Empirical Approaches to Language Typology

27

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Romance Objects

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From subject to object and from object to subject: (de)personalization, floating and reanalysis in presentative verbs

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1. Between subject and object

Subjects and objects seem to constitute two distinct spheres. Indeed the direct object is defined by its opposition to the subject, especially in sentences which are highly transitive, viz: [1]

(1)   It. *il contadino*$_S$ *batte il cavallo*$_{DO}$
            'The farmer hits the horse'

Even among advocates of the valency (or "actantial") perspective, there seems to be now general agreement that the subject is an actant of the verb, although a very particular one, quite distinct from other actants (Lazard 1994a: 100–103; 1998: 19–21). While variational or diachronic passages or exchanges may take place between categories of different actants, they seem to occur above all within the object sphere, as in these three pairs of examples (2a/b), (3a/b) and (4a/b):

(2)   a. Engl.   *Harry loaded hay*$_{DO}$ *onto the truck*$_{Loc}$
        b. Engl.   *Harry loaded the truck*$_{DO}$ *with hay*$_{OBL}$

(3)   a. Fr.   *parler de problèmes*$_{OBL}$ *politiques*
                     'to speak of political problems'
        b. Fr.   *parler politique*$_C$ [2]
                     'id.'

(4)   a. Germ.   *diese Fehlreaktion kostete ihn*$_{DO2}$ *das Leben*$_{DO1}$
'This bad reaction cost him his life'

    b. Germ.   *diese Fehlreaktion kostete ihm*$_{IO}$ *das Leben*$_{DO1}$[3]
'id.'

At the same time, exchanges between subject and object in the same verb seem quite uncharacteristic. Of course an object can always be turned into a subject, or vice versa, by means of such grammatical mechanisms as the passive, causativization or reflexivization.[4] However, this is not what I am concerned with here. I am interested in processes of diachronic exchange and floating between subject and object in the same verb that are not due to regular mechanisms.

Let us take a particularly clear case of diachronic exchange between subjects and objects:

(5)   a. OFr.   ... *si   en   falloient   li   plusor*$_S$
... and   thereof   miss-IMPF-3PL   DEF   most-CS
'... and most of them were missing' (Graal: 149)

    b. Mod.   *il   nous   faut*
    Fr.   it   us   be-necessary-PRES-3SG
de l'argent$_{DO}$
MASS   money
'We need money'

In Old French, the verb *falir/faloir*, meaning 'lack', was accompanied by a subject actant expressing what was missing (5a). Whereas in modern French *falloir*, which has come to mean 'need, be necessary', is accompanied by a direct object which expresses the entity that is necessary (5b).

2. Levels of sentence structure and the impersonal

Before taking a closer look at these processes, I have to clarify some premises of my analysis. I shall adopt the three-level approach to sentence structure that has been proposed and applied in many syntactic and typological studies over the last three decades (Daneš 1964; Halliday 1985; Dik 1979; Lazard 1981; Koch 1981; Feuillet 1996). We can identify:

(6)

A **syntactic** level comprising the syntactic valency of verbs (actantial functions like S, DO, IO etc.)
A **propositional** level comprising the semantic valency of verbs (participant roles, like AGENT, PATIENT, EXPERIENCER etc.)
An **informational** level comprising theme-rheme-structure (thematicity and rhematicity)

Since the verb, especially through its valency, constitutes a sort of fulcrum between the whole sentence and the single lexeme, the propositional and informational levels affect not merely the semantics of the sentence, but also the conceptual meaning of the verb. The verb is a part of discourse which is particularly suited to verbalising frames[5] which correspond to our conceptualization and/or perception of states of things (Waltereit 1998). We can represent the conceptual structure of a frame F_i as follows:
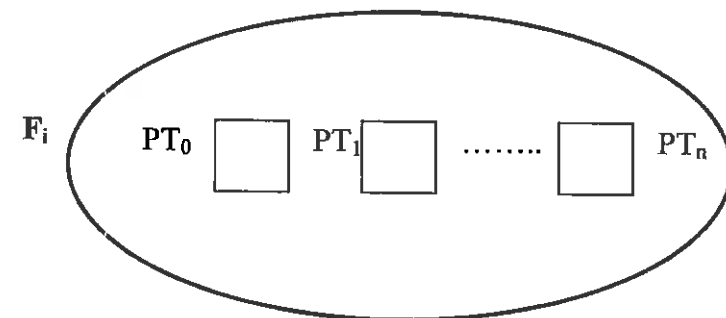

Figure 1. Conceptual structure of a frame and its participants

The frame F_i, conceptualizing a state of affairs SA_i, intrinsically contains a certain number of participants $PT_1 ... PT_n$. The Italian verb *dare*, for

example, expresses a conceptual frame encompassing three more or less salient participants:

(7)   It. *Giovanni₁ dà una mela₂ al ragazzo₃*
       'John gives an apple to the boy'

But a frame can also do without any participant, as in the example (8):

(8)   a. It. *piove*
              rain-PRES-3SG
              'It rains'

Since no other element can take the place of the formal subject marker *-e*, this does not constitute the "substituent" of a class of elements designating participants (Creissels 1991: 52). Hence this formal marker does not correspond to a participant PT, and the frame expressed in (8a) does not in fact contain a participant. In other languages the state of affairs SA_i, conceptualized and expressed in (8a), can actually be conceptualized differently, in terms of a frame F_i containing a participant PT, syntactically realized, e.g. as subject actant (Lambert 1998: 310; Chang 1994: 37). See examples (8b) and (8c) from Russian and Chinese:

(8) b. Russ.   *idet*   *dožd'*
                go-PRES-3SG   rain
                'It rains'

    c. Chin.   *tiān lĕng le*   /*tiānqì lĕng le*
                sky   cool-off FINAL /weather cool-off FINAL
                'It is cold'

We describe as 'impersonal' a verb which has either no subject actant or else one which is "empty" – i.e. the verb is accompanied by a subject marker necessarily in the third person singular corresponding to no participant PT_n, as in the example (8a).[6] In this sense, even a bi-actantial verb like Fr. *falloir* in (5b) can be considered impersonal: *de l'argent* is a direct object, *nous* an indirect object, while *il* constitutes an "empty" subject marker.

Now we shall look at the typical cases in which a subject is transformed diachronically into an object, and vice versa. All these processes occur around the impersonal, as we have defined it.

