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A CROSSLINGUISTIC STUDY OF SO-CALLED “LOCATIVE INVERSION”: EVIDENCE FOR THE *FUNCTIONAL DISCOURSE GRAMMAR* MODEL¹

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1. Introduction

In this chapter, I will try to isolate the internal syntactic, semantic and discourse-pragmatic properties of the “locative inversion” construction in eight languages, representing three constituent order types: French, Italian, European Portuguese, English, German, Norwegian², Turkish (rigid SOV) and Arabic (flexible VSO). The term ‘inversion’ is purely descriptive within this context and is not to be taken as indicating a “movement” derivation of such constructions³; and in any case, we shall see later that the F(D)G approach in terms of the subsequent placement of underlyingly unordered constituents in positions within a template is perfectly suited to a proper treatment of this construction.

In any event, locative inversion is a distinct construction in its own right, and its properties do not derive from those of the canonical, unmarked construction with which it can be correlated.

My aim, then, is to show that the properties specific to the construction flow from its essential function within discourse, and from its information-structural value. Thus a proper description of the construction presupposes a top-down organisation of the grammar, as in Hengeveld (2002a,b). It will be shown in what follows that the different types of function of each of the main components of the construction under study need to be determined essentially via specifications at the Interpersonal level, hence preceding the Structural level at which the subject position would be assigned and the various constituents placed within the positional template available at this Level, but following the latter’s counterpart level (that of the extended predication) at which syntactic functions are assigned in standard FG (Dik, 1997: ch. 10). Hence the initial locative or temporal term, the non-predicating verb and the subject-cum-Presentational Topic function of postposed subject terms could not be adequately specified within the standard model of FG.

The central features of the construction which I want to examine are as follows: 1) Is the postposed subject still a “subject” in relation to the verb?; 2) connected with this aspect, isn’t the construction essentially an impersonal one?; and 3) the effect of the information-structure values “narrow (contrastive) focus” vs. “wide (thetic) focus” which the construction may express.

Section 2 outlines four general properties of the construction, in terms of English and French examples; section 3 examines those of the equivalent forms in Italian, Portuguese, German, Norwegian, Turkish and Arabic in the light of this initial characterization; and finally section 4 draws together the common features isolated from the specifics of each type of realization, and proposes an account in terms of the Functional Discourse Grammar model (Hengeveld, 2002a,b). The section concludes by reexamining the subject-verb agreement patterns evident in the data, particularly where the verb is unaccusative, the subject term occurring to its right rather than to its left, as canonically in the SVO languages. Independently

¹ The present chapter is an expanded and revised version of a paper presented at the 10th International Conference on Functional Grammar (26-29 June, 2002, University of Amsterdam), entitled “Locative inversion in 8 languages: syntax, semantics, discourse-pragmatics and functional position”. I would like to thank João Costa for his help in revising the original paper. I am also grateful to Christian Molinier, Maria-Nella Carminati, Gerd Jendraschek, Thorstein Fretheim, Ahmed Moutaouakil, Joseph van den Reysen and Albert Abi Aad, for their help with the French, Italian, German, Turkish, Norwegian and Arabic data presented in the chapter. Any remaining errors are my sole responsibility.

² All basic SVO languages, at least in main clauses.

³ Functional Grammar rules out movement rules, and in fact Transformational rules in general.

of this factor, a number of other properties characteristic of subjects are shown to be lacking in the construction. It is suggested that, at least where the verb is unaccusative, the construction may actually be an impersonal one.

2. Some syntactic, semantic and discourse-pragmatic properties of the locative inversion construction in English and French

The discourse function of the locative inversion construction as a whole is to *present* a referent which is discourse-new⁴, within the framework of a locative or temporal context. At the same time, the construction as a whole serves to establish the *setting* for a new discourse unit, indicating that the state, process or event it denotes is to be backgrounded as context for a more foreground event to come (see Huffman, 2002). The essential properties of the construction flow from this discourse function: the presence in clause-initial position of a *locative or temporal* adverbial which is either subcategorized by the verb of the construction, or is a level 1 or level 2 satellite, designating the place or time in which this new referent is to be located within the discourse model being co-constructed by the speech participants; a *locative or existential non-predicating verb* whose inherent semantics corresponds or is reduced to this type of denotation, and which is tightly connected syntactically and semantically to the preposed constituent; and a postposed rhematic *subject* term occurring in focus position.

Let us look now at these essential properties, on the basis of French and English examples.

2.1. Presence vs. absence of a preposed adverbial of certain types

Borillo (2000: 88), Ono (2001), Fournier (1997: 98-102), and other linguists argue that those verbs which subcategorize a PP complement (locative or temporal in the present case) invert with their subject when this complement is preposed⁵. Compare in this respect examples (1)-(4), which involve the French verbs *se trouver* ‘to be found’, *s’ouvrir* ‘to open’, *flamber* ‘to blaze’, and *gagner* ‘to win’, respectively:

- (1) a Dans l’armoire se trouvaient les chaussures.
 ‘In the wardrobe were (to be) found the shoes’
 b *Dans l’armoire les chaussures se trouvaient. (Nølke, 1995, ex. (36)).
 ‘In the wardrobe the shoes were (to be) found’
- (2) a Avec cette clé s’ouvre toute porte.
 ‘With this key opens every door’
 b ?Avec cette clé, toute porte s’ouvre.
 ‘With this key, every door opens’
- (3) a Dans une large cheminée flambait un grand feu.
 ‘In a broad chimney blazed a big fire’
 b Dans une large cheminée, un grand feu flambait. (Borillo, 2000, ex. (10)).
 ‘In a broad chimney, a big fire blazed’
- (4) a *D’après mon frère, gagnera ce cheval.

⁴ A NewTop, in standard FG terms.

⁵ See also in this regard Bimer & Ward (1998: 31), who note that the preposing of “lexically governed” constituents is more restricted than that of other types of (merely modifying) constituents.

