

In *Current Issues in Linguistic Interfaces*, Vol.1, eds., Young-Se Kang, Sze-Wing Tang, Chul Kim, Jong-Yurl Yoon, Yong-Soo Kang, Kyoung-Ae Kim, Hyunkyung Yoo, Youngjun Jang, & Hye-Kyung Kang, 319–330, Hankook Moonhwasa.

***There*-Existentials with Participial Codas and Theticity¹**

Min-Joo Kim

Texas Tech University

min-joo.kim@ttu.edu

Abstract:

This paper examines the ambiguity of *there*-existentials with participial codas observed by Milsark (1974) and offers a systematic account thereof. Along the way, some of the debate on the constituent structure of relevant *there*-existentials will be settled. We also take a closer look at extractability from the participial coda and suggest a more pragmatic approach to the putatively syntactic phenomenon. Our analysis will also be shown to capture the paradoxical properties of *there*, a long-standing problem in the literature.

1. Introduction

Milsark (1974) observes that *there*-existentials with participial codas can be semantically ambiguous. For instance, (1a) can be interpreted as the characterization of some people at the party or as a description of the situation at the party, that is, some people at the party were engaged in the activity of studying Gothic. Similarly, (1b) can be interpreted as characterizing some man in the bar or as describing the situation in the bar. For convenience, here and throughout, we call these interpretations ‘individual-central’ and ‘situation-central’ readings, respectively (cf. Sasse 1987).

- (1) a. There were [people]_{pivot NP} [studying Gothic]_{part. coda} [at the party]_{PP-coda}.

- b. In Duffy’s bar, there was [a man]_{pivot NP} [shot by the police]_{part. coda}.

(taken from Milsark 1974: (44) and (45), pp.184-5)

This two-way semantic ambiguity of *there*-existentials with participials makes us wonder whether it correlates with the syntax or not. Milsark suggests that it does: he says that when (1a) is interpreted as characterizing people at the party, i.e., receiving an individual-central reading in our terminology, the participial coda *studying Gothic* occurs inside the NP containing *people*; when the sentence receives a situation-central reading, it occurs outside the NP.

Milsark’s analysis seems intuitively correct but it does not tell us exactly where the participial coda is located in the structure. As far as we are aware, this issue has not been taken up in the literature. In

¹ I am grateful to Barbara H. Partee, Marcel den Dikken, and Kyle B. Johnson for invaluable comments and discussion at various stages of this work. All remaining errors are my own responsibility.

this paper, we address this issue by examining possibilities made available in the current literature. We argue that a participial coda occurs either as a reduced relative clause (RC) or as a predicate inside a small clause (SC), but not as a depictive adjunct, contra Hartmann (2008), and the choice between the two structural possibilities is determined by the interpretation of the sentence.

Below we first review Hartmann 2008, a most thorough syntactic analysis currently available, and then offer an alternative that improves on its weaknesses. More specifically, we will postulate the presence of a Predicate Phrase in the sense of Bowers (1993), along the lines of Hazout (2004) and Hartmann (2008). But we will diverge from them in terms of how we treat *there* and BE. Our analysis will be shown to capture the predicative syntax but referential nominal semantics of *there* and the theticity of the construction, both of which have drawn a great deal of attention in the literature (e.g., Kuroda 1972, Milsark 1974, Sasse 1987, Ladusaw 1994, Basilico 2003).

2. Hartmann's (2008) analysis of *there*-BE-existentials with participials

Hartmann posits that *there*-existentials with participials can receive more than one syntactic analysis although she does not discuss their potential ambiguity in the way Milsark (1974) does. In brief, she claims that some participial codas are reduced RCs, as suggested by Jenkins (1975) and Williams (1984), and others are depictive adjuncts, as suggested by McNally (1992). Her claim is schematically represented in (2) and (3): the DP corresponds to our pivot NP. And PredEx is shorthand for existential predicate, a specific type of the functional head 'Predicate' proposed by Bowers (1993).