3. It. c'è

We shall start from cases in which the subject is called into question. Typically these involve a verb expressing the existence (or non-existence), appearance and/or introduction into the discourse of an entity, as in (9a):

(9) a. It.   *c'   erano   dei   contadini₅*
            there be-IMPF-3PL   INDEF   farmer-MASC-PL
            'There were farmers'

In what follows, I shall refer to cases like (9a) as featuring a 'presentative verb'. We can represent the frame which corresponds to a presentative verb as in Fig. 2:
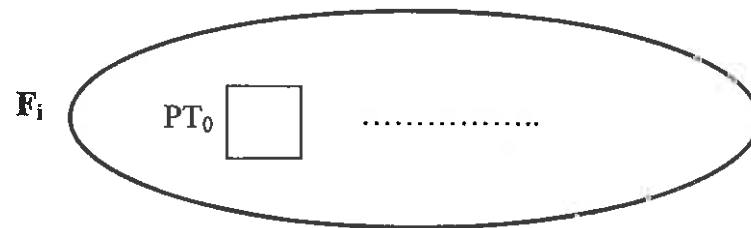

Figure 2. Structure of a "presentative" frame

Given the semantics of presentative verbs, the sole actant *dei contadini* expressing the PT_0 in (9a) is necessarily a rhematic subject.[7] As a rule the subject of Italian verbs is placed before the verb in an unmarked case – i.e. when it corresponds to the unmarked theme of a sentence – but the universal tendency to rhematize the subjects of presentative verbs causes the subject to be moved to after the verb. Thus the preceding example (9a) reflects an unmarked structure for the group of presentative verbs, and a marked structure with respect to the totality of grammatical subjects in Italian. This tension often gives rise to syntactic floating in the position of

the sole actant. Thus in some oral varieties of Italian you find, together with (9a), the following construct (Berruto (1985: 128); Koch and Oesterreicher (1990: 188)):

(9) b. It. *c'*   *era*   *dei*   *contadini₂*
there   be-IMPF-3SG   INDEF   farmer-MASC-PL
'There were farmers'

With a verb of EXISTENCE, the same construct can be found in oral varieties of English ((10b); see Bolinger 1977: 116; Lazard 1994b: 12; Faarlund 1998: 191 n. 8):

(10) a. Engl.   *there are lions_S in Africa*
b. Engl.   *there is lions₂ in Africa*

The typological frequency of this phenomenon has been described by Gilbert Lazard (1994b), who calls the actant of indeterminate status "actant H". In the case of Italian, uncertainty derives first of all from the lack of a specific morpheme which would make it possible to distinguish between subject and direct object in grammatical terms. Thus the formal distinction between these two functions comes down to indicators of agreement and serialization. It is likely that the observable uncertainty is due to interference with a syntactic structure such as (9c):

(9) c. It. *c'*   *era*   *un*   *contadino*
there   be-IMPF-3SG   INDEF   farmer-MASC-SG
'There was a farmer'

In what is a special case, but nonetheless frequent, the singular form of the verb leaves the question of agreement in abeyance, and in view of the post-verbal position of the sole actant one could – in theory – ascribe to it the status of direct object. But while, from the point of view of agreement and position of the sole actant, we are obviously not dealing in (9b) with a prototypical subject, it is not a prototypical direct object either, as the criterion of pronominalization makes clear. Pronominalization with *ne* (9d) is of no help, since this pronoun can substitute both direct objects (11) and rhematic and post-verbal subjects (9e). But the result is clearly negative when we have to pronominalize the sole actant of *c'è* with the series *lo, la* etc. (9f).[8]

(9) d. It. *c'era*   *dei contadini*   ⇒ *Ce n'era*
e. It. *c'erano*   *dei contadini*   ⇒ *Ce n'erano*
f. It. *c'era*   *i contadini*   ⇒ **Non ce li era*
there be-IMPF-3SG   DEF farmer-MASC-PL
'There were the farmers'

(11) It. *Cercava*   *dei contadini*   ⇒ *Ne cercava*
search-IMPF-3SG   INDEF farmer-MASC-PL
'He was searching for farmers'

In conclusion, the typological survey given by Lazard and this specific case study show that the diachronic frequency of "actant H" constitutes a *continuum* between prototypical subject actants and prototypical object actants.[9] Moreover, in (9b) *c'è* begins to become impersonal in the sense described in paragraph 2.; in other words, we recognize an incipient process of 'de-personalization' (see Koch (1994b: 10)). However, it must be noted that the "actant H" of *c'è* is not yet a prototypical direct object.

4. Engl. there is and Fr. falir/falloir

One might ask whether the subject actant of a presentative verb can be transformed – thanks to the features of the "actant H" – into a prototypical direct object actant.[10]

The example from English (10a/b) seems to correspond to this type of evolution. In this case, in addition to the lack of agreement, one finds in certain oral varieties of English the participant PT_0 expressed using an oblique form of the pronoun (10c). "[...] il ne semble pas déraisonnable de considérer ce terme comme un objet [...]" [it does not seem unreasonable to consider this term as an object [...]] (Lazard 1994b: 13–14). This gives rise to the analysis (10d):

(10) c. Engl.   *there's him_DO – and there's you_DO and me_DO* (Bolinger 1977: 116)
d. Engl.   *there is lions_DO in Africa*

We have already seen another example of de-personalization due to the transformation of subject into object in example (5a/b). *Li plusor* in (5a) is a form of the (plural) *cas sujet* in Old French, in agreement with the verbal form *falloient* (the pre- or post-verbal position of the actant has no bearing

on the function in Old French). Whereas *de l'argent* in (5b) clearly functions as direct object, as shown by the loss of agreement, the post-verbal position (significant in Modern French) and above all substitution of the interrogative pronoun *qu'est-ce que ?* (5c) (Tobler 1902: 214; Damourette and Pichon 1930–71: IV, 503–511; Koch 1995: 130):

(5)   c. Mod.Fr.   `qu'est-ce qu' il nous    faut?`
                    what-ACC   it   us   be-necessary-PRES-
                    3SG
                    'What do we need?'