- ‘According to my brother, will win this horse’
 b D’après mon frère, ce cheval gagnera.
 ‘According to my brother, this horse will win’
 (ex. (14) from the Fournier & Fuchs (2002) corpus)

Given that where (as in (1a)) a preposed PP is subcategorized by a verb⁶, inversion is virtually obligatory (see (1b), in contrast to (1a)), one can postulate that the preposed locative PP is placed in the structural position P1 in the standard FG universal constituent-order template – the initial position within the clause, reserved for expressions given special treatment, particularly for discourse-pragmatic reasons. See (5) below for this template, which I have augmented by a clause-final position P0, proposed for Polish by Siewierska (1998) and for Bulgarian by Stanchev (1997), but which is evidently more relevant cross-linguistically.

- (5) P2, P1 (S) (O) (X) V (S) (O) (X) (P0), P3 ((1) in Siewierska, 1998:246, slightly adapted)

S, O, X and V symbolise ‘subject’, ‘object’, ‘argument’ and ‘verb’ respectively, and parentheses indicate optionality (not all languages require description in terms of the subject or object functions, for example).

Other verbs behaving like *se trouver* in French are *se dérouler/avoir lieu* ‘to take place’, *se tenir* ‘to be held’, *dater* ‘to date’, and *figurer* ‘to occur’- intrinsically locative or temporal verbs. Now, given that P1 in (1b) is occupied by the locative PP as a quasi-topic, the subject term as clausal topic cannot also be placed there. Level 1 satellites such as *avec cette clé* ‘with this key’ in (2a,b), make subject-verb inversion a “preferred” option, in Fournier’s (1997: 97) words. This would not be the case if the PP were to occupy the extra-clausal position P2, as in (3b). As the verb *flamber* ‘to blaze’ does not subcategorize the locative PP *dans une large cheminée* ‘in a broad chimney’, the inversion here is in no way obligatory (see example (3b), which is well-formed). The PP *dans une large cheminée*, a level-2 satellite in FG terms, is thus placed in P2 (at least in the case of (3b)).

The choice of inversion or of non-inversion is thus equally well-formed with preposed level-2 satellites, as expected. Finally, “propositional” level 3 satellites, as in the evidential satellite *D’après mon frère* ‘according to my brother’ in (4a,b), rule out subject-verb inversion completely⁷. So we see here that, as the tightness of the grammatical-semantic relation between verb and preposed adverbial decreases as we move from argument to level-1, then level-2 and finally level-3 satellite, the “attraction” it exerts on the verb lessens, and the pressure for subject-verb inversion within the construction as a consequence decreases.

The presence in initial position of the locative adverbial is motivated by the fact that, to introduce a new referent into a discourse, that referent must be located somewhere, existence and location being two sides of the same coin, as is well known – see, for example, Lambrecht (1994: 179).

However, while the nature of the preposed adverbial is one determinant of the inversion following it - and no doubt the most important such determinant -, it is not the only one, by any means, as Fournier (1997) also points out. Whether or not there is subject-verb inversion

⁶ Witness **Les chaussures se trouvaient* *‘The shoes were to be found’.

⁷ Presumably because the grammatico-semantic connexion between verb and satellite is too tenuous to “attract” the verb into second position. Nonetheless, João Costa (p.c.) suggests to me that it would be prudent to test for the possibility that it might be the type of verb (here inergative) rather than the nature of the preposed PP itself as such, which rules out the inversion here. However, if we take an unaccusative verb in place of the unergative one (*gagner*), the result is little better: **Selon mon frère, sont arrivés une dizaine de garçons* ‘According to my brother, have arrived about ten boys’. It would seem, then, that it is clearly the level 3 (and not argument, level 1 or level 2) status of the preposed adverbial phrase, and not the nature of the verb *per se*, which is at issue here. If we replace the level 3 adverbial here by a level 2 one, the result is acceptable: *Avec une heure de retard, sont arrivés une dizaine de garçons* ‘With an hour’s delay, have arrived about ten boys’.

within the construction is a function of the **interaction** of several factors, in particular, the information-structural value of the utterance as a whole, the syntactic and semantic nature of the verb, and the internal structure of the subject term. Let us briefly examine each of these factors in turn.

2.2. Information-structure influences on the construction

A central factor explaining the unnatural status of examples like (1b) is the positioning in clause-final position (unmarked Focus position) of an informationally “light” predicate: that is, not involving any specific semantic feature capable of being highlighted via this syntactic and prosodic treatment. This is also the reason for the difficulty, or even impossibility, of the non-inverted variants of (7a,b and g) and (7a', b' and g') on p.5, where the verbs are *be able to be seen/se voir, stand/se dresser, and be/être*.

Nølke (1995) argues that the assignment of the Focus function in French always involves the setting up of a paradigm of entities established as a function of the context - entities which are potential focus targets - and the marking of a contrast between one member of this paradigm and all the others. He suggests that, where the focus is assigned to a single lexeme rather than to a whole phrase, the element on which the focus operates is the SPECIFIC semantic feature which makes it possible to differentiate that element from all the other elements within the same lexical or semantic field. That feature is thereby highlighted, and the predicate has its full semantic value (see the (a) examples under (6) below); where inversion occurs, on the other hand, as in the (b) examples under (6), the verb's specific semantic feature is not highlighted, and only the GENERIC semantic feature(s), which establish(-es) the sortal category of entity to which the predicate may be applied, is/are in evidence. The verbs or past participles in the (b) examples below have a purely existential or locative, and not predicating, interpretation in this inversion context. In (6a-f), syllables in upper-case indicate nuclear pitch-accent. ((6c-f) are my examples; see Cornish, 2002a:§4 for fuller discussion of this issue).

