Danish there-constructions with transitive verbs

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1   Introduction

The there-construction has traditionally been discussed within the context of unaccusativity, claiming that the verbs that allow there-insertion are unaccusative verbs, cf. Burzio (1986). However, due to the observation that in certain languages, e.g. Scandinavian languages, unergative verbs with agentive subjects allow there-insertion, it has been suggested that there-insertion is not an unaccusativity diagnostic and that verbs allowing there-insertion form a more heterogeneous group, cf. e.g. Sveen (1996) and Lødrup (2000).

In the Scandinavian tradition, the focus has been on establishing that in there-constructions, the logical subject is a direct object, cf. Platzak (1983), Askedahl (1986), Vikner (1995) and Lødrup (2000). On the assumption that the direct object position can only hold one constituent, there-insertion can occur only when there is not already a direct object, i.e. with intransitive verbs, in effect giving us an intransitivy contraint on there-insertion.

In Danish we find a very heterogeneous group of verbs allowing there-insertion. Danish allows there-constructions with both unaccusative and unergative intransitive verbs, certain transitive verbs and passive verbs.

In this paper we wil focus on the group of transitive verbs that allow there-insertion in Danish. This group constitutes an apparent exception to the intransitivity constraint on there-insertion. We want to argue that the distribution of verbs in there-constructions is determined by a "locative" constraint. An important function of the there-construction is to "locate" the logical subject referent at a location, literally or metaphorically, the referent of the indirect object. In this way the constraint that there has to be a direct object position available for the logical subject can be maintained. See also Bresnan (1993) who proposes a similar constraint for the locative inversion construction.

We will, in other words, show how various levels of linguistic description act together to give an account of the Danish there-construction. In particular, we will show that both lexical semantics, grammatical relations and topology together predict the set of verbs entering the there-construction.

2   Transitive there-insertion verbs

In Danish we find a group of transitive verbs allowing there-insertion. Examples are shown in (1).

(1)   a.   Der   fulgte   ham et mærkeligt held.
         There followed him a strange   luck

   b.   Der   mødte ham dog   noget   af et chok.
         There met   him however something of a shock

   c.   Der   greb   hende et vanvittigt ønske om   at flyve af sted gennem luften.
         There seized her   a crazy   wish about to fly   away   through air-the

   d.   Der   ventede hende en grim overraskelse.
         There waited   her   an ugly surprise

3   The object position

As mentioned above, a series of arguments that the logical subject is the direct object in there-constructions have been put forward. Lødrup (2000) lists a number of them. One of the arguments concerns the transitive verbs that allow there-insertion. These are claimed to have a single indirect object, and in there-constructions, the logical subject can occupy the direct object position following the indirect object position.

One question one may ask is what makes the object of these verbs indirect other than the fact that it explains why there-insertion can happen with these verbs? In the following section we will provide a semantic account of why these transitive verbs have single indirect objects.

Incidentally, Börjars and Vincent (2005) argue against the direct object analysis of the logical subject, claiming that the logical subject is a post verbal subject. This claim goes against a topological rule saying that the subject precedes the indirect object. They argue, though, that the indirect object in such construction precedes the subject because of information structural constraints. They claim that only weak pronouns occur as indirect objects in such constructions allowing them to precede the subject. They put forward this argument for Swedish, but predict that it will be true of Norwegian and Danish as well. The Danish examples in (2)[1] show that the claim does not hold for Danish at least.

(2) a. Der påhviler således *hvert enkelt medlem af selskabets   ledelse* **et selvstændigt**
       There falls on thus   every single member of company's-the management an independent
       ansvar   for at   indsendelsesfristerne   overholdes.
       responsibility for that submission deadlinea-the is kept

   b. Der   venter *den sprogligt   opvakte* **en dejlig læseoplevelse**   i Carsten Rene Nielsens nye bog.
       There waits the linguistically bright   a lovely reading experience in Carsten Rene Nielsen's new book

4 "Locative" transitive verbs

In this section we provide a semantic explanation as to why certain transitive verbs allow there-insertion. We will show how the verbs in (1) semantically differ from other transitive verbs.