   →   *il nous faut*   *de l'argent*
                    it us be-necessary-PRES-3SG   MASS money
                    'We need money'

Here we have a case of de-personalization performed with a presentative verb which originally expressed the participant PT_0 as subject (Koch 1994b: 10). In terms of the corresponding frame F_i (which we could represent as in Fig. 2), the de-personalization of *falloir* does not imply any change in structure of the participants in the frame. Leaving aside the participant expressed by the indirect object (*nous* in (5b) and (5c): see n. 15), which is optional and not involved in the syntactic change, we can say that there must at least be a participant PT_0, which will be rhematic in an unmarked case. The only element that changes in this process of de-personalization is the syntactic realization of the participant PT_0 (syntactic level in Fig.1). From being an actantial function of the subject, compatible in Old French with the post-verbal position in the rhematic subject of a presentative verb, this becomes an actantial function of the direct object, which is invariably a post-verbal and prototypically rhematic actant in Modern French:[11]

(12)   rhematic S > rhematic DO

To adopt and adapt a term of Lucien Tesnière, we can call this process a 'diachronic syntactic metataxis' with respect to the verbal valency and actants.[12] The constant element in this change is, in fact, the informational (rhematic) value of the actant expressed by PT_0, and this guarantees the semantic continuity of the construct.
At the same time the change in the verb Fr. *falir/falloir* contains another element of continuity, in this case a formal one. The change comes about –

at least potentially – on the basis of an identical syntactic-morphological and phonic surface. We have seen that the syntactic-functional floating observable in the Italian verb *esserci* (9a/b) probably derives from an uncertain syntactic structure like (9c). In the case of Old Fr. *falir*, too, we find uncertain structures of this type:

(13)   a. OFr.   *il   ne   me   faut   rien*_{S>H}
                  it   not   to-me   miss-PRES-3SG thing
                  'I have got everything I want'

Since *rien* is in the singular, the problem of agreement is left in abeyance – all the more so since this form is also ambiguous from the point of view of the case (*cas sujet/cas régime*) marking the opposition between subject and direct object. Moreover, the presence of a formal element with the value of subject (pronoun) *il* cannot fail to call into question the subject status of *rien*. Thus already in Old French we can recognise an incipient de-personalization of *falir* and floating in the syntactic realization of the participant PT_0 towards the zone of the "actant H".

As I have shown elsewhere (Koch in press b), three factors come into play at this point that are observable in the evolution of Old French into Modern French:

(i) a morphological factor of general significance: bi-casual declension disappears definitively at the very end of the Old French period. The lack of a morphological distinction between subject and direct object, which was fortuitous in (13a), becomes systematic.

(ii) a syntactic factor of general significance: in Modern French the post-verbal position of the direct object becomes standard. The post-positioning of an element such as *rien* in (13a), originally due merely to its rhematic value, suggests an interpretation as direct object.

(iii) a specific lexical factor: already in Old French the concept expressed by *falir*, i.e. LACK, moves towards NEED in a metonymic change.

On the basis of factors (i) and (ii) we witness a genuine reanalysis of the original subject of *falir/falloir* as direct object in Modern French (see also (5c)):

(13) b. Mod.Fr.   *il   ne   me   faut*   *rien*$_D$
                    It   not   to-me be-necessary-PRES -3SG   nothing
                    'I do not need anything'

With respect to (13a/b), we can speak of a 'reanalysis' in the syntactic sense of the term – "change in the structure of an expression or class of expressions that does not involve any immediate or intrinsic modification of its surface manifestation" (Langacker 1977: 58) – if we are prepared to accept that this concept of 'reanalysis' covers not just rebracketing but also syntactic re-categorizations, as for example metataxes of the S > DO type (see Lang and Neumann-Holzschuh (1999b: 6); Detges (2001: cap. 7)).

However, Waltereit and Detges have shown that the reanalysis of a sequence of morphemes, as a process initiated by the hearer, is not a merely formal process:[13]

(a) In terms of a "principle of reference", the reanalysis of a sequence, such as (13a/b), presupposes not only a formal continuity, but also a referential identity in the sense that the sequence must remain compatible, in spite of the reanalysis, with the referent in the discourse. In fact the hearer can refer the sequence (13a/b) to the same extra-linguistic state of affairs both with *rien* as subject and with *rien* as direct object.

(b) In terms of a "principle of transparency", the receiver assigns to the sequence in question a new formal analysis motivated by a conceptual interpretation corresponding either to functional regularities of the language in question or to a more general principle. Often – but not always – reanalysis occurs together with a metonymic semantic shift.

In terms of point (b), the case of (13a/b) does in fact represent an example of a metonymic shift LACK → NEED (see above, factor (iii)). This metonymy concerns a conceptual aspect that is independent of the structure of the participants in the frame, which we can represent as in Fig. 3a and 3b:[14]

Every metonymic shift involves a figure–ground effect with respect to a conceptual frame (see Blank 1997: 232–243; Koch 1999a; 2001). In the case of the concept LACK ((13a) = Fig. 3a) a real aspect R, the ABSENCE of PT$_0$, is the figure and a virtual aspect V, the idea of PRESENCE of PT$_0$, is the ground, while in the case of NEED ((13b) = Fig. 3b) V becomes the figure and R the ground. An inter-linguistic comparison then shows that it

is more natural to realize the participant PT$_0$ – virtual – as rhematic direct object than as subject (for more details see Koch, in press b). Thus the metonymic shift in the verb *falir/falloir* seems to have favoured the reanalysis rhematic S > rhematic DO (12) in the sequence (13a/b), which remains unaltered, according to the "principle of reference" (a), on its surface.
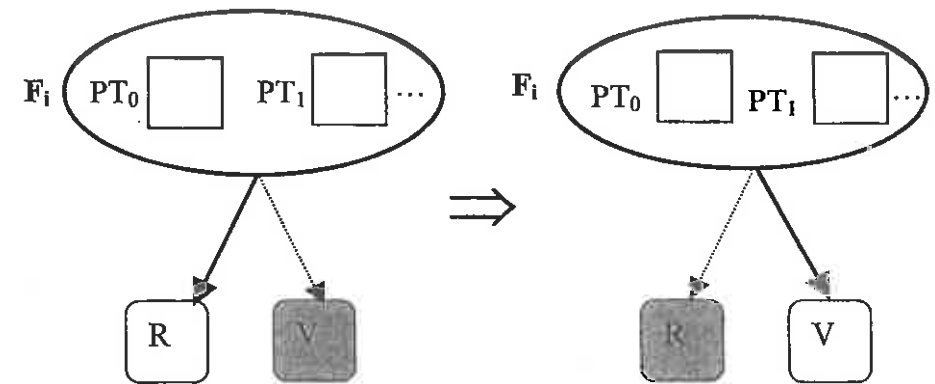

Figure 3a. Conceptual structure of LACK (corresponding to (13a))

Figure 3b. Conceptual structure of NEED (corresponding to (13b))

If the analysis of Lazard (1994b) is correct, the example of English (10d) does indeed involve a complete de-personalizing reanalysis S > DO, but in this case without any metonymic shift: both in (10a) and in (10b/d) the verb expresses the concept of EXISTENCE. However, this reanalysis obeys the "principle of transparency" (b), since in modern English a post-verbal noun phrase lacking a preposition is very probably a direct object.

