

Wh*-movement and the Small Clause Analyses of the English *there*-construction

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In this paper, I argue against the analyses of the *there*-construction by Moro (1997) and Hoekstra & Mulder (1990) and for an analysis in the frame of Williams (1994), Hazout (2004) from two angles. First of all, Moro and Hoekstra & Mulder do not correctly predict the behaviour of the *there*-construction under *wh*-movement; second, from a semantic point of view, the predicate in the small clause structure is the postverbal DP and not *there*. Alternatively, I follow the proposal by Williams (1994) in which *there* is the subject of predication and I will point out a direction to analyse the problematic *wh*-movement data within this framework.

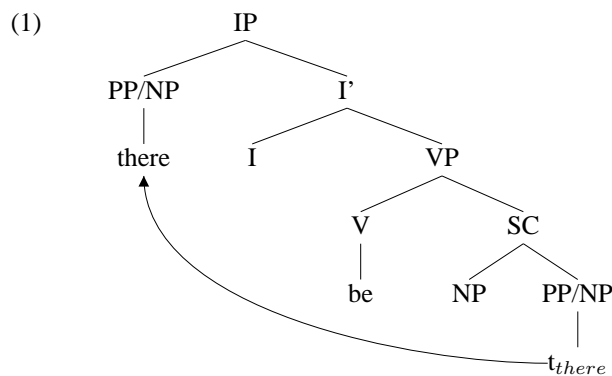
1. Introduction

In the generative framework, the English *there*-construction has always been a major subject of theoretical research and several different proposals have been made. In many analyses, *there* is seen as an expletive without meaning and introduced into the Spec,IP position to fill the subject position. Contrary to this position, Moro (1991; 1997) proposes that *there* is a dummy predicate that originates in a small clause configuration with the postverbal DP. In this way, it is parallel to predicate inversion constructions. Hoekstra & Mulder (1990) have taken up this analysis and proposed a slight change: *there* is classified as a PP with the result that the *there*-construction parallels locative inversion. In this article, I challenge both of these small clause analyses. First of all, it will be shown that they cannot satisfactorily handle *wh*-extraction data of the *there*-constructions with the verb *be* (henceforth: the *there*-BE construction) and the different behaviour of the *there*-construction with unaccusatives (henceforth: *there*-V constructions). Second, I will present a new argument in favour of the alternative proposal by Williams (1994) and Hazout (2004), which claims that the predicate is the postverbal DP not *there*. The article is structured as follows: I will first present Moro's and

Hoekstra & Mulder's analyses (section 1), then proceed with giving the problematic sets of extraction data (section 2). In the third section, I discuss the arguments for Hazout's and Williams' alternative small clause structure and finally come back to the *wh*-movement data for which I will give directions to handle it within Williams' analysis.

2. Moro's and Hoekstra & Mulder's Analyses

Moro (1991, 1997) argues that the English existential construction is a type of predicate inversion with *there* being a dummy predicate that originates in a small clause structure and predicates over the postverbal DP. Hoekstra & Mulder (1990) agree in the main respects with Moro, however, in their analysis, *there* is a PP and the structure, thus, parallels locative inversion. The structure is given in (1).¹



One of the main arguments for taking *there* as a predicate is its parallel behaviour with predicate inversion structures (Moro 1997:119). Both the *there*-construction, cf. (2), and the predicate inversion construction, cf. (3), are not possible in a small clause configuration without *be*.

(2) Mary believes there *(to be) a picture of the wall in the room.

(3) Mary believes the cause of the riot *(to be) John.

In Moro's analysis this behaviour is predicted: in order to precede the DP, *there* has to move, and the position to move to is provided by the verb *be*.²

A second fact that Moro's analysis can handle is the ungrammaticality of (4) (cf. Moro 1997:98).

¹The original idea is Moro's, even though the dates of the references might suggest the opposite.