(2) Participle inside a complex-NP

[_{PredExP} [there] _{PredEx'} [_{PredEx} BE] [_{DP} [_{DP} an article] [_{RC} **written by Chomsky**]])]

(3) Participle adjoined to a higher (verbal) category

[_{PredExP} [there] _{PredEx'} [_{PredEx} BE] [_{DP} man]]] ... [_{PartP} **shot**]

Hartmann dismisses a SC analysis, a plausible alternative to a depictive analysis (see Stowell 1978, Safir 1982, Lasnik 1995, Chomsky 1995), on the basis of extraction facts. Drawing on the following data, she claims that while complements can be extracted from the participial coda position, adjuncts cannot be (p. 173).

(4) a. **To whom** has there just been a celebrity introduced?

b. **?How many cookies** have there been children baking?

(5) a. ***How many miles** a day are there people running?

- b.***How badly** has there been a man shot?
- c.***How much headway** could there be people making?

(McNally 1992: 68; cited as (80) and (81) in Hartmann 2008: 173)

Hartmann draws a parallel between the pattern that emerges from the above data and what Cinque (1990) observes about extraction from untensed adjuncts: as exemplified in (6), adjuncts like *how* cannot be extracted from untensed adjuncts, i.e., the bracketed parts, but complements like *which topic* can be.

- (6) a. Which topic did John ask [whether to talk about __]?
- b.*How did John ask [whether to behave __]?
- c. Which topic did you leave [without talking about __]?
- d.*How did you leave [without behaving __]?

(Hartmann 2008: 172, ex. (78))

Given the apparent parallel between the good and the bad cases in (6) and (4)-(5), Hartmann submits that the participial coda has to be an untensed adjunct. It cannot be a predicate inside a SC because, if it were, it would let anything extract, be it an argument or an adjunct.

Of the two possibilities Hartmann narrows down for the syntactic status of a participial coda, the reduced RC analysis is certainly worth considering, for it derives individual-central readings Milsark (1974) identifies. The depictive adjunct analysis seems problematic, however, on both semantic and syntactic grounds.

On the semantic side, the most serious problem with Hartmann's depictive analysis is that it cannot derive situation-central readings. Given the structure depicted in (3), the prediction is that sentences like (1a) and (1b) will assert the existence of some individual that is in the denotation of the nominal *people* or *a man*. So what we obtain in the end would be individual-central readings, rather than situation-central ones. Needless to say, these interpretations would differ slightly from the interpretations resulting from assigning a bare NP analysis to the sentences. But they would still be individual-central readings. Hence, positing a reduced RC and a depictive adjunct as the only two possibilities for the syntax of the participial coda cannot do justice to Milsark's observations.

A related problem is presented by some of the sentences Hartmann discusses herself. Consider (7), for instance, which is taken from Chomsky (1995: 272).

- (7) There is [a book missing from the shelf].

Chomsky analyzes the bracketed part as a SC which consists of a nominal subject and a verbal predicate. But Hartmann treats it as a DP followed by a depictive that is adjoined much higher than the pivot

nominal *a book*. Since her analysis treats a pivot nominal as the argument of BE and a participle as a depictive secondary predicate, (7) is predicted to assert that some non-salient book exists and it is in a missing state—that is, it is gone from the shelf. As Chomsky insightfully notes, however, the sentence can be true even if the book at issue does not exist at all. In the light of recent work on theticity, this truth-condition is totally expected because some *there*-existentials can instantiate ‘event-central’ thetic statements in the sense of Sasse (1987), in which a (hearer) new situation is presented in its entirety, rather than being partitioned into an ordinary topic-like entity and a predicative component that ascribes a property to it. That is, they can be uttered to simply describe a situation that is relevant to the discourse at hand (see, among others, Basilico 2003, Borschev and Partee 2001). So (7) can be construed as describing the situation of a book missing from the shelf, rather than asserting the existence of that book.