We should recall that although It. *c'è* (9b) floats towards the "actant H", this does not result in a reanalysis. Similar syntactic floating can be observed in the Old Fr. *falir*, where however floating corresponds to a preliminary phase, albeit a favourable one,[15] in the reanalysis S > DO. The reanalysis becomes definitive as a sudden, discontinuous process initiated by the metonymic shift – equally discontinuous – in the verb.

5. Sp. hay, Cat. hi ha, Port. há et al.

It is natural to wonder whether this de-personalization is necessarily a one-way process, for we do in fact observe shifts in the opposite direction in various Romance languages.

A particularly striking instance can be found in certain diatopic or oral varieties (in the broadest sense) of the Ibero-Romance languages[16] (Rosario 1979: 52; Real Academia Española 1989: Wesch 1994: 326; Brauer-Figueiredo 1999: 404; Koch/Oesterreicher 1990: 223; Koch 1994b: 10; 1995: 129):[17]

(14) a. Sp.   *habia*   *muchos soldados*$_{DO}$
              be-there-IMPF-3SG   many soldier-MASC-PL
              'There were many soldiers'
       b. Sp. *habian*   *muchos soldados*$_{S}$
              be-there-IMPF-3PL   many soldier-MASC-PL
              'id.'

(15) a. Cat. *a casa*   *hi*   *havia*   *els*   *llibres*$_{DO}$
              at house   there   be-IMPF-3SG   DEF   book-PL
              del   *meu*   *cosí*
              of-DEF   my   cousin
              'At home, there were the books of my cousin'
       b. Cat. *a casa*   *hi*   *havien*   *els*   *llibres*$_{S}$
              at house   there   be-IMPF-3PL   DEF   book-PL
              del   *meu*   *cosí*
              of-DEF   my   cousin
              'id.'

(16) a. Port. *vai*   *havendo*   *cada*   *vez*
              go-PRES-3SG   be-there-GER   every time
              menos   *carros*$_{DO}$
              less   car-MASC-PL
              'There are going to be less and less cars'
       b. Port. *vão*   *havendo*   *cada*   *vez*
              go-PRES-3PL   be-there-GER   every time
              menos   *carros*$_{S}$
              less   car-MASC-PL
              'id.'

Here too we can apply the structure represented in Fig. 2: it is essential to have at least one participant PT_0, which will be rhematic in an unmarked case. The only change needed is the syntactic realization of the participant PT_0. In actual fact this type of syntactic metataxis is the opposite of cases (9) and (10) because the direct object which expresses the participant PT_0 of a verb of EXISTENCE/LOCALIZATION – compatible with post-positioning as object and also as rhematic (14a, 15a, 16a) – becomes the subject, compatible with the post-positioning as rhematic subject of a presentative verb (14b, 15b, 16b):

(17)   rhematic DO > rhematic S

Unlike case (9) at least, in (14b, 15b, 16b) we can recognize not only floating, rhematic DO → rhematic H, but also an apparently genuine syntactic reanalysis of the subject as direct object, and hence a complete personalization. Significantly, we find perfect congruence even in a periphrastic and rather marginal form such as Port. *vão havendo* (16b), or an example of type (18) occurring in a corpus of spontaneous spoken Spanish from Caracas (Rosenblat 1979: 313):

(18) Sp.   *"¿No*   *hay*   *presiones*
              not   exist-PRES-3SG   pressure-PL
              ni   *nada*   *de*   *eso?"*
              nor   nothing   of   this
              "De   *ningun*   *tipo"*
              of   no   type
              'Is there no pressure nor anything like that? – None at all'
       – *"¿Antes*   *habian?"*   – *"Tampoco"*
              before   exist-IMPF-3PL   neither
              – 'Before, there was? – Neither'

Irrespective of the fact that in this variety of Spanish the impersonal use of *haber* (*hay* with direct object *presiones*) still coexists with the personal use (*habian*), the latter form demonstrates a fairly thorough personalization of the verb, which does not rule out a highly thematic participant PT_0 (anaphoric reiteration of *presiones* by means of the personal desinence of *habian*).[18]

As reanalysis, these processes of personalization obey the "principle of transparency" (3.2., (b); see Detges 2001: 417). In fact the type of

unmarked V-S sentence with presentative verb and rhematic subject (see 3.1.) is well rooted in the Ibero-Romance languages. However, the verbs Sp. *haber*/Cat. *haver*/Port. *haver* are conditioned by their etymological provenance, which requires the realization of the participant PT_0 as direct object (see n. 18). Thus it seems only natural to reanalyse, according to formula (17), sentences of the type (14c), lacking visible agreement, as the most prevalent occurrences of presentative sentences (14d), and go on to derive from type (14d) a plural structure such as (14b):

(14) c. Sp.   *había*   *un soldado*DO
           be-there-IMPF-3SG   INDEF soldier-MASC-SG
           'There was a soldier'

      d.Sp.   *había*   *un soldado*S
           be-there-IMPF-3SG   INDEF soldier-MASC-SG
           'id.'

Here we have a process of syntactic reanalysis in reverse with respect to the one exemplified in (13a/b) for Fr. *falir/falloir*: see (17) vs. (12). There is, however, a fundamental difference: in the case of Fr. *falir/falloir* the definitive reanalysis is linked to a lexical metonymy (LACK → NEED), while in the case of Sp. *haber* (and also Cat. *haver-hi* and Port. *haver*) there is no semantic-lexical shift. The concept expressed by these verbs (EXISTENCE/LOCALIZATION) remains unchanged.[19] It appears to be easier to reanalyse a verb of EXISTENCE/LOCALIZATION merely at the syntactic level, without any semantic change taking place.