²What Moro (1997) does not consider is that the base order of the small clause cannot be produced either: **Mary believes a man there in the room*.

- (4) *there seems a man to be in the room.

From the embedded small clause configuration, only one item, either the DP *a man* or *there* can move to the embedded subject position. Locality restrictions on further movement make sure that exactly the item that moved first moves further on. Thus, there is no need for stipulating that *there* is inserted in the embedded subject position (as e.g. Chomsky's 1995 principle of merge over move³).

A third advantage of Moro's system is that *there* and the postverbal DP start off in a local relationship. Thus, they can agree in ϕ -features and *there* can take these features to the subject position in order to establish agreement with the verb. In this way, the long-distance agreement facts as seen in (5) can be explained without a separate mechanism like AGREE (at least not in English), cf. Hoekstra & Mulder (1990), Hazout (2004), Broekhuis (2005).⁴

- (5) there seems/*seem to be a man in the room.

Apart from all this merits, there is an important problem with these analyses: they predict that the *there*-construction patterns with predicate inversion (Moro's position) or locative inversion (Hoekstra & Mulder's position), however, the constructions behave differently under *wh*-movement as we will see in the next section.

3. Wh-movement in there-constructions, locative and predicate inversion

3.1. Extraction of and from the postverbal DP

One discrepancy in terms of *wh*-movement arises, when the full postverbal DP is extracted: this type of extraction is ungrammatical with predicate inversion, cf. (6), and locative inversion, cf. (7). However, it is possible with the *there*-BE construction, even though it is restricted, cf. (8).

- (6) a. ?*What do you think the cause of the riot was t?
 b. *Which picture do you think the cause of the riot was t? (Moro 1997:123)
- (7) a. *?What kind of mushrooms do you think on these trails can be found t?
 (Bresnan 1994:87)
 b. *Which picture of a politician do you think that on this wall hung t?

³Moro's point has also been used to argue against Chomsky by Broekhuis & Klooster (2001).

⁴Both Moro (1997) and Hoekstra & Mulder (1990) assume for case-assignment to the postverbal DP that there is a type of agreement relationship established in the small clause configuration (the same type of relationship that gives case-agreement in Latin examples like *puella bella est* 'daughter.nom.fem pretty.nom.fem is'). They do not explicitly speak of ϕ -feature agreement between *there* and the postverbal DP. Broekhuis (2005) argues for this relationship explicitly. Hazout (2004) proposes a detailed analysis of ϕ -agreement in the Williams' type small clause structure, see below.

- (8) a. ??Which actors were there in the room? (Heim 1987:27)
 b. What is there in the refrigerator? (Aissen 1975:7)
 c. How many men do you think that there were *t* in the room?
 (Moro 1997:126)

What we observe here is that extraction of *what* and *how many X* is possible with the *there*-BE construction, but extraction of *which X* is not.

Furthermore, extraction from within the postverbal DP is also prohibited in predicate inversion, cf. (9), and locative inversion constructions, cf. (10). And again, the same type of structure is possible for the *there*-construction as seen in (11).

- (9) *Which wall do you think the cause of the riot was a picture of?
 (Moro 1997:124)
 (10) *Who do you think on this wall hung a picture of?
 (11) Which wall do you think there was a picture of *t*? (Moro 1997:124)

3.2. Moro's explanation

These facts have not gone unnoticed. Moro argues with regard to the predicate inversion structure, that extractions of the postverbal DP cf. (6), is generally ungrammatical, because this DP would need to pass via some escape hatch. (He compares it to the subject going via Spec,CP to escape CP.) As far as I understood Moro's proposal, this escape hatch is Spec,Agr above T. This position is already filled by the predicative DP, thus, extraction of the full DP is not possible.

Still speaking about the predicate inversion construction, extraction from within the postverbal DP, cf. (9), is ungrammatical for a different reason. According to Moro, the extracted item crosses one barrier: the DP subject of the small clause that is not selected by *be*. One barrier causes a subjacency violation in the sense of Cinque (1990).