Suppose, for the sake of argument, that Hartmann’s analysis can somehow circumvent the problem raised by (7). Even if we make this assumption, however, we are nonetheless confronted by numerous other challenges. A rather serious attack comes from (8a) and (8b).

(8) a. There was a book completely burnt to ashes.

b. There was a live pig roasted.

(Milsark 1974: 84)

Under the depictive analysis Hartmann argues for, (8a) is predicted to assert that there existed a book in a completely burnt state. Our intuitions tell us, however, that the sentence actually asserts that there existed some event in which a book was completely burnt. Similarly, (8b) is predicted to assert the existence of a live pig in a roasted state. But according to our intuitions, the sentence asserts instead that there was an event of a live pig getting roasted (and, consequently, the pig ended up in a completely roasted state). As far as we can see, there is no way for the depictive analysis to overcome such inadequacies.

On the more syntactic side, the depictive adjunct analysis faces at least three problems. One problem concerns argument structure and control: according to the Theta-Criterion, every theta role a verb can assign must be realized by some argument. Since every participle is a kind of verbal category, it comes with theta roles to assign. In *there*-existentials, the argument of a participle is never pronounced. Yet semantically, it is invariably linked to the pivot nominal. Thus the only option we have at our disposal is to treat it as a PRO. But in the configuration outlined in (3), the pivot nominal starts out much lower than the participle. So it cannot obligatorily control the PRO without doing some serious harm to the control theory.

The next syntactic issue concerns the extraction facts Hartmann utilizes to bolster her analysis. Recall that, on the basis of data (4) and (5), she concludes that there is a sharp contrast between *wh*-movement of a complement and that of an adjunct out of the participial coda. But her classification of complements vs. adjuncts is hard to comprehend and even self-contradictory at times. For instance, it is not clear to us how exactly *how many miles* in (5a) and *how much headway* (5c) differ from *how many*

cookies in (4b) to the point where the former can be classified as adjuncts but the latter as a complement.

Moreover, under scrutiny, it turns out that the extraction facts Hartmann relies on have several wrinkles to them. First of all, we consulted with 12 native speakers of English for grammaticality judgments and they do not report any contrast between (4b) and (5a): they find them almost equally bad. This result goes against Hartmann's analysis, because the two sentences are supposed to involve extraction of a complement and that of an adjunct, respectively, and hence there has to be a contrast in grammaticality. Even if we assume that both sentences involve extraction of the same kind of material, say a complement, things do not look any better. This is because, on the depictive adjunct analysis, the participial is expected to allow for extraction of complements across the board, contrary to fact.

Another empirical problem with Hartmann's depictive analysis is that there are ways to ameliorate what she calls a ban on adjunct-extraction. Changing the wording and thereby facilitating a situation-central reading can be one such strategy. To illustrate, compare (5b) and (9). The latter is a minimal revision of the former and it contains a PP-coda. Curiously, this minimal change has a striking impact on the grammaticality: all our 12 informants consistently judged (5b) to be ungrammatical or marginal but (9) to be acceptable or conceivable (more on this below).

(5) b. *How badly has there been a man shot?

(9) (?)How badly was there a man injured in the car accident (yesterday)?

Since the only notable syntactic difference between the two sentences is the absence vs. presence of a grammatically optional material, namely, the PP-coda, we are led to conclude that their contrast is not due to a purely grammatical factor (whatever the ultimate account of this phenomenon may turn out to be).

These findings, we believe, give us good reason to question the validity of employing extraction facts as a probe for the syntactic structure of *there*-existentials with participial codas. Put another way, their structures cannot be determined based solely on the argument vs. adjunct dichotomy with respect to *wh*-movement possibilities.