A type of reanalysis which is quite similar to (14) can be observed, in oral and/or Latin American versions of Spanish, with the verb *hacer* in a meteorological context (Rosario 1979: 52; Real Academia Española 1989: 384; Koch/Oesterreicher 1990: 223).[20]

(19) a.Sp.   *hizo*   *grandes*   *heladas*DO
           make-PERF-3SG   great   frost-FEM-PL
           'There were crisp onsets of frost'

      b.Sp.   *hicieron*   *grandes*   *heladas*S
           make-PERF-3PL   great   frost-FEM-PL
           'id'

The meteorological verbs of the Romance languages Fr. *faire*, Sp. *hacer*, It. *fare* etc., accompanied by a substantive actant[21] resemble verbs of

EXISTENCE in their presentative nature. Their actant – which can only be rhematic when unmarked – expresses a participant PT_0 in the sense of Fig. 2. In this case too impersonal sentences are reanalysed according to formula (17), without visible agreement (19c), as occurrences of the personal type of presentative sentence (19d) deriving from type (19d) a plural structure like (19b):

(19) c.Sp.   *hizo*   *mucho*   *calor*DO
           make-PERF-3SG   much   heat-MASC-SG
           'It was very hot'

      d.Sp.   *hizo*   *mucho*   *calor*S
           make-PERF-3SG   much   heat-MASC-SG
           'id.'

The Spanish and Italian verbs expressing a clock's striking present another type of personalizing reanalysis associated with presentative sentences:

(20) a.Sp.   *da*   *las tres*DO
           give-PRES-3SG   DEF three
           'It is striking three o'clock'

      b.Sp.   *dan*   *las tres*S
           give-PRES-3PL   DEF three
           'id.'

(21) a.It.   *suona*   *le tre*DO
           sound-PRES-3SG   DEF three
           'It is striking three o'clock'

      b.It.   *suonano*   *le tre*S
           sound-PRES-3PL   DEF three
           'id.'

6. Germ. es gibt

We can perhaps also associate with examples (19)–(21), and more especially (14)–(16), a process observable in certain dialects of German, where the main verb of EXISTENCE *es gibt* shows floating in the syntactic realization of the actant (*viele Äpfel*) expressing PT_0 (see Paul 1968: 286; Brugmann 1917: 19, 26–27, 48 n. 2):

(22) a. Germ.   *es gibt*   *dies Jahr nicht*
                      it give-PRES-3SG   this   year   not
                      viele   *Äpfel*$_{DO}$
                      many   apple-PL
                      'There are not many apples this year'

     b. Germ.   *es geben*   *dies Jahr nicht*
                      it give-PRES-3PL   this   year   not
                      viele   *Äpfel*$_7$
                      many   apple-PL
                      'There are not many apples this year'

Since we are again dealing here with a verb of EXISTENCE, this process recalls the one observed with Ibero-Romance verbs of EXISTENCE (14)–(16). It is likely that in this case too the syntactic uncertainty derives from a syntactic structure such as (22c), where the singular form of the verb and the syncretism between nominative and accusative cases[22] of the noun leave the problem of agreement in abeyance:

(22) c. Germ.   *es gibt*   *dies Jahr nicht*
                      it give-PRES-3SG   this   year   not
                      genug   *Wasser*
                      enough   water-SG
                      'There is not enough water this year'

When it comes to details, however, the syntactic conformation of German is different from that of Ibero-Romance languages, because German is a "verb second" language (X-V-Y) which does not allow, in affirmative sentences, a bare V-S structure as occurs in Ibero-Romance languages. It is only thanks to the "dummy subject" *es* that presentative verbs can be inserted into an *es*-V-S sentence with rhematic post-verbal subject (23b), although this structure is in competition with an S-V sentence such as (23a), where the (rhematic) subject carries the main emphasis. Both in (23a) and in (23b) – and also in the plural (23c) – *Auto(s)* is a genuine subject (Lazard 1994b: 16).

(23) a. Germ.   *ein*   *Auto*$_S$ *kommt*
                      INDEF   car   come-PRES-3S
                      'There is a car coming'

     b. Germ.   *es*   *kommt*   *ein Auto*$_S$
                      DUMMMY   come-PRES-3SG   INDEF car
                      'id.'

     c. Germ.   *es*   *kommen*   *Autos*$_S$
                      DUMMMY   come-PRES-3PL   car-PL
                      'There are cars coming'

If in (22b) we had a complete reanalysis DO > S, we could assimilate the structure of (22c) to that of (23b), and extend it to the plural by analogy with (23c). In (22a/c), however, we have an "expletive *es*" which constitutes a "dummy" but obligatory subject actant, as emerges in (22d) and (22e):

(22) d. Germ.   *dies Jahr*   *gibt*   *es nicht*
                      this year   give-PRES-3SG   it not
                      viele   *Äpfel*   /
                      many   apple-PL   /
                      nicht   *genug*   *Wasser*$_{DO}$
                      not   enough   water-SG
                      'This year, there are not many apples/there is not enough water'

(22) e. Germ.   **dies Jahr gibt nicht viele Äpfel/nicht genug Wasser*$_{DO}$

In (23b/c), on the other hand, we have an optional "Vorfeld-*es*", which, when appropriate, allows itself to be replaced by pre-verbal elements (see Eisenberg 1999: 174–176; Lazard 1994b: 15).

(23) d. Germ.   *jetzt kommt*   *ein*   *Auto*$_S$
                      now   come-PRES-3SG   INDEF   car
                      'Now, there is a car coming'

     e. Germ.   *jetzt kommen*   *Autos*$_S$
                      now   come-PRES-3PL   car-PL
                      'Now, there are cars coming'

Moreover, this "Vorfeld-*es*" never appears in subordinate clauses which show regular S-O-V order:

(23) f. Germ. *ich*   *sehe,*   *dass (*es)*   *Autos*$_S$
      I   see-PRES-1SG   that   car-PL

      kommen
      come-PRES-3PL
      'I see that there are cars coming'

To decide whether in (22b) we have an "expletive *es*", as in (22a/d), or a "Vorfeld-*es*", as in (23b/c), we can refer to a phrase from the *Urfaust* (24) where a structure analogous to (22b) appears in a subordinate clause: there is no agreement between the verb (*geben*) and the actant expressing PT_0 (*mehr* 'more (persons)' – necessarily plural).