Turning to the *there*-construction, Moro argues that it is special: it allows for extraction from within because, as Moro claims, *there* lexicalizes the verb *be* and makes it an L-marker. This is supposed to lift the barrier from the DP subject of the small clause, and thus, the extraction from within is no longer a violation of subjacency; the structure becomes grammatical. In this way, he explains the difference between extraction from within the postverbal DP in predicate inversion versus in the *there*-construction.

This leaves the contrast of *what / how many X* extraction versus *which X* extraction (cf. (8-a) vs. (8-b), (8-c)) open. This is unexpected if both movements are extraction of the whole XP (which is licit). Moro (1997) claims that what looks like extraction of a full DP is actually extraction from within the DP, and therefore possible. The LF structures of the relevant examples are given here:

- (12) a. How many do you think that there were [*t* men] in the room?

- b. What do you think that there was [D t] in the room?

Thus, this type of extraction is possible because it does not extract the full DP and a subjacency violation does not occur.

3.3. Arguments against Moro's analysis

First of all, Moro's analysis predicts that extraction out of a postverbal DP should be possible whenever the verb is an L-marker. However, this prediction is not born out: in the *there-V* construction (with an unaccusative verb as the tensed verb), the verb is an L-marker from two perspectives: first, it is lexical; second, *there* lexicalizes the verb. Thus, extraction out of the *there-V* construction should be as grammatical as out of the *there-BE* construction (with BE as the tensed verb). However, this is not the case. The former is ungrammatical in both environments (as already observed by Aissen (1975)) while the latter, as we have seen, allows extraction (cf. (8), (11)):⁵

- (13) a. *Who did there arrive at six o'clock?
 b. *What bus did there arrive at the station at 9 o'clock?
 c. *How many buses did there arrive at the station at 9 o'clock?
 d. *Which teacher did there come to your party last night?
- (14) a. *Who did there appear a picture of t in the Daily Telegraph?
 b. *Who did there arrive a friend of t at the party?

Thus, we find the same restriction on *wh*-movement with the *there-V* construction as we have already observed with the predicate inversion and locative inversion. This strongly suggests that these constructions should find a common analysis, different from an analysis of the *there-BE* construction.⁶

Finally, I want to point out that Moro's analysis relies on the notions of barriers and subjacency. In a minimalist analysis, I can see no principled reason, why extraction out of the small clause should be ungrammatical. Thus, it is possible to work with Moro's basic idea as a starting point for the *there-BE* construction in a minimalist framework as well. However, there is an alternative small clause analysis: Hazout's (2004) implementation of Williams' (1994) idea of *there* being the subject and not the predicate in the small clause. So before I go on to propose an analysis for the *wh*-movement facts, I go into the issue, which of the two analyses,

⁵Aissen (1975) noted this difference (among others) between what she calls the existential (roughly *there-BE*) and the presentational (roughly *there-V*) construction. However, she almost exclusively uses examples of the *there V XP DP* type, which seem to me to be heavy NP shift constructions. Furthermore, native speakers seem not to agree on the grammaticality of the *there-V* construction. However, it seems to hold that for those who accept the base structure do not accept *wh*-extraction. I am currently in the process of experimentally testing the grammaticality of these constructions on a broader basis.

⁶I will not go much further into this issue, for further commonalities between the *there-V* structure and locative inversion, see Aissen (1975) also reported in Hartmann (2005).

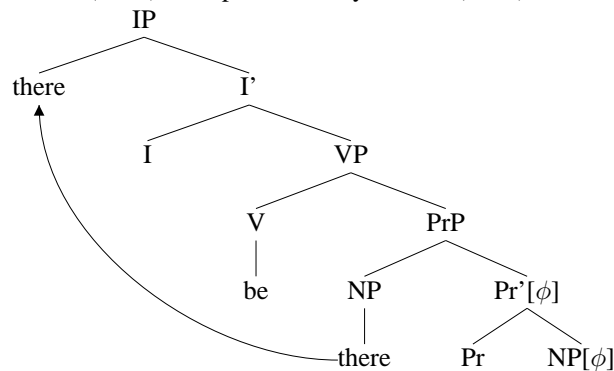
I want to adopt.