- (6) a Dans l'armoire, les chaussures étaient ranGÉES. (Ex. (33a) in Nølke, 1995; originally presented in Borillo, 1990, ex. (a), p. 80)
 'In the wardrobe, the shoes were neatly arranged'
- b Dans l'armoire étaient rangées les chauSSURES. (Ex. (33b) in Nølke, 1995)
 'In the wardrobe, were stored the shoes'
- c A l'horizon, un orage couVAIT.
 'On the horizon, a storm was brewing'
- d A l'horizon couvait un oRAGE.
 'On the horizon was brewing a storm'
- e ? #Dans la vallée, une rivière COULE⁸.
 'In the valley, a river flows'
- f Dans la vallée coule une riVIÈRE.
 'In the valley flows a river'

2.3. The type of verb involved in locative inversions

⁸ (6e) is pragmatically odd, since there is no (evident) predicate with which the verb *couler* 'to flow' could contrast, occurring as it does in end-focus position: after all, 'flowing' is the only normal thing which rivers can do.

In general, locative inversion is only possible in English and French when the verb involved is *intransitive*⁹. Involved here are, in particular, intransitive verbs denoting the existence, localisation, appearance/emergence or disappearance of an entity: *stand* in (7b), *hang* in (7c), *run* in (7e) and *work* in (7h); “unaccusative” or “ergative” verbs¹⁰: *sink* in (7d); passive verbs (especially those interpretable as stative-resultative): *be seen* in (7a), *be engraved* in (7f); pronominal verbs: *se voir* ‘be seen’ in (7a’) and *se dresser* ‘stand’ in (7b’); attributive or copular verbs: *be* in (7g); and more generally, verbs which are interpretable in context as “light”, from the point of view of their informational contribution¹¹. The parallel sets of illustrative examples from English, followed by their French counterparts under (7), form a standard group of examples which are used as a baseline on which to view the locative inversion facts in the six other languages examined here:

- (7) a In a clearing *could be seen* a charming cottage.
 b At the end of a courtyard *stood* some ageing huts.
 c On the wall *hung* an antique chimney hook.
 d In the distance *was slowly sinking* a patched-up oil tanker.
 e Into the garden suddenly *ran* three young barefoot boys.
 f On the door *was engraved* in gothic letters a mysterious inscription.
 g Nestling in a pile of dead leaves *was* a tiny reddish bird.
 h ? In this office *work* four people.
- (7) a’ Dans une clairière *se voyait* une coquette chaumière.
 b’ Au fond d’une cour *se dressaient* de vétustes baraquements.
 c’ Sur le mur *pendait* une antique crémaillère.
 d’ Dans le lointain *coulait* lentement un pétrolier rafistolé.
 e’ Dans le jardin *accoururent* soudain trois jeunes garçons aux pieds nus.
 f’ Sur la porte *était gravée* en lettres gothiques une inscription mystérieuse.
 g’ Tapi dans un tas de feuilles mortes *était* un oiselet rougeâtre.
 h’ Dans ce bureau *travaillent* quatre personnes.

So we can say, with Levin & Rappaport-Hovav (1996: 230) in the case of English, and Fournier (1997: 116) in that of French, that it is the presence of the inversion which gives these verbs an informationally “light” interpretation¹². These authors argue, moreover, that, in order for the inversion to be acceptable, the sense of the inverted verb should *characterize* the

⁹ This restriction does not seem to hold in the case of Romance languages other than French, which are “pro-drop” – for example, Spanish, Catalan and Italian; however, in the case of subject inversion involving a transitive verb, in Italian the scope of the focus would necessarily be narrow, according to Pinto (1997). This was also possible at earlier stages of French up to the classical period, according to Fournier (2001: 96). For exceptions to the intransitive condition concerning French, see Korzen (1996) and Hobaek Haff (2000). João Costa (p.c.) points out that locative inversion and the inversion one finds with transitive verbs in the Romance languages other than French, are two different phenomena, with distinct properties.

¹⁰ For an in-depth study of this type of verb in English, see Levin & Rappaport-Hovav (1996).

¹¹ It is exactly this situation which characterizes the possibility of inversion of subject and verb in the locative inversion construction in the Bantu language Chichewa, according to Bresnan & Kanerva (1989).

¹² Christian Molinier (p.c.) points out that in the following pair of examples with the verb *travailler* ‘work’, subject-verb order, as in (i), can easily be interpreted as bearing an actualised temporal value (where the people involved are actually at work at the time of utterance). The felicity of the progressive aspect in the English gloss reflects this interpretation. However, such an interpretation is ruled out in the case of (ii), which manifests verb-subject order. Here, only the “habitual” interpretation seems possible. This factor is no doubt closely connected to the need for preposed verbs in this construction to be semantically light, and non-predicating:

- (i) *Dans ce bureau quatre personnes travaillent.* ‘In this office four people work/are working’
 (ii) *Dans ce bureau travaillent quatre personnes* ‘In this office ?work/#are working four people’ (cf. (7h’) in the text).

referent of the postposed subject term: in other words, there should be an effect of redundancy in the subject-verb relation, the verb expressing an activity or state which is characteristic of the type of entity represented by the subject referent. This property is obviously closely connected to the criterion of “informational lightness” which the verb needs to assume in context.

2.4. *The syntactic form and semantic content of the postposed subject term, and its relation to the verb*

First of all, the postposed subject term does not have to be placed immediately to the right of the verb involved: (7d)/(7d'), (7e)/(7e') and (7f)/(7f') show clearly that an adverb ((7d)/(7d'), (7e)/(7e')) or a modifying PP ((7f)/(7f')) may be closely dependent on the verb. Thus it is the subject and the verb group or V', in the X' notation¹³, which invert.

The postposed subject in the eight examples under (7) (both the English and the French series) is morphologically indefinite, since a form of the indefinite article, or a non-definite numeral determiner, in (7e,h), is used in each case. This is not obligatory, though, the important factor being that the referent of this term should constitute discursively new and not topical information once it is brought into relation with its immediate context. This phrase may therefore be morphologically definite, but may certainly not be expressed by an unaccented definite 3rd person pronoun, which carries the presupposition that its potential referent is already highly active, psychologically, for the addressee (a GivTop, in FG terms)¹⁴.