The verbs in (1) are all "locative" in some sense. If we look at the examples in (3) (the examples are deviant as Danish will avoid indefinite subjects), we can analyze them locatively in the sense that the subject referent is located at the indirect object referent. The indirect object will have a locative semantic role.

(3) a. En stor hob   af folket   fulgte   ham.
       A big crowd of people-the followed him

   b. Et mærkeligt held fulgte   ham.
       A strange   luck followed him

   c. En stor skare mødte ham.
       A big crowd met   him

   d. Noget   af et chok mødte ham.
       Something of a shock met   him

Locative semantic roles end up as indirect objects, whereas themes end up as direct objects. As the locative argument of these verbs will become the indirect object, the direct object position is still empty and there-insertion is allowed. In other words, it is the locative interpretation that allows these verbs to appear in there-constructions.

Most transitive verbs do not allow the locative analysis as shown in (4).

(4) a. *Der spiste æblet   en mand.
       There ate   apple-the a man

   b. *Der købte bogen   en mand.
       There bought book-the a man

   c. *Der hørte lyden   en mand.
       There heard sound-the a man

In these examples the object entities cannot be interpreted locatively, and there-insertion is not possible.
Sometimes we find both analyses giving rise to different meanings. Consider the examples in (5).

(5) a. Piraterne greb   hende.
       Pirates-the gripped her

   b. Drengen ventede hende.
       Boy-the   waited her

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[1]The indirect object is in italics and the direct object (logical subject) is in bold face.

The object entities are clearly themes here. But now consider the examples in (6).

(6) a. Et vanvittigt ønske om   at flyve af sted gennem luften   greb   hende.
    A crazy   wish   about to fly   away   through air-the seized her

    b. En grim overraskelse ventede hende.
    An ugly surprise   waited   her

In these examples the meaning of the verbs are similar to *fik*, 'got', as in he praphrases in (7), suggesting that the object entities in (6) can indeed be analyzed locatively.

(7) a. Hun fik et vanvittigt ønske om   at flyve af sted gennem luften.
    She got a crazy   wish about to fly   away   through air-the

    b. Hun vil få en en   grim   overraskelse.
    She will get an ugly surprise

Now, if the there-construction favours the locative interpretations, we would expect only to find examples of the two verbs with the locative interpretation in there-constructions. This seems to be the case, as shown in (8).

(8) a. Der   greb   hende et vanvittigt ønske om   at flyve af sted gennem luften.
    There seized her   a crazy   wish about to fly   away   through air-the

    b. *Der greb   hende en pirat.
    There gripped her   a pirate

    c. Der   ventede hende en grim overraskelse.
    There waited   her   an ugly surprise

    d. *Der ventede hende en dreng i   stuen.
    There waited   her   a boy   in living room-the

Other verbs in this group more obviously have the locative analysis as shown in (9).

(9) a. Der   påhviler dem et ansvar.
    There rests on them a responsibility

    b. Der   tilstødte ham en ulykke.
    There befell   him an accident

    c. Der   tilfaldt ham et klækkeligt honorar.
    There fell to him a substantial fee

We belive that the locative constraint argued for here together with the empty object position constraint are the main factors explaining what verbs will allow there-insertion generally. Consider the intransitives in (10).