4. Williams' Alternative Analysis

4.1. Williams' Proposal

Williams' (1994) basic idea (and main difference to Moro's analysis) is that *there* is not the predicate but the subject of predication. The main predicate is claimed to be the postverbal DP. The structure taken from Hazout (2004) is given in (15).⁷

(15) Williams (1994) as implemented by Hazout (2004)



Both Moro's and Hazout's analyses have in common that the small clause approach makes it easy to explain two facts about the English *there*-BE-construction, which we have already seen in the arguments for Moro's structure: it easily deals with the ungrammaticality of (4) and it opens a way to deal with the agreement facts given in (5).

4.2. Williams' Arguments

Williams (1994) gives four arguments for his analysis. The first two arguments rely on his analysis of the specificational pseudocleft as inverse predicate construction. In this analysis, the predicate of examples like (16), is the cleft clause, that is inverted to the subject position.⁸

⁷The basic idea of *there* being the subject of predication has to be attributed to Williams. The implementation of this idea in a small clause structure is the idea Hazout (2004). Independent of the subject of predication vs. predicate discussion of *there*, Bowers (2002) already suggested that *there* is merged in Spec,PrEP: this fact explains the transitivity restriction of the construction. As Williams does not opt for locality in predication structures, his structure would look different.

⁸For the discussion of the different types of pseudoclefts see Higgins (1973), Williams (1983), Williams (1994), Heycock & Kroch (1999).

- (16) [_{predicate} What John is] is [_{subject} proud of himself]

This structure stands in contrast to predicational clefts where the cleft is the subject of predication:

- (17) [_{subject} What John is] is [_{predicate} amazing]

Arguing for *there* as subject of predication, Williams claims that *there* undergoes raising, unlike other inverted predicate constructions like specificational pseudoclefts. Thus, *there* does not behave like predicates in this respect.

- (18) *What John is seems to be important to himself. (Williams 1994:135)

Second, facts from ellipsis show again that predicates behave different from subjects of predication: only predicates can be elided but not subjects of predication. In the specificational pseudoclefts, where the predicate is the *wh*-cleft and the subject is the adjective, elision of the subject of predication, is not possible:

- (19) *[What John is] is callous and what Mary is, is too. (Williams 1994:135)

With the predicational pseudocleft structure, when the pseudocleft is the subject of predication, ellipsis is possible:

- (20) [What John is] is amazing and what Bill is is too. (Williams 1994:135)

Williams concludes from these facts, that predicates can be elided, but not subjects of predications. In the *there*-construction, the post-verbal DP can be elided, which to Williams means that the DP must be the predicate.

- (21) We thought there would be a lot and there were t.

The third argument that Williams gives comes from the scope facts in the *there*-construction: the postverbal DP generally exhibits narrow scope. Thus, the scope in (22) can only be *must* > *seem* > *nothing*.

- (22) In order for the illusion to work, there must seem to be nothing in the box.

If the postverbal DP is a predicate, this fact finds a simple explanation: as a predicate, this DP does not undergo quantifier raising and thus, it does not interact with other scope operators.

The last argument comes from parallel behaviour under *wh*-extraction. The contrast of (23) versus (24) shows that predicates tend to be less well extractable from *wh*-islands than arguments (the examples are taken from Williams (1994; 2004)):

- (23) a. ?What do you wonder who fixed?
 b. ?Who do you wonder why Bill likes?
 (24) a. *How do you wonder who fixed it t?

- b. *How tall do you wonder who became?
- c. *How foolish do you wonder why Bill considers anyone t?