The longer and more complex the subject term is, the more likely it will be to be positioned to the right rather than to the left of its verb. This is predictable in terms of discourse, since if the information contribution associated with a nominal term is relatively more substantial, then it will tend to be interpreted as rhematic (introducing new information relative to the context) and not as thematic; and the default position for placing such constituents is generally towards the end rather than at the beginning or the middle of the clausal utterance. In addition, it is for reasons of ease of processing that complex phrases tend to be placed at the end of clauses (as in the case of the preceding sentence).

Finally, as far as semantic content is concerned, the animacy of the subject term (human-denoting or inanimate) will cause a potentially movement verb to tend to be interpreted as dynamic and agentive when it is human-denoting, or as stative when it is inanimate. In the first case, the subject will tend not to be postposed, while in the second, it is likely to be.

3. Locative inversion in six other languages

3.1 *Italian*

In Italian, lexical subject-full verb inversion seems to be completely free (unconstrained). It can involve all kinds of verbs – unaccusatives, unergatives, transitives, even without the co-presence of a preposed overt locative or temporal PP (according to Pinto, 1997). However, when transitive verbs are involved, only the order VOS is possible, and never VSO, according to João Costa (p.c.). The only verb which is excluded from this construction is the copula *essere* ‘to be’, which when it occurs induces the selection of the existential construction with *ci* ‘there (is)’ (see example (7g') below). The translation into Italian of the English examples

¹³ What Korzen (1996) calls “the predicative unit”.

¹⁴ In this respect, lexical subject-full verb inversion is clearly distinct from pronominal subject-auxiliary or -verb inversion - as in French interrogative structures, for example.

of locative inversion given under (7a-h) is presented under (7a''-h''). As in the case of the English and French examples, the verb of each example is in italics¹⁵ :

- (7) a'' In una radura *si vedeva* una casetta graziosa.
 b'' Nel fondo di un cortile *sorgevano* delle baracche vecchie.
 c'' Sul muro *pendeva* una catena di camino antica.
 d'' In lontananza *stava affondando* lentamente una petroliera rappezzata.
 e'' In giardino *accorsero* subito tre giovani ragazzi scalzi.
 f'' Sulla porta *era incisa* in lettere gotiche un'iscrizione misteriosa.
 g'' Rannicchiato in un mucchio di foglie morte *c'era* un uccellino rossiccio.
 h'' In questo ufficio *lavorano* quattro persone.

Note that, with the exception of (7g''), where the copula *essere* is obligatorily accompanied by the locative clitic expletive *ci* (Carminati, 2001: 66), Italian expresses this construction in the same way as French. Maria Nella Carminati (p.c) informs me that in many cases, preposing of the locative adverbial cannot co-occur with *the absence* of subject-verb inversion – that is, in the absence of inversion, the adverbial must be placed in its canonical position to the right of the verb. Among the examples (7a''-h'') above, the last two, (7g'') et (7h''), would not be possible without inversion – in the last-mentioned case, even if the preposed locative is not a governed complement of the verb *lavorare* 'to work': **In questo ufficio quattro persone lavorano* 'In this office four people work'. She proposes the example of the verb *nascere* 'to be born' (an unaccusative verb like *morire* 'to die'), where we find the locative inversion construction: *In questa casa è nato un poeta famoso* 'in this house was born a famous poet', as well as, as in English and French, the variant without preposing and without inversion: *Un poeta famoso è nato in questa casa*, but not the variant with locative preposing and no inversion: **In questa casa un poeta famoso è nato*.

Nascere, morire, arrivare etc. are unaccusative, intransitive verbs, though possessing a locative argument at the level of their lexical-semantic structure; this argument may be analyzed as a "default argument" in Pustejovsky's (1995: 63-67) terminology. We may consider that such is also the status of the locative PP *in questo ufficio* in relation to the unergative verb *lavorare* 'to work' which we have just seen.

The generalisation which seems to apply here is that when the preposed constituent is either subcategorized syntactically, or is a "default argument" of the predicate to which the verb corresponds at the lexical-semantic level, subject-verb inversion is either obligatory or strongly preferred in relation to the canonical order.

In fact, it would be incorrect to say that inversion in Italian is completely free: as Pinto (1997) stresses, the inversion involving the majority of unaccusative verbs may have either a wide or a narrow focus, whereas that involving unergative or transitive verbs only allows narrow focus. For Carminati (and Pinto), the postposed subject is focal, rhematic, whereas the preverbal subject is topical or thematic.

Pinto (1997: 8) suggests that in general, verbs allowing inversion with wide focus interpretation in Italian are characterized by the presence in their argument structure of a locative or temporal argument denoting the spatio-temporal context in which the proposition expressed is asserted as true or false: cf. Erteschik-Shir's (1997) notion "stage topic". Verbs not allowing inversion with wide focus interpretation¹⁶ would lack this extra argument (the unergative verb *telefonare* in (8e) below is exceptional in this respect). For Pinto, this phonetically null argument is basically deictic in character, with its interpretation being oriented towards the speaker. As an illustration, let us look at the pairs of examples (8a-b),

¹⁵ Thanks are due to Maria Nella Carminati for having helped me with these translations.

¹⁶ Unergative and transitive verbs, as well as some unaccusative verbs, according to Pinto.

(8c-d), and (8e-f): note in particular the differences apparent in the English translations of the members of each pair:

- (8) a E' entrato Dante.
has entered Dante
'Dante has come in (here/in this place)'
- b Dante è entrato
'Dante has entered (somewhere)'
- c E' morto Fellini.
has died Fellini
'Fellini has just died (...I've just heard it)'
- d Fellini è morto.
'Fellini has died (at an unspecified time)'
- e Ha telefonato Beatrice.
has telephoned Beatrice
'Beatrice telephoned (here, at this place)'
- f Beatrice ha telefonato.
'Beatrice telephoned (somewhere, has made telephone calls)'
(Pinto, 1997, exs. (19)-(21), ch. 1)

When the subject occurs in postverbal position with 'invertible' verbs (i.e. verbs where wide focus interpretation correlates with inversion), the verb selects an extra locative or temporal argument. In fact, this argument is present even in the non-inverted variant, the two "objective"/"subjective" readings also being possible. Pinto concludes then that it is the implicit presence of this locative/temporal argument – which she symbolises as LOC – which motivates the verb-subject order in the case of those verbs which allow it. Subject-verb inversion in Italian would therefore only be "marked" where it can only give rise to a narrow-focus interpretation.