Why then do some sentences allow for *wh*-movement out of the participial coda but others do not regardless of what moves? Space precludes us from answering this question properly and fully. But we would like to submit that, in many cases, the ungrammaticality of a *wh*-question derived by a *there*-existential reflects the clash between the discourse function of the construction and the question that is at issue. More specifically, some *there*-existentials instantiate thetic statements in which a situation is presented as a whole (see, e.g., Kuroda 1972, Milsark 1974, Sasse 1987, McNally 1992, Ladusaw 1994). So it would be pointless to use the *there*-BE-construction to inquire about things that are part of a situation that is being described or presented. To illustrate, consider (1b). This sentence can be uttered by the speaker to describe a new situation. Hence, if the hearer wants to inquire about that situation in turn,

she is likely to use a non-*there*-BE construction, which contains a pronominal or a definite description referring back to an individual that is part of the situation just introduced. For example, if she is curious about the condition of the man mentioned in (1b), she will say something like, “How badly was **he** injured?” or “Oh my goodness, did **he** die?”. This explains, albeit partly, why (5b) would sound so bad if asked to obtain the same information as these questions.

What is then the reason for the relative goodness of (9)? We think that it sounds better simply because it is easier to imagine a context for it. To exemplify, suppose that John and Mary are having dinner. They are both aware of some horrible car accident that happened yesterday. Yet between the two, Mary is expected to be more informed about it because she has been watching TV all day long and John knows this too. In this context, John is genuinely interested to learn more about the accident, so says something in a sort of ‘think-aloud’ way, expecting Mary to fill him in. Given this discourse context, it seems conceivable for him to say something like (9), especially if it is asked as a sort of clarification question and the temporal frame adverb *yesterday* is added at the end, despite the fact that it instantiates the *there*-BE-existential construction.²

The foregoing discussion has shown that the depictive adjunct analysis of the participial coda is not adequate for deriving situation-central readings and, furthermore, the extraction facts it hinges on are not as reliable or cut-and-dried as they appear to be: there is no consistent difference between extraction of complements and that of adjuncts from a participial coda. And extractability out of a *there*-BE-existential is not a purely syntactic phenomenon which only concerns argument vs. adjunct asymmetry; it is also governed by discourse pragmatic factors. This revelation, in effect, nullifies the criticism Hartmann charges against the SC analysis. It is therefore concluded that there is no *a priori* or *a posteriori* reason to reject a SC analysis on the basis of extraction facts.

3. Reviving a SC Analysis

As a way to improve on Hartmann’s analysis, we propose that the pivot NP + participle string has a bare NP structure when receiving an individual-central reading but has a SC structure when receiving a situation-central reading. That is, we would like to suggest that her depictive adjunct analysis be replaced by a SC analysis. Below we substantiate this claim by outlining the syntax of *there*-existentials that systematically correlates with their interpretations.

In embarking on this task, there are at least three issues to consider: First, the pivot NP does not behave like a referential expression or a generalized quantifier: e.g., it is always construed as a property-

² This intuition was verified by some of our informants who participated in the survey: many of them intuited that (9) can be judged fine if uttered as a clarification or echo question. Notably, however, they added that such contextualization or accommodation would still not salvage (5b).

denoting expression (McNally 1992, 1998; cf. Francez to appear). For this reason and others, some authors have explicitly treated it as a predicate nominal (e.g., Williams 1994, Hazout 2004).

Second, there is a mismatch between the syntax and semantics of *there*. Syntactically, it sort of behaves like a predicate: for example, when embedded under ‘believe’-type propositional attitude verbs, it displays an analogous behavior to typical predicative nominals that occur in subject position (e.g., Moro 1997, Den Dikken 2006). Semantically, however, it ‘feels’ like the stage topic (Erteshik-Shir 2005) or the spatio-temporal entity that the sentence seems to describe (Carlson 1977, McNally 1992, Blutner 1993, Borschev and Partee 2001, cf. Francez to appear). This intuition has led some authors to treat it even as the ‘true’ subject of the sentence (e.g., Williams 1984, Hazout 2006, Hartmann 2008).