(10) a. Der   ankom et bigband fra   Danmark.
    There arrived a bigband from Denmark

    b. Der   vågnede en fortærende Lidenskab i   hans Sjel.
    There awoke   a consuming passion   in his   soul

    c. Der   sidder en julemand   *(bag rattet).
    There sits   a santa claus behind wheel-the

    d. Der   gik   en mand *(ud ad døren).
    There walked a man   out   of door-the

    e. *Der snakker en mand.
    There talks   a man

    f. *Der fryser en mand.
    There freezes a man

On a complex event analysis of unaccusatives, cf. e.g. Bjerre (2003) and Bjerre and Bjerre (2007), the examples in (10a) and (10b) involve representations where the object (logical subject) is "located". In (10c) and (10d) the place adjuncts are obligatory, causing the objects (logical subjects) to be "located". Finally, in (10e) and (10f) no such "location" is evident.

5   Formalization

In this section we sketch as formalization of the analysis of there-constructions with transitive verbs. The lexical rule in (11) inserts *der*, 'there'[2].

(11)
$$
\begin{bmatrix}
\textit{there-insertion-lexical-rule} \\[2pt]
\text{IN} \begin{bmatrix}
\textit{word} \\[2pt]
\text{SYNSEM} \mid \text{LOC} \begin{bmatrix}
\text{CAT} \begin{bmatrix}
\text{HEAD} & \textit{verb} \\
\text{SUBJ} & \left\langle \boxed{1}\text{NP}\left[\text{INDEF}\right]\!:\!\boxed{2}_i \right\rangle \\
\text{COMPS} & \boxed{3}
\end{bmatrix} \\[14pt]
\text{CONT} \begin{bmatrix}
\textit{situation} \\
\text{SIT-STRUC} \; \textit{list} \oplus \left\langle \begin{bmatrix} \textit{state-rel} \\ \text{THEME} \; i \end{bmatrix} \right\rangle \oplus \textit{list}
\end{bmatrix}
\end{bmatrix} \\[18pt]
\text{INFO-STRUC} \mid \text{TOPIC} \left\langle \boxed{2} \right\rangle
\end{bmatrix} \\[20pt]
\text{OUT} \begin{bmatrix}
\textit{word} \\
\text{SYNSEM} \mid \text{LOCAL} \mid \text{CATEGORY} \begin{bmatrix} \text{SUBJ} \left\langle \textit{der} \right\rangle \\ \text{COMPS} \; \boxed{3} \oplus \left\langle \boxed{1} \right\rangle \end{bmatrix} \\[10pt]
\text{INFO-STRUC} \mid \text{TOPIC} \left\langle \; \right\rangle
\end{bmatrix}
\end{bmatrix}
$$

(11) says that for any verb, where the subject is linked to a theme semantic role, there is a similar verb with *der*, 'there', inserted on the SUBJ list. The input verb has the subject (first element on the ARG-ST list), as its topic. Everything not explicitly mentioned in the rule is carried over unaltered from input to output. The restriction of there-insertion to verbs with theme subjects ensures that our locative constraint is enforced, as it is exactly locative predicates which have themes that are linked to subjects.

Based on a strong tradition in Danish grammar originating with Diderichsen (1946), and Linearization-based HPSG, Reape (1994), Kathol (1995, 2000), we describe word order with a list-valued DOM-feature, allowing separation of word order from immediate constituency. Further, for any headed phrase in Danish, the elements on this list must, if present, occur in the order given in (12).

(12) $\textit{headed-ph} \longrightarrow \left[\text{DOM} \; \left\langle C \prec F \prec v \prec s \prec \textit{lio} \prec \textit{ldo} \prec a1* \prec V \prec IO \prec DO \prec P \prec a2* \right\rangle \right]^3$

The constraint in (13) licenses the combination of a verb with its two complements.