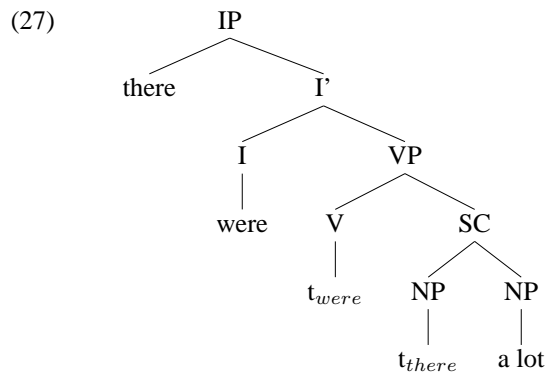
The postverbal-DP of the *there*-construction patterns with the extraction of predicates. Thus, Williams argues, it must be a predicate as well.

- (25) a. *Who do you wonder why there was at the party?
 b. *How many people do you wonder why there was?

These arguments are not totally waterproof, however. First of all, it is not clear whether it is the predicative status of the specificational pseudocleft in (18) that prohibits it from raising. Other inverted predicates seem to be able to raise as e.g. inverted predicates of the Moro-type and locatives in locative inversion constructions:

- (26) a. The cause of the riot seems to be a picture of the wall.
 b. In the garden seemed to be playing several children.

Second, to me it is not clear, what exactly is going on in the ellipsis cases. For the *there*-construction, it could be possible that what is elided is a VP with the verb having raised out of the structure.



The point is well-taken in another respect, though. Given that his analysis of the pseudocleft is on the right track, Williams finds an empirical difference in the behaviour of predicates and subjects of predication within VP-ellipsis after *be*.

Thus, there are two arguments left to support Williams' analysis: the scope facts and the parallelism in extraction from a *wh*-island. In the following, I want to present another strong argument from semantics, why *there* is rather the subject of predication and not the predicate.

4.3. An Argument from Semantics

The *there*-construction has generally been considered to belong to the class of thetic judgements (cf. e.g. Kuroda (1970) and Sasse (1987) for the discussion of thetic vs. categorical). Informally speaking, thetic judgements are defined as being a mere presentation or assertion of an all-new situation. In opposition to that categorical judgements are sentences in which a statement is made about a topic. Thus, the former have been assumed to be clauses without a subject-predicate structure. Maleczki (2004) argues (mainly on the basis of Hungarian) that this description is not entirely correct: she argues that there is a predicational relationship present in thetic judgements as well. The all-new content of the thetic-judgment is predicated over an (un)articulated logical subject of location. As Hungarian has a syntactic topic position in the left periphery of the clause, thetic judgements can be easily detected. All sentences that do not exhibit a syntactic topic are thetic. Thus, the example in (28), is a thetic sentence, the categorical counterpart is given in (29).

(28) Hideg van (a völgyben.)
cold is the valley-in
'It is cold (in the valley).'

(29) A völgyben hideg van.
the valley-in cold is
'In the valley, it is cold.'

Transferring this analysis to the English *there*-BE construction, the logical subject also has to be some abstract locational argument, the logical predicate of the structure can only be the postverbal DP. If we want to retain that logical predicates are also syntactic predicates, the postverbal DP must be the predicate. Then, the expression of the logical subject of predication is expressed by the expletive *there* or *it*.

To me, this seems to be a strong argument for taking up Williams' analysis instead of Moro's. In order to do this, it is also necessary to solve some open questions that Williams already pointed out but could not see a principled answer to. Although I am not able to give a straightforward solution, I would like to point out directions in which a solution might lie.

4.4. Left-over issues

There are two unanswered questions for Williams' (1994) analysis, as he himself notes. The first question is, why *there* and the predicative DP cannot occur in a small clause configuration without *be*, cf. (2) and (30)

(30) I consider there *(to be) a man in there.