Third, as aforementioned, *there*-BE-existentials instantiate thetic judgments and, as such, they are concerned with describing some spatio-temporal entity by presenting a hearer-new situation in its entirety (Kuroda 1972, Sasse 1987, McNally 1992, Basilico 2003, Hartmann 2008 and references therein).

Ideally, a full-blown analysis of *there*-existentials would take all these issues into account. Given the limited space of this paper, however, we will focus mainly on the paradoxical behavior of *there* and the theticity of the construction here. Below we first build the VP structure of a *there*-BE-existential with a participial coda and then sketch the rest of the structure.

3.1. The VP Structure

In building the VP structure, we want to capitalize on Borschev and Partee’s (2001, henceforth B&P) treatment of BE. B&P claim that the BE that occurs in *there*-existentials takes two arguments, namely, a thing and a location, as shown in the following argument structure:

- (10) BE (THING, LOCATION)

They further claim that between the two arguments, what surfaces as the syntactic subject is determined by the categorical vs. thetic judgmental nature of the sentence. In a categorical statement, THING occurs as the surface subject; in a thetic statement, LOCATION occurs as the subject. If we accept that *there*-BE-existentials indeed instantiate thetic statements, then we can draw a parallel between LOCATION and THING in B&P’s terminology and the spatio-temporal argument and the entity argument in our terminology, i.e., the individual or eventuality whose existence is asserted by a *there*-BE-existential.

Given this parallel, we hypothesize that in the syntax of the construction, BE forms a VP of its own and, between the two arguments, it selects for the location argument first (cf. Hazout 2004, Hartmann 2008). This idea is based on the intuition that a location constitutes a more ‘innermost’ complement than a typical nominal in Larsonian shell structure. Since *there* can be treated as representing a location, we can posit that it occurs as the first argument of BE. But given its predicative syntactic

behavior mentioned above, we suggest that it enters into the enumeration without the definite and referential ‘feel’ to it; such features are acquired later, as we argue below.

Concerning the second argument of BE, we claim that it can be either a NP or a SC, and the choice between the two is determined by the discourse-function of the sentence: when the sentence introduces a new discourse referent and hence receives an individual-central reading, a NP is selected and a reduced RC can occur inside it if there is any. If the sentence describes a hearer-new situation in the sense of Ward and Birner (1995), thereby receiving a situation-central reading in our terminology, then the verb may select for a SC which consists of a NP and a participial coda.³

Taken together, this set of hypotheses yields (11) as the VP structures of (1a) that match its interpretations. Note that we treat the PP-coda *at the party* as a frame adverbial that occurs outside VP, so put it inside parentheses here.

(11) a. The VP structure of (1a) on an individual-central reading

[_{VP} [_{NP} [people] [_{RC} studying Gothic]] v [_{v BE}] [_{PP} there]] ([_{PP} at the party])

b. The VP structure of (1a) on a situation-central reading

[_{VP} [_{SC} [_{NP} people] [_{VP} studying Gothic]] v [_{v BE}] [_{PP} there]] ([_{PP} at the party])

3.2. The Structure beyond VP

In mapping out the structure beyond VP, we assume with Hazout (2004) and Hartmann (2008) that it contains a Predicate Phrase (PrP) in the sense of Bowers (1993) and [Spec, PrP] is where surface subjects are manufactured. We make several important departures from these works, however. This move is made chiefly to capture the behavior of *there* and the theticity of the construction.

First, we posit that a phonologically null element always occupies [Spec, PrP] and determines what gets to be the surface subject. More concretely, in the case of the canonical copular BE construction, this null argument is an individual-denoting expression (I for short); in the case of *there*-BE-existentials, it is a spatio-temporal or event-denoting expression (E for short) (cf. Basilico 2003).⁴ This proposal capitalizes on the consensus reached among semanticists that *there*-existentials are descriptions of an (implicit) spatio-temporal entity, which is comparable to a Kratzerian event argument (see works cited above, in particular Erteshik-Shir 2005).