(24) Germ. *es*   *ist*   *ein*   *Kauz,*   *wie's*
              it   be-PRES-1SG   INDEF   queer-fellow   how

             mehr   *noch*   *geben.*
             it more   still   give-PRES-3PL
             'He is a queer fellow like several others' (Urfaust: v. 1175, cit. Brugmann 1917: 19)

Since *'s = es* does not disappear in the subordinate clause, we are not dealing here with a "Vorfeld-*es*" but with an "expletive *es*". A subordinate version of (22b) would read, hypothetically:

(22) f. Germ. *... weil's*   *dies Jahr*   *nicht*
                 because it   this year   not

                viele   *Äpfel*$_H$ *geben*
                many   apple-PL   give-
                PRES-3PL
                '... because there are not many apples this year'

While the agreement of *geben* with *mehr* in (24) and with *viele Äpfel* in (22f) invalidates their identity as direct object, the persistence of *es* as subject – at least on the formal level – rules out their being pure subjects. Going on the documentation we have ready to hand, we must say that *viele Äpfel* in (22b) has not undergone a complete reanalysis as subject, but has merely floated towards the zone of the "actant H".

7. Conclusions

We have seen above some cases of diachronic syntactic metataxis due to both a de-personalizing reanalysis S > DO (10, 5/13) and a personalizing reanalysis DO > S (14, 19–21 and probably also 15, 16).

This prompts three questions:

o is the direction of these processes indifferent?
o why in some cases do we not find a complete reanalysis, but only syntactic floating towards the zone of the "actant H" (9, 22)?
o what is the role (and is this optional?) of metonymic shift (Fig. 3a/b) in the reanalysis?

Starting from the fundamental verbs of EXISTENCE such as It. *c'è* (9), Sp. *hay* (14), Cat. *hi ha* (15), Port. *há* (16), Engl. *there is* (10) and Germ. *es gibt* (22), we can say that they all, by definition, fall into the category of presentative verbs with a sole rhematic participant PT_0.

In all these languages two syntactic structures coexist:
(i)   verbs with post-verbal rhematic direct object: (S-)V-O$_{rh}$,
(ii) presentative verbs with post-verbal rhematic subject: (X-)V-S$_{rh}$. This option is rather restricted in English, but it can be found, in marginal uses, especially when the "dummy" *there* is introduced before the verb: *Here comes the sun; There arises the question whether ...* (see n. 27).

Thus in theory all these languages offer the possibility of a diachronic syntactic metataxis between the constellations V-O$_{rh}$ and V-S$_{rh}$ (17) or vice versa (12). Either way this would be achieved by means of a sentence type without visible agreement, i.e. with a rhematic actant in the singular, such as (9, 14, 22), which raises uncertainties of analysis between cases (i) and (ii). This is also the case for English which, starting from the rather unusual structure V-S$_{rh}$, arrives at the more common form.

We must, however, point out that these possibilities of diachronic metataxis exist merely in theory, and are limited and channelled according to the typological conformation of each specific language. This is clear from Tab. 1, which covers the Ibero-Romance, Italian, English and German material we have examined, and in addition the French *il y a* 'there is'.[23]

We can divide the languages into three groups in terms of serial typology: S-V-O/V-S[24] (Spanish, Catalan, Portuguese, Italian), X-V-Y[25] (German) and S-V-O[26] (English, French). Moreover there is a distinction between languages in which the participant PT_0 is originally realized as

subject (S) of the fundamental verb of EXISTENCE and those in which it is originally realized as direct object (OD).

In languages in which the original syntactic realization of the participant PT_0 contradicts the expected syntactic structure, we observe a syntactic reanalysis. This is the case above all for English, where a post-verbal noun phrase without preposition is, as a general rule, a direct object. But the same reasoning can also be applied, inversely, to the Ibero-Romance languages, where the noun phrase that follows a presentative verb is, in the unmarked case, a subject. As we saw in sections 4 and 5, these reanalyses obey the "principle of transparency", since they generalize the syntactic realization you expect to find in a given language (and, where appropriate, in a given semantic context).

Table 1. Syntactic type and changes between S and DO

PT_0 originally realized as …	S-V-O/V-S language	X-V-Y language	S-V-O language
S	It. *c'è*: floating ('actant H')		Engl. *There is*: reanalysis > DO (depersonalization)
DO	Sp. *hay*, Cat. *hi ha*, Port. *há*: reanalysis > S (personalization)	Germ. *Es gibt* floating ('actant H'); OFr. *(i) a*: floating ('actant H')	ModFr. *il y a* DO-DO

In languages in which the original syntactic realization of the participant PT_0 does not directly contradict the expected syntactic structure, we observe floating towards the zone of the "actant H", due to tension between (i) and (ii), without complete reanalysis ever being achieved. This is true not only for Italian, which, as well as the V-S structure (presentative), also has the S-V-O structure, but also, conversely, for German, featuring both S-V-O and X-V-S.

It is interesting to note that in Old French, an X-V-Y language not unlike German, the fundamental verb of EXISTENCE *(i) a* shows syntactic floating like that found in German: the participant PT_0 is originally realized *as a direct object in the cas régime (25a) — the verb corresponds*

etymologically to Sp. *hay*, Cat. *hi ha* and Port. *há* – but there are also occurrences in the *cas sujet* (25b).

(25) a. OFr. *n'   i   out   un*[27]DO   *nen*
      NEG there have-PERF one-CR[27]   NEG-there-of
      parolt
      speak-SUBJ-PRES-3SG
      'There was no one who got to talking about that' (*Voyage de Charlemagne à Jérusalem et à Constantinople*: v. 812, cit. Buridant 2000: 84)

      b. OFr. *n'   en   i   out   uns*H
      NEG of there- there have-PERF   one-CS[28]
      d'eus   tot   sous
      of them   all   single-CS
      'There was none of them
      qui   osast   prendre   ses
      who   dare-SUBJ-IMPF   take-INF   POSS-PL-CR
      adous
      armour-PL-CR
      'who dared to take up arms' (Béroul, *Tristan*: v. 137-128, cit. Buridant 2000: 84)

In actual fact, the actant in question has not undergone a definitive reanalysis, as can be seen in Modern French:

(26) Mod.Fr. *qu'est-ce qu'   il y   a   sur*
      what-ACC   it there   have-PRES-3SG   on
      la   table?
      DEF   table
      'What is there on the table ?'