To my eye, this point seems to be related to the observation that it is not possible to have PPs in this configuration either:

- (31) a. *I consider at the party a few people .
 b. *I believed in the kindergarten a nurse.

This is far from being a solution to the problem, but thinking along these lines might give a better understanding for the contrast in (30) in the long run.

The second question is the following: If *there* can be an argument of predication, why is it not possible to combine it with other non-nominal predicates like in (32)?

- (32) *There was red.

Hazout (2004) proposes a possible solution for this problem. He argues that the main difference between *it* and *there* is that the latter needs to agree with the complement of the small clause head in number. Adjectives are not specified for number (in English) and therefore, adjectives cannot be an appropriate predicate to co-occur with *there*. Thus, the difference between English and Hebrew that only has one expletive is located in the lexicon of the two languages.⁹

5. Williams' small clause analysis and *wh*-extraction

Taking Williams' analysis as the basis for our analysis of the *there*-BE construction, let's now turn back to the open question concerning *wh*-movement. Remember that we observed two things: first, we saw that there is a difference between two types of *there*-constructions: the *there*-V construction and the *there*-BE construction. The former does not allow for *wh*-movement, the latter does, but it is restricted in a sense that we will look at below. How do these facts go together with Williams' small clause analysis?

First of all, there are quite a few differences between the *there*-V and the *there*-BE construction, in which *there*-V also patterns with the locative inversion construction (for a more detailed overview see Aissen (1975), also presented in Hartmann (2005)). I take this to be reason enough for a common analysis of the *there*-V construction along the lines of locative inversion. As a profound study of locative inversion and *there*-V constructions goes beyond the scope of this paper, I refer the interested reader to some of the relevant literature (e.g.: denDikken & Næss (1993) and Bresnan (1994) deal with the *wh*-movement data; Coopmans (1989) and Newmeyer (1987) include the *there*-V constructions in their analysis of locative inversion).¹⁰

⁹Of course, the idea that *there* and *it* differ in their ϕ -feature content is not new, cf. among others Chomsky (1981), Chomsky (1995), Bowers (2002).

¹⁰I do not want to exclude that all three constructions, locative inversion, *there*-V and *there*-BE, have a common small clause derivation up to a certain point. I just claim that there is more to be said about the first two. Cf. Belvin & denDikken (1997) for a possible solution about extraction from within the postverbal DP in *there*-V vs. *there*-BE constructions.

So let us now turn to the small clause analysis of the *there*-BE construction. As far as I can see, the small clause structure as implemented by Hazout (2004) does not exclude *wh*-extraction of and from the postverbal DP in principle. Thus, we have to find a different explanation for the fact that *wh*-movement of the postverbal DP is restricted in the *there*-BE construction. We observed that extraction of *what X* and *how many X* is allowed whereas extraction of *which X* is marked (cf. examples in (8)). Intuitively, this contrast has to be linked to another well-known fact about the *there*-construction: the so-called definiteness effect/restriction. This idea is not new and Heim (1987) has already proposed a semantic analysis for the facts. I argued for a slightly different way elsewhere which I will shortly take up here as well (cf. Hartmann (2005)).

There are two proposals in the literature that I use to reduce the observed fact to the definiteness restriction. The first step is following McNally's argumentation that there are actually two types of definiteness effect. A semantic restriction accounts for the observation that universal quantifiers, cannot occur in the *there*-construction, cf. (33); a pragmatic one accounts for the fact that definite DPs, cf. (34), cannot readily occur in the *there*-construction (the examples are taken from Milsark (1977)):

- (33) a. *There was everyone in the room.
 b. *There were all viewpoints considered.
 c. *There was each package inspected.
- (34) a. *There is the wolf at the door.
 b. *There were John and Mary cycling along the creek.
 c. *There was Frank's article mentioned.