3.2 *European Portuguese*

According to the description put forward by Costa (2001a,b), in terms of subject-verb inversion, Portuguese would appear to behave like Italian rather than French, within the Romance group of languages - as in fact would be expected. This language allows inversion with all sorts of verbs, unaccusative as well as unergative or transitive. According to Costa (2001a: 2), in "wide focus" sentences (thetic utterances, then), the subjects of unaccusative verbs may be either pre- or postverbal. See (9a) vs. (9b) below:

- (9) *What happened?*
- (a) *O Paulo chegou*
the Paulo arrived
- (b) *Chegou o Paulo*
arrived the Paulo'
'Paulo arrived'
(Costa, 2001a, exs. (2a,b))

On the other hand, with intransitive verbs other than unaccusatives, only subject-verb order, as in (9a), would be possible as a realisation of athetic sentence - in response, then, to a question of the type *What happened?*. Costa (2001b) confirms the inference one can draw from this, on the basis of the situation characterizing Italian, that in Portuguese, verb-subject order for verbs other than unaccusative ones can only give rise to a narrow-focus interpretation.

One factor connected with verb-subject order in Portuguese which we have not observed in the case of Italian concerns subject-verb agreement. According to Costa (2001a: 8-9), in familiar spoken discourse¹⁷, agreement of an unaccusative verb with a *postverbal* subject in number may not occur, whereas it is obligatory when the subject precedes the verb. This possibility is absolutely ruled out with the other categories of invertible Portuguese verbs (unergative and transitive). Interestingly, Maria Nella Carminati (p.c.) informs me that her native Bergamasco dialect in northern Italy also shows this possibility under exactly the same conditions. See the pairs (10a, a'), (10b, b') and (10c, c') below:

- (10) a *Chegaram* *o* *Pedro* *e* *o* *Paulo*.
arrive-PAS¹⁸-3PL the Pedro and the Paulo
- a' *Chegou* *o* *Pedro* *e* *o* *Paulo*.
arrive-PAS-3SG the Pedro and the Paulo
‘Pedro and Paulo arrived’
- b *Fecharam* *muitas* *fábricas*.
close-PAS-3PL numerous factories
- b' *Fechou* *muitas* *fábricas*.
close-PAS-3SG numerous factories
‘Many factories closed’
- c *Chegaram* *as* *cadeiras*.
arrive-PAS-3PL the chairs
- c' *Chegou* *as* *cadeiras*.
arrive-PAS-3SG the chairs
‘The chairs arrived’
(Costa, 2001a, exs. (19a-c))

I will not follow Costa in his attempt to explain this phenomenon (in Minimalist terms, as a function of alternative Case assignment mechanisms), but will look at it rather in terms of information structure. I formulate the following hypothesis: Amongst the different types of verbs, only the unaccusatives in pre-subject position allow a “thetic” reading of their

¹⁷ Costa (2001a: n.4, p. 8) points out that the data involving verbs which do not agree in number with their postposed subject would not be acceptable by normative grammars of Portuguese, despite the fact that such forms are “quite often” produced spontaneously by speakers. He also points out (p.c.) that when native speakers see such utterances written down, they often experience a (mild) shock, even though such forms would pass unnoticed in their spoken realization.

¹⁸ The abbreviations used in the glosses for the examples from now on are as follows: ABS = absolute; ACC = accusative case; ADVR = adverbialiser; ALL = allative case; COM = comitative; D1 = 1st person demonstrative (i.e. “proximal”); DEF = definite article; F = feminine; GEN = genitive case; IMPF = imperfective; INDIC = indicative; LOC = locative; M = masculine; NEG = negation; NEUT = neuter; NOM = nominative case; PAR = partitive; PART = participle; PAS = past tense; PASS = passive; PERF = perfective; PL = plural; POSS = possessive; PRES = present tense; PROG = progressive aspect; 1 = 1st person; 3 = 3rd person; REFL = reflexive; SG = singular.

containing sentence. Now, in familiar spoken Portuguese, postverbal subjects in such conditions may not trigger number agreement with their preceding verb. Why? Because in this case, *neither* the referent of the subject, *nor* the denotatum of the verb would be topical. And agreement in number (at least in the colloquial, spoken language) is sensitive to the informational status of the potential controller (in this case, the term fulfilling the subject function), and not solely to its purely grammatical status (that of subject, in opposition to object or to other grammatical functions). This combination of statuses - preposed focal verb and postposed focal subject - is what distinguishes preposed unaccusative verbs in relation to the other types of verbs in Portuguese: indeed, whereas transitive and unergative verbs may be preposed in relation to their subject, in this case, only the “narrow-focus” interpretation is possible – in other words, where only the referent of the subject will constitute contextually new information once the content expressed by the sentence is integrated with its discourse context. The denotatum of the preposed verb will correspond in this case to presupposed, anaphoric information. However, one must treat this generalization somewhat carefully (as João Costa, p.c., cautions), since there is wide variation in current usage. See §4.2 below for further development of this analysis.

3.3 German and Norwegian

Let us look now at two Germanic languages (German and Norwegian), which differ from English on several counts. Let’s take German first of all. (7a''' - h''') below are translations of the English examples in (7)¹⁹.

- (7) a''' Auf einer Lichtung *war* eine schöne Hütte zu sehen.
 b''' Am Ende eines Hofes *standen* einige auffällige Hütten.
 c''' An der Wand *hing* ein antiker Kaminhaken.
 d''' In der Ferne *sank* langsam ein zusammengeflickter Tanker.
 e''' In den Garten *rannten* plötzlich drei kleine barfüßige Jungen.
 f''' In die Tür *war* in gothischen Buchstaben eine mysteriöse Inschrift eingraviert.
 g''' In einem Haufen toter Blätter *nistete* ein kleiner rötlicher Vogel.
 h''' In diesem Büro *arbeiten* vier Personen.

