double shafted arrow which Platzack used in earlier versions of the article. In note 10 of his article, he proposes that the relation is partly semantic, partly syntactic (with movement to Spec,CP of the embedded clause) but does not represent it in the tree structure.
30. Platzack (in press) assumes that expletive *det* is merged in Spec,vP, i.e. below TP. See e.g. his structures (12) and (15), shown as (61) here.
31. Eide (2011:181, Table 1) reports that 24.4% of the clauses in a spoken corpus had an initial expletive subject, compared with 11% in the matched written corpus.
32. Of the 436 examples of *det är svårt att* … 'it is hard to' in the PAROLE corpus in *Språkbanken*, less than 10% of the examples involved an initial referential *det*. Further frequency studies, especially from spoken language, are required in order to say something more definitive about the distribution of referential and expletive *det*.
33. Hammarberg (2000, 2008) points out that it is sometimes difficult to say which use of *det* is involved and discusses some examples where the interpretation switches back and forth between an anaphoric, backward-looking use of *det* and a cataphoric, clause-anticipating use. It would be very interesting to use on-line methods to investigate whether this temporary ambiguity concerning the function of *det* influences listeners' and readers' processing of the utterance/sentence, and, equally interesting, whether this may shed some light on the sentence planning involved in speaking/writing. One possibility would be to carry out ERP-studies of examples like the ones in (72) and (73) (cf. Roll 2009). If

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subjects interpret an initial *det* in (72c) and (73b, d) as an anticipating expletive, we might expect some reanalysis effect when they reach the object gap in the embedded clause.

34. This example comes from a conversation at a rehabilitation clinic (Lundgren 2009:185) and was discussed by Per Linell at a seminar entitled "On-line syntax: Språkandets dynamiska grammatik" [On-line syntax: The dynamic grammar of languaging] at the Department of Linguistics, University of Gothenburg, 13 March 2011.
35. The example in (77) involves a clause-anticipating expletive. A written example with a missing presentational *det* is given in (i).

(i) så visst kan det ge ett bokkontrakt. (blog 2011-03-07)
so of.course can it give a book-contract
Det$_i$ tror jag Ø finns några exempel på e_i i Sverige i nutid
it believe I are some examples on in Sweden in present
också . . .
also
'Of course, it might lead to a book contract. I believe there are examples of this (happening) in present-day Sweden, too.'

36. One reviewer remarked that the type of matrix predicates used here, *tycka* 'think' and *tro* 'believe', resemble discourse markers and suggested that they may be used parenthetically. Note that the subesequent clause is introduced by the complementizer *att*, which indicates that these are real embedded clauses. In addition to the predicates mentioned, there are also examples like (i), uttered by a frustrated train conductor after checking the mobile phone tickets of a group of teenagers who did not have the relevant page open for inspection. The preverbal position of the negation *inte* in the embedded clause also indicates that this is an embedded clause.

(i) det förstår jag inte (.) att dom inte 'har (28 May 2012)
it understand I not that they not have
'I don't understand that they don't have (them ready)'

37. Or a missing argument. There are several proposals in the literature, see e.g. Pickering & Barry (1991).
38. In HPSG it is customary to use feature structures with features like HEAD DAUGHTER to encode the hierarchical relaions. For perspicuity I have drawn a simplified tree structure which only contains a few of the features involved. The coindexation [1] represents unification. Some researchers account for the fronting of the finite verb by a special DOUBLE SLASH feature (see e.g. Kathol, Przepiórkowski & Teng 2011; Müller & Ørsnes 2011) but I have here chosen a flatter structure for the midfield, as argued for in Engdahl, Andréasson & Börjars (2004).
39. A written clause-bounded example with a fronted demonstrative DP and missing presentational *det* is given in (i), cf. (56):

(i) Sådant finns exempel på från kyrkohistorien. (blog, 2008)
such.NEUT exist examples on from church.history.DEF
'There are examples of such a thing from church history.'

(ii) [$_{CP}$ Sådant$_i$ finns [$_{TP}$ Ø *v* [$_{VP}$ *v* [$_{DP}$ exempel på e_i] från kyrkohistorien]]]
such.NEUT exist examples on from church.history.DEF

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40. I have not come across any examples involving *wh*-questions as in (i). To my ear they are clearly better than (84).

    (i) ??Vad$_i$ var dumt att du sa e_i.
    what was stupid that you said

41. In her extensive corpus study of *de e* 'it is', Forsskåhl (2009) did not note any examples like this.
42. Saaristo suspects that this is due to influence from Finnish.
43. This example was provided by Bjarne Ørsnes.
44. See Vikner (1995:228ff.) for an overview.
45. As mentioned briefly in Section 2, the Icelandic expletive *það* is only used in clause-initial position (Spec,CP) and never in Spec,TP. Sigurðsson (2010:174) phrases the restriction in Icelandic in a way which highlights the similarities with the Swedish construction discussed in this article: '*það* must not be spelled out *when some other element takes the first position of the clause*' (italics in the original).
46. Theiler & Bouma (to appear) analyze the initial *es* as having a double function. It acts simultaneously as a placeholder and as a fronted object. A similar analysis for Swedish initial *det* was given in Engdahl 2007.
47. There are indications that it was used in colloquial Swedish much earlier. Ida Larsson found the example in (i) in a novel by Vilhelm Moberg from 1956 about the life of Swedish immigrants in the US in the late 19th century. Moberg's characters speak *småländska*, a dialect from the province of Småland in the south of Sweden.

    (i) – Jag gissade ju att han hade bröstsoten, sade Kristina.
    I guessed PRT that he had consumtion.DEF said Kristina
    'I thought that the had consumtion, said Kristina.'
    – Dä ä trolitt att han hade.
    it is probable that he had
    'It is probable that he had that.' (Moberg 1956:441)

CORPORA

Gothenburg Spoken Language Corpus, http://www.ling.gu.se/projekt/tal/index.cgi?PAGE=3
Nordic Dialect Corpus, http://www.tekstlab.uio.no/nota/scandiasyn/
NoTa: Corpus of spoken Norwegian in Oslo, http://www.tekstlab.uio.no/nota/english/index.html
Språkbanken [The Swedish Language Bank], http://spraakbanken.gu.se/eng/start

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