Second, we suppose that the VP headed by BE, i.e., one of the structures given in (11), occurs as

³ Note that not every sentence receiving a situation-central reading may contain a SC. A situation-central reading can also come about when the pivot NP is an eventive nominal or a nominalized expression, as in *There was a riot*.

⁴ This null event argument is, in spirit, not so different from the null pronominal event argument Basilico (2003) posits in the topic position of various small clause structures in English.

complement to the phonologically null head of the PrP. We envision that this complement status makes the VP interpreted as a description of the null event argument posited at [Spec, PrP], thereby capturing our intuition that a *there*-BE-existential describes a situation described by the VP in its entirety—that is, without partitioning it into a Topic/Comment (or Theme/Rheme) structure, although such partitioning is done at the sentential level, with *there* representing the topic of the sentence.

Finally, we suggest that *there* undergoes Predicate Raising in the spirit of Moro (1997): it moves from its base-position inside VP to [Spec, TP]. Unlike Moro, however, we hypothesize that it stops over at [Spec, PrP], picking up the semantic features of the null event argument. This stop-over makes an indefinite PP *there* become a definite and more nominal-like expression. Consequently, it can be construed as denoting the spatio-temporal entity of which the sentence predicates something. If valid, this idea will not only give us a novel motivation for Predicate Raising but also help answer the long-standing question of why *there* behaves like a predicate in its syntax but like a stage topic in its semantics.

The proposal we just put forward is schematically depicted in (12) for sentence (1a).

(12) a. The structure of (1a) on an individual-central reading

$$[\text{TP} [\text{there}] \text{T}[\text{T} [+ \text{pst}]] [\text{PrP}[\text{NP} [\text{there} + \text{E}] \text{Pr'}[\text{Pr} \emptyset] [\text{VP}[\text{NP} \text{people studying Gothic}] \text{v}[\text{v BE}] [\text{there}]]]] ([\text{PP} \text{at the party}])$$

b. The structure of (1a) on a situation-central reading

$$[\text{TP} [\text{there}] \text{T}[\text{T} [+ \text{pst}]] [\text{PrP}[\text{NP} [\text{there} + \text{E}] \text{Pr'}[\text{Pr} \emptyset] [\text{VP}[\text{SC} \text{people studying Gothic}] \text{v}[\text{v BE}] [\text{there}]]]] ([\text{PP} \text{at the party}])$$

With this relatively concrete syntactic analysis put in place, we turn now to discussing some of its benefits, in particular adopting a SC analysis over a depictive adjunct analysis.

4. Benefits of the Proposed Analysis

There are several benefits for adopting the proposed analysis. One has to do with the fact that it assigns semantic import *there*. Although this idea goes against the prevailing view that *there* is an expletive that is phonologically inserted to satisfy the Extended Projection Principle (EPP) (e.g., Chomsky 1995, Lasnik 1995), it allows for a rather insightful analysis of the copula and the postcopular material. First, it lets the combination of BE and the relevant postcopular material construed as ascribing a property to the entity denoted by *there*. Second, it enables us to treat a PP coda, e.g., *at the party* in (1a), as the spell out of the descriptive content of *there*.⁵ This in turn explains why some *there*-existentials sound better when a PP

⁵ Some PP codas may occur as part of the pivot NP, so do not necessarily bear a relation to the denotation of *there*. In general, the more embedded a PP is, the more unlikely it is linked to *there*.

coda is added, as we have seen in (9).

Next, the proposed analysis improves upon the extant literature by bringing the syntax and the semantics of *there*-existentials with participials more in line with each other. Under this analysis, sentences like (1a) and (1b) can receive two similar interpretations, namely, individual-central and situation-central readings and, importantly, they go hand in hand with equally similar syntactic structures. To articulate the compositional interpretive process a bit more within the confines of this paper, it won't be too unreasonable that the postcopular material (modulo some PP codas) denotes a set of things—more concretely, a set of individuals when analyzed as a NP⁶ and a set of eventualities when analyzed as a SC. On this assumption, situation-central readings can be obtained just as readily as individual-central ones.