      → *sur   la   table   il y   a*
      on   DEF   table   it there   have-PRES-3SG
      des   miettes   de   pain.
      INDEF-PL   crumb   of   bread
      'There are bread crumbs on the table'

The introduction of the interrogative form shows that the actant *des miettes de pain* in (26) has remained a direct object (see also Lazard 1994b: 10).

We see from Tab. 1 that the S-V-O nature of Modern French confirms the object identity of the post-verbal actant of *il y a* and has put an end to the syntactic floating of the Old French exemplified in (25b).

Whereas the case of Fr. *falir/falloir* is quite different. Originally a verb of EXISTENCE – or rather non-existence (5a), – *falir/falloir*, as the basis for the reanalysis featured in (13) and (5b/c), expresses POSSESSION (negative).[29] This concept involves at least two participants, PT_0 (the POSSESSUM) and PT_1 (the POSSESSOR), as is seen in Fig. 3a and 3b. In principle, this conceptual relation of POSSESSION can be subject to two opposing informational orientations. For LACK (i.e. NEGATIVE POSSESSION), PT_0 can be chosen either as rheme (13a) or as theme (27).

(27) OFr. *riens que   j' aie,*   *ne   vos*
            thing that I   have-SUBJ-PRES-1SG   not   to-you
            faut
            lack-PRES-3SG
            'You do not lack for anything that I have' (Chrestien de
            Troyes, *Erec et Énide*: v. 638, cit. AFW: s.v. *falir*, col. 1611).

Even though the constellation PT_0 = rheme (13a) is more common, the constellation PT_0 = theme (27) is always possible. If there is syntactic floating (S > H) in the realization of PT_0 = rheme (13), the structure PT_0 = theme (27) does not allow any oscillation and consolidates the status of subject of the actant which expresses PT_0.

As I have shown elsewhere (Koch, in press b), everything changes with the lexical metonymy LACK → NEED described in Fig. 3a and 3b and exemplified in (13b) and (5b). In this case, it is the semantic change which initiates a definitive reanalysis S > DO. This process is probably favoured also by a certain analogy between *il (me) faut qch.* and *il y a qch.*, and by the strong S-V-O tendency of Modern French, described above. However, the fact that the semantic change is decisive is confirmed by an onomasiological observation in this conceptual sphere: while Fr. *falloir*, after the change LACK → NEED, has undergone the reanalysis S > DO, Fr. *manquer*, the diachronic successor to *falloir* in the sense of 'lack', is one of the few verbs in modern spoken French which, in spite of the strong S-V-O tendency, allows – integrated in the so-called "impersonal" construct (see n. 4) – a post-verbal actant to express PT_0 = rheme – with syntactic floating, it is true, but without a definitive reanalysis:

(28) Mod.Fr. *il   manque   de l'eau*$_H$
               it   lack-PRES-3SG   MASS water
               'We have not got any water'

Thus when considering changes we must distinguish those concerning the subject from those concerning the object:

1. syntactic floating due to tension between (i) and (ii), which, however, does not lead to a genuine reanalysis, contrary to the prevailing syntactic type: It. *c'è* (S > H); Germ. *es gibt* (DO > H).
2. reanalyses due to the prevailing syntactic type: Sp. *hay*, Cat. *hi ha*, Port. *há* (DO > S); Engl. *there is* (S > DO).
3. a reanalysis due primarily to a metonymic lexical change: Fr. *falir/falloir* (S > DO).

Notes

1. In categorizing noun phrases, I use the following abbreviations: S = subject; DO = direct object; IO = indirect object; OBL = other oblique actant; Loc = locative actant; C = "circonstant", i.e. not depending on the valency of the verb, cf. Tesnière 1959. For the *cas sujet* in Old French I use CS.
2. Analysis of Busse and Dubost (1983), s.v. *parler*.
3. Construct which runs contrary to the prescriptive norm in German, but frequent in varieties that do not conform to this norm.
4. It would be extremely interesting, for example, to analyse such grammatical shifts as Sp. *se venden aceitunas*$_S$ > *se vende aceitunas*$_{DO}$ / It. *si vendono delle olive*$_S$ > *si vende delle olive*$_{DO}$ 'people sell olives' (see Manoliu-Manea 1985: 85–86; Oesterreicher 1992: 248; Baciu 1993; Wehr 1995: 110–125, 185–213; Koch 1994b: 10; 1995: 132–133). Another clearly grammatical process that also goes beyond what we can deal with here is the so-called "impersonal" transformation of French sentences such as *Tes élèves*$_S$ *viennent* > *Il vient tes élèves*$_?$ 'Your pupils are coming' (see also cap. 7., (28); see Hériau 1980; Rivière 1981; Gorzond 1984; Lazard 1994b: 5–10).
5. For the concept of *frame* in cognitive linguistics, see Fillmore (1975; 1985); Barsalou (1992); Taylor (1995: 87–92); Ungerer-Schmid (1996: 205–217); Koch (1999a: 144–153).
6. Cf. Lazard (1994a: 140–141). – This description is also valid for a language such as French, where – in oral use – the formal mark for the third person is a pre-positioned clitic (*il pleut* [i(l)-plø]) and for languages like English and German, in which, in addition to a mark (suffix) for the third person, there is

an obligatory third person pronoun (neutral). From the typological point of view, all these languages diverge from languages which allow impersonal sentences without any formal mark of subject (viz. Tahiti: see Lazard (1994a: 69, 140)). – Although I recognise that it would be more logical to call verbs of the type (8a) 'a-subjectal' (see Creissels (1991)), I retain the traditional denomination 'impersonal' which is less clumsy (also as the root for the terms 'personalization' and 'de-personalization' which I need further on).