The first thing to note here is that in the Germanic languages other than English, subject-verb inversion is *obligatory* whenever a non-subject term occurs clause-initially. Hence there is no choice here between an inversion and a non-inversion construction, as there is in English, French, Italian and Portuguese. The translations reveal that the situation does not present itself in exactly the same way as in English, French or Italian: in the case of example (7e'''), as Gerd Jendraschek (p.c.) points out, preposing of the locative PP *In den Garten* ‘in the garden’ would induce a contrastive reading, thus supposing a context in which, for example, it has just been a question of the house or the courtyard, and where now it is the turn of the garden. Note that as in French and Italian, but unlike in English, example (7h''') is perfectly grammatical and acceptable, even though the verb is unergative and not unaccusative. But as already pointed out, recall in this respect also that in the Germanic languages other than English, more generally, there is no real choice here, since inversion is *obligatory* after a non-subject phrase occurring clause-initially, whatever its nature might be.

*Norwegian*²⁰ functions like German and the other Germanic languages other than English, since as we have seen, they are “V2”, or “verb second” languages, where the verb (full verb or auxiliary) needs to occupy the second position in the sentence, whether or not the

¹⁹ I am indebted to Gerd Jendraschek for these translations.

²⁰ According to Thorstein Fretheim (p.c.). I am indebted to Thorstein for examples (11a-c) and (12a,b).

subject occupies the first position. Fretheim puts forward the following examples involving a topicalised pronoun and adjective (exs. (11a,b)), and a focused adjective ((11c)):

- (11) a Han kjenner ikke sjefen min
 him (ACC) know-PRES-3SG NEG DEF.boss mine
 ‘He doesn’t know my boss’/‘Him, my boss doesn’t know’
- b Bruner er ikke noen av de tre husene
 ‘brown are.PRES-3PL NEG none of these three DEF.houses
 ‘Brown, none of these three houses is’
- c Hvitt bestemte broren min seg for å male
 White.NEUTdecided DEF.brother mine REFL for to paint
 huset sitt.
 DEF.house NEUT REFL.NEUT
 ‘White my brother decided to paint his house’

According to Fretheim (p.c.), it is possible to focus a subject term in postverbal position in the Germanic languages other than English, where initial position within the clause is occupied by another phrase of some kind – but this is not a systematic property of XVS sentences. In Norwegian, whereas the utterance of a sentence manifesting canonical constituent order such as (12a) may give rise to athetic interpretation, the inversion illustrated in (12b) would normally allow only a contrastive (narrow) focus on the referent of the postverbal subject (or on the fact that ‘Jens will come’); on the other hand, athetic reading of (12b) would be impossible. Sentences bearing athetic reading in the Germanic languages always have SVX order, and never one involving subject-verb inversion²¹.

- (12) a Jens kommer senere.
 Jens come-PRES-3SG. later
 ‘Jens will come later’
- b Senere kommer Jens.
 Later come-PRES-3SG.Jens
 ‘Later, JENS will come’

3.4 Turkish

Turkish, an “agglutinating” language which is a member of the Altaic group, is a rigid SOV language. Let us see then how it deals with the locative inversion sentences in the SVO languages which we have been examining up to now. The Turkish equivalents of (7) are given below²²:

- (7) a'''' □g6aç-sız bir alan-da sirin bir kulübe görün-üyor-du
 tree-without one zone-LOC pretty one cottagesee-REFL-PROG-PAS
- b'''' Bir avlu-nun uc-u-nda birkaç yıkkın kulübe dur-
 one courtyard-GEN end-POSS.3-LOC some old huts be-

²¹ Gerd Jendraschek (p.c.) disputes this as far as his native language, German, is concerned, at least: for Jendraschek, it is perfectly possible to obtain athetic reading with (locative) inversion constructions in that language.

²² Once again, I thank Gerd Jendraschek for having translated these examples, in conjunction with a native speaker.

	immobile	uyor-du. PROG-PAS				
c''''	Duvar-da wall-LOC uyor-du. PROG-PAS	antik bir ocak antique one chimney	çengel-i hook-POSS.3	asılı hanging		dur- stand-
d''''	Uzak-lar-da far-PL-LOC yavas yavas bat-ıyor-du. slow slow sink-PROG-PAS4	defa-lar-ca time-PL-ADVR	tamir repair	ed-il-mis make-PASS-PART		bir tanker one tanker
e''''	Birden suddenly ye gir-di ALL enter-PAS	yalınayak feet-bare	üç three	genç çocuk kos-arak young child run-PART		bahçe- garden-
f''''	Kapı-da door-LOC bir yazıt one inscription	gotik gothic	harf-ler-le letter-PL-COM	kaz-ıl-mıs engraved-PASS-PART		gizemli mysterious
g''''	Bir yığ5ın kuru yaprak-lar-da one heap dry leaf- PL-LOC uyor-du. PROG PAS		küçük kırmızımsı small reddish	bir one		kus yuval- bird nestle-
h''''	Bu büro-da D1 office-LOC	dört kişi four persons		çalış-ıyor. work-PROG		

Among these examples, it is worth mentioning example (7e'''), which cannot work in the same way as the parallel examples (7e), (7e'), (7e'') and (7e'''); the reason is that *bahçe-ye* 'in the garden', since it is a complement of the verb *girmek*, cannot be separated from it by being preposed clause-initially²³. This is interesting in the sense that it reinforces an observation made by Nathalie Fournier and Catherine Fuchs during their paper on locative inversion at the University of Paris III (1st February 2002): namely, that when the term preposed clause-initially in French is tightly governed by the verb, the latter is strongly "attracted" to it, a feature which is expressed via its placement in second position in the clause, in front of the subject.

Since in Turkish, the verb is constrained to occupy the final position in the clause, preposing of the locative phrase which it governs, and hence the separation of these two constituents, is impossible.