To illustrate, when the postcopular material in (1a) is analyzed a SC comprised of the pivot NP and the participle, it gets interpreted as denoting a set of eventualities of people studying Gothic. This denotation combines with the denotation of BE and, together, they describe the entity denoted by *there* in its surface position. Since the semantic core of a sentential predicate denotes a set of eventualities and, furthermore, eventualities can be considered a special type of situations (Kratzer 1989), the sentence ends up receiving a situation-central interpretation, more specifically, an assertion that for some spatio-temporal location, the existence of an instantiation of a situation in the denotation of the SC holds true. An essentially same compositional process yields an individual-central reading except that this time the postcopular material will be assigned a NP structure and thus the sentence ends up being construed as asserting that the existence of an instantiation of an individual in the denotation of that NP holds true for some spatio-temporal location.

It is worth noting at this juncture that the proposed SC analysis has no problem dealing with sentences like (8b): under the depictive adjunct analysis, the nominal modifier *live* and the post-nominal participle *roasted* create a semantic clash, because no live pig can exist in a roasted state. When *roasted* is treated as a predicate inside a SC, as is done here, such a semantic clash doesn't arise: the postcopular material *a live pig roasted* will now denote a set of situations in which a pig that was alive at some time t_1 undergoes roasting and becomes no longer alive after the culmination of the event, which is later than t_1 .

Another notable advantage of the proposed analysis is that it is not subject to the control problem that plagues the depictive adjunct analysis: there is no PRO to begin with. The Theta Criterion is also met because every theta-role inherently available in the structure gets assigned to just one syntactic component without violating any other principle of grammar. The theta role the participle comes with goes to its NP sister. Things also proceed straightforwardly with regard to the theta-role licensing by the copula. The locative argument of the verb gets saturated by *there* and the thing argument gets saturated by the denotation of the SC that is comprised of the NP and the participle.

⁶ Postcopular material with a NP structure may in fact denote properties (McNally 1992) or something else (see, e.g., Hartmann 2008, Francez to appear). But its precise denotation does not affect the main thrust of the present analysis.

Our analysis of *there*-existentials with participials is also compatible with the near-non-existence of argument vs. adjunct asymmetries found in extraction from the participial coda. When a *there*-existential receives an individual-central reading, nothing should be permitted to move across the pivot NP since, being a complex NP, it forms an island (Ross 1967). When the sentence receives a situation-central reading, material inside the participial coda can in principle be extracted, irrespective of its argument vs. adjunct status. The extraction should not impinge on pragmatic constraints, however, given the discourse function of the entire sentence and the question at issue. This immediately accounts for why speakers do not see sharp contrasts between cases involving argument-extraction and those involving adjunct-extraction such as (4b) vs. (5b): (4b) and (5b) are predicted to be judged equally bad because there is no reason to employ the *there*-existential construction to convey the intended message or to perform the intended speech act.

Relatedly, we now have a way to explain why a minimal amendment to a sentence may increase its grammaticality—that is, why there is a decisive difference between (5b) and (9), for example, although the only notable difference between them is the presence vs. absence of the presumably ‘optional’ PP-coda in *the car accident*. On our analysis, when a sentence receives a situation-central reading, anything can in principle be *wh*-moved from the participial but the resulting structure has to be well-suited to convey the information sought by the speaker. In light of this, (5b) is judged better than (9) because it does a better job of satisfying the pragmatic constraint as well as the syntactic one.

Given this probing, the verdict we reach is that analyzing the participial coda as the predicate inside a SC can do everything the competing depictive analysis can and much more. It is therefore a better line to pursue in capturing situation-central readings expressed by *there*-existentials with participials.