7. See Hetzron (1975: 347–329); Contreras (1976: 52–55); Wandruszka (1982: 6–22, 52–59); Manoliu-Manea (1985: 82–83). The informational status of the verb itself in sentences with a presentative verb is controversial: some consider it thematic (Contreras; Wandruszka; Oesterreicher 1991: 324–325), while others hold that it forms, together with the actant that expresses PT_0, a sentence with global rhematicity (Manoliu-Manea; Ulrich 1985). The crucial point for what follows is that the participant PT_0 is in any case rhematic in nature, or at least belongs to a rhematic sequence (see also Kęsik (1991); Lazard (1994b: 4)).

8. For the status of *ne* in general see Lihn Jensen (1986), Koch (1994c: 181–182); for the specific case of *c'è*: Koch (1994b: 10; 1995: 129 n. 29).

9. We should emphasize that 'prototypicality' means, in this case, 'prototypicality at the level of the metalinguistic conceptualization of linguistic facts'. It is not a prototypicality at the level of conceptualization of our daily extralinguistic knowledge, as in the emblematic cases of BIRD, FRUIT, FURNITURE, etc. (Koch 1998).

10. I shall not go into the problem of the syntactic status of *there*, which has been interpreted as the true subject of the sentence (see Lakoff 1987: 468–469, 546–549, and the more nuanced interpretation of Lazard 1994b: 12–14). I must, however, point out that such an interpretation does not suit It. *c'è*, whose structure is very similar to Eng. *there is* (Koch 1999b: 293–294).

11. Since in Modern French the post-verbal position of the direct object is practically obligatory, it cannot but be rhematic in an unmarked sentence such as *j'ai trouvé ton parapluie* 'I've found your umbrella' (see Raible (1971)). This is, however, only a prototypical affinity which does not exclude other combinations of syntactic function and informational value in marked sentences, as for example *ton parapluie, je l'ai trouvé* 'Your umbrella, I've found it'; see Oesterreicher (1991: 368–369).

12. Tesnière's concept of 'metataxis (Fr. *métataxe*) is synchronic-comparative and was coined to describe the syntactic divergences between two languages that co-exist in time. It seems only logical to extend it to the two diachronic stages of the same language; see Koch (1994a: 119–120; 1995: 126–133; in press a). We should observe that for Tesnière syntactic metataxes occur in the context not only of verbal valency (the subject of this paper), but of all syntactic relations. – For a more extensive concept of metataxis, taking in divergences at

the propositional and informational levels as per schema (6), see the works just mentioned. The processes of metataxis we have looked at here only involve diachronic divergences at the syntactic level (and continuity at other levels).

13. See Waltereit (1999); Detges and Waltereit (1999); Detges (2001): cap. 7. On reanalysis in general, see Langacker (1977); Timberlake (1977); Hopper and Traugott (1993: 32–50); Harris and Campbell (1995); Haspelmath (1998); Lang and Neumann-Holzschuh (1999a and b).

14. For PT_1 corresponding to *nous* in (5b/c) and to *me* in (13), see section 7.

15. It has been widely held that reanalysis presupposes an ambiguity in the original morpho-syntactic structure (see Timberlake (1997: 142, 148); Harris and Campbell (1995: 72); Haspelmath (1998: 56–61)). However, Waltereit (1999) has shown that ambiguity is not the premise but rather the consequence of reanalysis. Detges (2001: 419–420) states that we should not confuse ambiguity (as a consequence of reanalysis) and formal uncertainties as a frequent motive for reanalysis (e.g. the syntactic floating in the zone of the actant H for Fr. *falir/falloir*).

16. Type (14b) is found in low sociolects of peninsular oral Spanish and Latin American varieties of Spanish; types (15b) and (16b) belong to low sociolects, but also to low registers of Catalan and Portuguese.

17. Although Sp. *haber*, Cat. *haver* and Port. *haver* come from Lat. *habere* 'to have' and in (14a, 15a, 16a) have kept the direct object etymologically required by this verb, I have annotated Sp. *había*, Cat. *hi havia* and Port. *(vai) havendo* as 'be-there/there be' because in modern Ibero-Romance languages *haber/haver/haver* as verb of POSSESSION has been replaced by Sp. *tener*/Cat. *tenir*/Port. *ter* and has survived only as a temporal and modal auxiliary (only modal in Portuguese) and as verb of EXISTENCE/LOCALIZATION (in Catalan *haver-hi*, in Spanish in the present *hay*).

18. We can add that in Latin American Spanish the personalization of *haber* occurs also in the particular form of the present *hay*, blended with the archaic adverb *ý* 'vi' (*¿ quienes hayn adentro ?* 'Who (PL) is inside ?') and even with other verbal persons: *en la clase habemos cuarenta estudiantes* 'In our form, we are forty students' (Lapesa 1981: 589).

19. The conceptual difference – by no means negligible – between EXISTENCE and LOCALIZATION also derives from a semantic shift (see Koch 1999b: 291–295), but one which has no relationship with the syntactic reanalysis (17) of these verbs.

20. A similar reanalysis occurs with another use of Sp. *hacer* that was originally impersonal (expressing a PERIOD OF TIME): *hace muchos años* ⇒ *hacen muchos años* 'It was many years ago' (Rosario 1979: 52; Real Academia Española 1989: 384–385; Koch/Oesterreicher 1990: 223–224).

21. Of course we are not concerned here with their use followed by an adjective as in Fr. *il fait chaud* 'It is hot', It. *fa brutto* 'The weather is ugly'.
22. In standard German this syncretism is found mostly in feminine and neuter nouns (such as *Wasser*) and in all plural nouns (like *Äpfel*). Only with a masculine singular noun is there no uncertainty (see Ger. *es gibt dies Jahr keinen Schnee*$_{DO}$ 'There is no snow this year': *keinen* = accusative). We should note, however, that in many Geran dialects there is syncretism between nominative and accusative also in the masculine singular.
23. Note that Tab. 1 only reflects the varieties of languages considered in which a shift actually takes place.
24. I.e. S-V-O languages which allow the V-S order in certain conditions (above all with presentative verbs).
25. I.e. "verb-second" languages.
26. I.e. S-V-O languages which allow the V-S order only in very special conditions (above all residual from the diachronic point of view).
27. CR = *cas régime*.
28. Cf. fn. 5.
29. Typically associated with POSSESSION (ALIENABLE) are other concepts such as INALIENABLE POSSESSION, PART-WHOLE etc. (Jacob, in press), which I shall not deal with here.

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