The immediate observation to make on the basis of the Turkish data is that there is no subject-verb inversion in this language; the most we can say is that there is "inversion" between subject and preposed locative/temporal adverbial, the verb remaining in its canonical position clause-finally. We thus have the following order of constituents: *Locative/temporal adverbial* + *subject* + *verb*. Turkish being, as already noted, an SOV language, the unmarked canonical order of the constituents at issue in these examples would be *Subject* +

²³ Thanks go to Gerd Jendraschek for this information.

locative/temporal adverbial + finite verb. A constant feature in relation to the examples of subject-verb inversion which we have seen so far in terms of the SVO languages would be the placement of the rhematic, focal subject in the position reserved for this purpose in the type of language at issue: *postverbal* in the SVO languages, and *immediately preverbal* in SOV languages such as Turkish (see also Hungarian in this respect). If the constituent placed in this position carries the nuclear pitch-accent, it is assigned contrastive focus. When the subject is in second position, but not the immediately preverbal one²⁴, it is most often interpreted as part of the rheme, even if it does not bear contrastive focus in this position (Gerd Jendraschek, p.c.).

Moreover, in Turkish – as also in Arabic and Russian, amongst other languages –, subject-adverb order signals the definiteness and hence potential topicality of the subject (no articles existing in Turkish – apart from the indefinite article *bir*): *Çocuk-lar yer-de yat-ıyor* child-PL ground-LOC lie-PROG ‘The children are lying on the ground’, in contrast to *Yer-de çocuk-lar yat-ıyor* ground-LOC child-PL lie-PROG ‘Children are lying on the ground’ (examples due to Gerd Jendraschek). So all the examples (7a''''-h'''), which show adverbial-subject order, would contain indefinite subjects – with the exception of example (7e''') with the adverb *birden* ‘suddenly’, according to Gerd Jendraschek, which is a sentence adverb, and so is more autonomous in relation to the clause. On the other hand, when there is no adverbial phrase in front of the subject, the sentence is ambiguous with respect to definiteness.

3.5 Classical and modern Arabic²⁵

Arabic is a basic VSO language (cf. Dahlgren, 1988, Moutaouakil, 1984); however, Ahmed Moutaouakil (p.c.) informs me that it is currently changing from a more or less flexible VSO order towards a rigid SVO one.

Like Turkish, Arabic is a case-language, a property which in principle allows for flexibility in word order. According to Albert Abi Aad (p.c.), when the sentence is marked for past tense, a quasi-auxiliary morpheme is used, namely *ka3na*²⁶, with the lexical verb occurring later on in the sentence in the neuter imperfective form. Still according to Abi Aad, in this case, the subject would occur to the left of this second verb, since it will have been “thematised” by *ka3na*. According to Moutaouakil, the Arabic sentence requires two special positions clause-initially rather than one (as in (5) above), since P1 contains the complementizers and P0 the interrogative pronouns, or a constituent marked for contrastive focus, or (optionally), a non-subject topic²⁷. See (13) below, the positional template proposed for Arabic by Moutaouakil (1989: (170), p. 60):

(13) P2, P1 P0 V S O X, P3. (Moutaouakil, 1989: (170), p. 60: positional template required for Arabic):

(14) a *h;a"lidan* (PatObj) *)abs9artu* (*la" 'amran*)
 Halid-ACC have-seen-I (not 'Amr-ACC)
 ‘It’s Halid that I saw (and not ‘Amr)’

²⁴ A situation which can arise when an adverbial or a direct/indirect object is placed between subject and verb.

²⁵ This sub-section is essentially composed from information kindly provided by Joseph van den Reysen, Ahmed Moutaouakil and Albert Abi Aad, and derived from Moutaouakil (1984), (1989).

²⁶ An aspectual operator or even ‘past time adverbial’, according to Abi Aad (p.c.): see the examples (7a''''-d''') and (7f''''-g''') below.

²⁷ The fact that *zaydun* is a focused subject in (14b) accounts for the tension caused by its being placed in P0, according to Moutaouakil; this would also be the case if the subject term were topic.

- b ??? zaydun (AgSuj) g\$4a (la" 'amrun)
 Zayd-NOM has-come (not (Amr)'
 'It's Zayd who came (and not (Amr)'
 (Moutaouakil, 1989: 62, exs. (182) et (183))

As in the other languages analyzed so far, the (canonical, in Arabic) positioning of the subject to the right of the verb signals its rhematic, and not thematic, status – though according to Moutaouakil (1989:76-77), topic constituents *may* remain in their canonical position rather than being placed in P0. However, he also notes (*ibid.*, p. 77) that the preferred position of topic constituents is towards the beginning rather than the end of the clause.

See (7a''''-h''''') below for translations into modern Arabic²⁸ of examples (7a-h), which we have already seen in English, French, Italian, German and Turkish:

- (7) a'''' □□□□ fush[atin min alg?a"bati ka"na yatara")a □□□□;□-un□
)ani"qun
 in an.opening of DEF-forest was visible-V cabin-NOM pretty
- b'''' da"hi;ila alfina!□i ka"nat taqu"mu masa"kina
 inside-LOC DEF-courtyard was stand-V-3SG.F hut-PL.NOM
 qadi"matun
 ageing
- c'''' □□□□" □□□□□"□□□□[i ka"nat tatadalla □□ us5ratun
 □□□□□□atun
 on DEF-wall was hang-IMPERF chimney-hook-NOM old-NOM
- d'''' fi" alb(a4di ka"nat na"qilatu naft[in ba"liyatu"n tag?raqu
 in DEF-distance was tanker patched-up sink-IMPERF-3SG.
 bibut]in
 slowly
- e'''' □□□□\□□□□□□□□ (ada" fi alh9adi"qati t;ala"t{atu
 □s5ubba"nin □9ufa"tu
 suddenly run.up-3SG.PERF in DEF-garden three boys bare-GEN
 □l)aqda"□i
 DEF-feet-GEN
- f''''(ala" alba"bi □□□□□□□ (qad) nuqis6at bih9huru"fin
 on DEF-door was-3SG.F engraved-PASS.PERF in-letters-F. NOM
 g?ut[iyyatin (iba"ratun □□□□□□□□□t-un□
 gothic-F.PL formula-NOM obscure-F.NOM
- g'''' f?""i □□□□□ti□)□□□□□□□in maytatin ka"na y arbud[u t[a
 in heap leaves-GEN dead was nested-PERF bird-NOM
 ma")ilun ila" alh[umrati
 veering towards redness-GEN