The second step is to follow Heim (1987) (who refers to Katz & Postal (1964) and Kuroda (1969)) in analysing *which XPs* as being definite and *what* and *how many XPs* as being indefinite. This predicts two things. First, that *which X* extraction should be limited in the same way as definites occurring in *there*-constructions. Second, languages that only exhibit the semantic definiteness effect are expected not to have a restriction on *which-X* extraction in these constructions. Both predictions seem to be born out.

Let us look at the first prediction first. Ward & Birner (1995) argue that definites can occur in the *there*-construction under various conditions. One of these conditions is that a DP that is uniquely identifiable might occur in these constructions (e.g. *the guy that I saw last night* would be a uniquely identifiable DP). A complete analysis of the contexts and possibilities of *which-X* extraction out of *there*-BE constructions is still to be done, but a preliminary investigation suggests that under circumstances where *which-X* seems to be uniquely identifiable, the extraction seems to be felicitous, as seen in (35).¹¹

¹¹The examples are a result of a google.co.uk search and are double checked with a native speaker.

- (35) a. Which relationship is there between forms of censorship and forms of society?
 b. Why is there a role and which role is there for new created innovative growth entities in this environment of extremely large operators?

The second predictions seems to be born out as well. McNally (1998) reports that Catalan is a language in which the pragmatic definiteness effect does not hold, however, the language observes the semantic restrictions, cf. (36).

- (36) a. *Hi havia cada cotxe a la cursa.
 there have each car at the race.
 'There was each car at the race.'
 b. Hi havia la Joana a la festa
 there have the Joana at the party
 'Joan was at the party.'

Furthermore, Catalan does not exhibit a difference in extraction of *which X* vs. *how many X* and *what*.¹²

- (37) Quin metge hi havia a la festa?
 which doctor there have a the party
 'Which doctor was there on the party?'
- (38) Quanta gent hi havia a la festa?
 how many people there have at the party
 'How many people were there at the party?'
- (39) Què hi havia a la festa?
 what there have at the party
 'What was there at the party?'

Thus, the data show that the restrictions in *wh*-movement in the *there*-BE construction is an interaction of *which X* being definite and the restrictions on the sort of definites occurring in these constructions.¹³

¹²The data was tested via Email with six native speakers of Catalan that all agreed on the judgements.

¹³If we bias the examples in the opposite direction, making *what* D-linked (along the lines of Pesetsky (1987)) the examples surprisingly do not become ungrammatical: Thus, in the following context: *Sorry, detective, I need some clarification for the protocol. You said that there was a knife and a revolver in the house. One you said was in the living room, the other you said was in the bathroom* it is grammatical to say: *What did you say there was in the bathroom?* This is not completely unexpected as according to Ward & Birner (1995) it is not the discourse status that restrict the postverbal DP, but its hearer-new status. However, to construct *what* as hearer-new seems to me difficult. The example remains problematic. Thanks to Luis Vicente for suggesting to bias examples in this way.

6. Conclusion

In this paper, I have shown that Moro's (1997, 1991) and Hoekstra & Mulder's (1991) analyses of the *there*-construction make the wrong prediction concerning *wh*-movement. First of all, their analyses predict that the *there*-construction behaves parallel to predicate inversion and locative inversion, respectively. However, this is not the case and the arguments given for the divergence of the *there*-construction are not convincing enough: the underlying analysis in the GB framework does not properly account for the observation that *wh*-extraction is possible though restricted with the *there*-BE construction but it is ungrammatical with the *there*-V construction. Thus, the two should receive different accounts. Second, there is an alternative small clause analysis, Williams' (1994) analysis as implemented by Hazout (2004), that has been shown to fare better: from a semantic point of view, the postverbal DP is the semantic predicate (and not the predicate), and therefore, should also be the syntactic predicate. Finally, I proposed a pragmatic analysis of the restrictions on *wh*-extraction in the *there*-BE construction that parallels the restriction on the occurrence of definite DPs in these structures (the pragmatic definiteness effect).

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