5. Conclusion

We have sought to offer an analysis that ensures a greater correspondence between the syntax and the semantics of *there*-BE-existentials with participial codas in view of the two-way ambiguity observed by Milsark (1974). A main thesis has been that individual-central readings arise when the pivot NP and the participial form a bare NP structure and situation-central readings arise when they form a SC. Another important thesis has been that *there* starts out as a predicative element but becomes a stage topic in the course of derivation, due essentially to the presence of a null event argument in [Spec, PrP] reflecting the theticity of the construction. Lastly, we have seen that extractability is not a purely syntactic phenomenon, contra the prevailing assumption: it is also affected in part by discourse pragmatic factors.

References

- Basilico, D. 2003. The topic of small clause. *Linguistics Inquiry*, 34: 1-35.

- Blutner, R. 1993. Dynamic generalized quantifiers and existential sentences in natural languages. *Journal of Semantics*, 10: 33-64.
- Borschev, V. and Partee, B. H. 2001. The Russian genitive of negation in existentials sentences: the role of theme-rheme structure reconsidered. In E. Hajicova, P. Sgall, J. Hana, and T. Hoskovec, eds., *Travaux du cercle linguistique de Prague*, v. 4, 185-250. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Bowers, J. 1993. The syntax of predication. *Linguistic Inquiry*, 24: 591-656.
- Carlson, G. N. 1977. Amount relatives. *Language*, 53: 520-542.
- Cinque, G. 1990. *Types of A-bar Dependencies*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Chomsky, N. 1995. *The Minimalist Program*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Erteschik-Shir, N. 2005. *Information Structure: The Syntax-Discourse Interface*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Francez, I. To appear. Existentials, predication and modification. *Linguistics and Philosophy*.
- Hartmann, J. M. 2008. Expletives in Existentials: English *there* and German *da*. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Tilburg.
- Hazout, I. 2004. The syntax of existential constructions. *Linguistic Inquiry*, 35:393-430.
- Jenkins, L. 1975. *The English existential*. Tübingen: Niemeyer.
- Kratzer, A. 1989. An Investigation of the Lumps of Thought. *Linguistics and Philosophy*, 12: 607-653.
- Kuroda, S. 1972. The categorical and the thetic judgment. *Foundations of Language*, 9:153-185.
- Ladusaw, W. A. 1994. Thetic and categorical, stage and individual, weak and strong. In M. Harvey and L. Santelmann, eds., *Proceedings of the Semantics and Linguistic Theory IV*, 220-229, Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Proceeding Project.
- Lasnik, H. 1995. Case and expletives revisited: On greed and other human failings. *Linguistic Inquiry*, 26: 615-633.
- McNally, L. 1997. *An Interpretation for the English Existential Construction*. New York: Garland (1992 Ph.D. Dissertation, UC-Santa Cruz).
- Milsark, G. 1974. Existential sentences in English. Ph.D. Dissertation, MIT.
- Moro, A. 1997. *The Raising of Predicates: Predicative Noun Phrases and the Theory of Clause Structure*. Cambridge, UK: The Cambridge University Press
- Ross, J. R. 1967. Constraints on variables in syntax. Ph.D. Dissertation, MIT.
- Safir, K. 1982. Syntactic chains and the definiteness effect. Ph.D. Dissertation, MIT.
- Sasse, H.-J. 1987. The thetic/categorical distinction revisited. *Linguistics*, 25: 511-580.
- Stowell, T. 1978. What was there before *there* was there? In D. Farkas, W. M. Jacobsen, and K. W. Todrys, eds., *Proceedings of the Chicago Linguistic Society* 14, 458-471.
- Ward, G. and Birner, B. 1995. Definiteness and the English existential. *Language*, 71:722-742.
- Williams, E. 1984. *There*-insertion. *Linguistic Inquiry*, 15:131-153.

Williams, E. 1994. *Thematic Structure in Syntax*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.