(13) $\textit{hd-comps-ph} \longrightarrow$
$$
\begin{bmatrix}
\text{DOM} \; \boxed{1} \bigcirc \left\langle \boxed{2} \right\rangle \bigcirc \left\langle \boxed{3} \right\rangle \\
\text{SS} \mid \text{LOC} \mid \text{CAT} \mid \text{COMPS} \left\langle \; \right\rangle \\
\text{DTRS} \left\langle \begin{bmatrix} \text{DOM} \; \boxed{1} \\ \text{SS} \mid \text{LOC} \mid \text{CAT} \mid \text{COMPS} \left\langle \boxed{4}, \boxed{5} \right\rangle \end{bmatrix}, \begin{bmatrix} \text{DOM} & \boxed{6} \\ \text{SS} & \boxed{4} \end{bmatrix}, \begin{bmatrix} \text{DOM} & \boxed{7} \\ \text{SS} & \boxed{5} \end{bmatrix} \right\rangle
\end{bmatrix}
$$
$\wedge \; \textit{compaction}(\boxed{6}, \boxed{2}, O)$
$\wedge \; \textit{compaction}(\boxed{7}, \boxed{3}, O)$

The DOM lists of the two complements are compacted to it domain objects of the type *O* subsuming *IO* and *DO*, as shown in (14), and shuffled into DOM list of the verb.

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[2]Lacking space, a number of more general constraints are represented together in (11).

3 | | |
|---|---|
| *C* | coordinating conjunction |
| *F* | the subject or information structurally salient constituents |
| *v* | the finite verb or the subordinate conjunction |
| *s* | the subject |
| *lio* | light (pronominal, unstressed) indirect object |
| *ldo* | light (pronominal, unstressed) direct object |
| *a1* | adverbials |
| *V* | the finite verb when the *v* slot is blocked by a conjunction |
| *IO* | indirect object |
| *DO* | direct object |
| *P* | copredicate |
| *a2* | adverbials |

Elements marked with * may occur more that once.

(14)

$$
\begin{array}{c}
O \\
\diagup \quad \diagdown \\
IO \qquad DO
\end{array}
$$
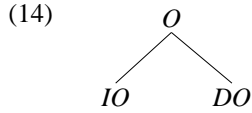
The constraints in (15) and (16) ensure that objects with the semantic role ground end up in the *IO* slot, while objects, including the logical subject, with other semantic roles end up in the *DO* slot.

(15)
$$
\Big[\text{DOM } \textit{list} \bigcirc \big\langle \big[IO\big] \big\rangle \Big] \longrightarrow
\begin{bmatrix}
\text{DOM } \textit{list} \bigcirc \Big\langle \begin{bmatrix} IO \\ \text{NP}_i \end{bmatrix} \Big\rangle \\[2ex]
\text{SS} \mid \text{LOC} \mid \text{CONT} \mid \text{RELS } \textit{list} \oplus \big\langle \big[\text{GROUND } i \big] \big\rangle \oplus \textit{list}
\end{bmatrix}
$$

(16)
$$
\Big[\text{DOM } \textit{list} \bigcirc \big\langle \big[DO\big] \big\rangle \Big] \longrightarrow \neg
\begin{bmatrix}
\text{DOM } \textit{list} \bigcirc \Big\langle \begin{bmatrix} DO \\ \text{NP}_i \end{bmatrix} \Big\rangle \\[2ex]
\text{SS} \mid \text{LOC} \mid \text{CONT} \mid \text{RELS } \textit{list} \oplus \big\langle \big[\text{GROUND } i \big] \big\rangle \oplus \textit{list}
\end{bmatrix}
$$

As as was shown in (12), *IO*s precede *DO*s, accounting for why the logical subject follows the object in there-constructions.

6   Conclusion

In this paper we have addressed the question of which verbs allow there-insertion in Danish. We have proposed that two constraints are involved in Danish there-constructions. Firstly, as have been noted by others, we need an empty direct object position constraint. To account for the transitive verbs allowing there-insertion, we have further proposed a "locative" constraint. The transitive verbs allowing there-insertion are verbs that allow a locative analysis, and consequently they take an indirect object, and the logical subject can appear in direct object position. We have further suggested that the "locative" constraint also applies to intransitive verbs explaining why not all intranstives allow there-insertion. We have provided a liniarization-based formalization of the proposal.

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