²⁸ My thanks are due to Joseph van den Reysen and Albert Abi Aad for having translated these examples.

h''''''□□□□ □□"□;a □al□□□□□bi□ □□□□a□□□)□□□□□□t-u
)□□□□;□□□s9in
 in this-F. DEF-office-F. there-work-3SG four-NOM persons-PAR

Apart from example (7d'''''), all the Arabic examples translated from (7a-h) show the same basic structure: LOC/TEMP ADV- (*ka4na(t)*) – V (+ ADV) – SUBJECT. Arabic prefers the order *theme-rheme* to the opposite - according to Abi Aad, when the verb is clause-initial in the canonical VSO order, it is itself thematised, in fact. Thus the preposed locative or temporal adverbial, as in all the examples (7a''''''- h''''') here, would necessarily be understood as thematic. In this case, a definite subject (also thematic, then) could not precede the verb. According to the positional template given in (13), we might say that the initial locative adverbial occupies either P0, or P2. In P0 (as in the examples here), it would be interpreted as topical, in the strict sense – which would prevent a definite, also topical, subject from occurring therein. And in P2, it would have a “framing” type of interpretation, rather than a topical one.

Regarding subject-verb agreement in classical Arabic, (15) below gives the rules formulated by the *Grammaire active de l'arabe* by M.Neyereneuf and G. Al-Hakkak:

(15) Rules for subject-verb agreement in Arabic (*Grammaire active de l'arabe* by M.Neyereneuf and G. Al-Hakkak, *Le Livre de Poche* (1996), Librairie Générale Française)

- in the first and second persons, the verb agrees in gender and in number with the subject;
- in the third person, when the verb precedes the subject, it remains in the singular and agrees with the subject if the latter is animate (in both singular and plural) or inanimate (in the singular);
- the verb assumes the feminine form if the subject is inanimate and plural.

Indeed, as far as the second rule is concerned, we see in examples (7b'''''), (7e''''') and (7h'''''), where the postverbal subject is plural, that the verb takes the 3rd person singular form. The situation is similar to what one finds in Russian, according to Corbett (2001: 17), where a verb with a quantified subject may take either 3rd person singular form, or 3rd person plural – the order subject-verb favouring plural agreement, while verb-subject order prefers singular “agreement”.

4. Towards a conclusion: subject-verb agreement in inversion constructions, the status of the postverbal “subject”, and personal vs. impersonal constructions

Before tackling the question of the agreement or non-agreement of postposed subject and verb within this construction, as well as the question of its impersonal status, let us see if it is possible to derive certain generalizations on the basis of this study of locative inversion in the eight languages represented here.

4.1 Taking stock of the “locative inversion” construction across the eight languages. Possible accounts within standard FG and Hengeveld’s FDG

First of all, we note the existence of certain common constraints, in three of the four major features of the construction, initially isolated on the basis of a consideration of English and French in section 2. First, the **preposed locative or temporal phrase** - in initial position

in all the eight languages - fulfils a thematic function, assuring the link with the discourse context upstream and also the anchoring ‘ground’ in which the new subject referent is to be located. Next, **the subject** occupies a rhematic position in relation to the verb, occurring either to its right in the six basic SVO languages, and in the one VSO one (Arabic), or to its left, but nonetheless in a special focus position “P4” immediately in front of the verb (see the “extended” template under (16) below); it may also occur to the left of this position but belonging to the rheme, in the case of the only SOV language represented here, Turkish. Finally, from the point of view of **information structure**, the order VS is indicated for unaccusative verbs in seven of the eight languages, expressing by default a thetic interpretation (wide focus, including the verb); for the unergative verbs, in Italian and Portuguese, as also more generally in the Germanic languages other than English, this order normally expresses a narrow, contrastive focus, excluding the verb, which would in this case be presupposed. Both types of reading - thetic and contrastive focus - are possible in this case only for Arabic and Turkish - in the latter case, the subject does not invert with the verb but with the preposed adverbial. We can see, then, that the common properties in the realization of this construction across the eight languages, representing three basic order types, far outstrip the differences.

(16) below presents an extended version of the positional template given under (5), which takes account of Turkish and Arabic. Note that I have replaced the position “P0” proposed by Moutaouakil (1989) in the template for Arabic under (13) by “P5”, since a position “P0” has independently been proposed for the Slavic languages by Stanchev (1997) and Siewierska (1998) clause-finally. This latter position was already included in template (5). In addition, position “P4” immediately in front of the position available for the verb, would be needed for Turkish as well as for other SOV languages. According to this extended template, the subject may be placed within this construction, depending on the language at issue, either in its “pattern position” for the language in question, otherwise in position P4, or else in the special position P0 clause-finally. Given that Turkish is a strict V-final language, however, this latter position would not be available for subjects in that language.

(16) P2, P1 (P5) (S) (O) (X) (P4) V (S) (O) (X) (P0), P3

Several properties of the “locative inversion” construction are specific to it, as we have seen: the locative or temporal preposed argument, level 1 or level 2 term placed in P1 rather than P2 (which position may well be filled by level 2 satellites, cf. §2.1); the non-predicating, purely locative or existential verb in second position (more or less equivalent here to a copula, as is suggested in §4.2); and the rhematic subject term in P4 or P0 (according to the language type), signalling new information relative to the context. Within a wider discourse context, the construction as a whole serves to background the situation evoked, including the new subject referent (cf. Huffman, 2002, Borillo, 2000, Cornish, 2001).

Now, in Dik (1997:§16.4.1, p. 403), one of the interacting principles determining the order of constituents at the expression level in the derivation, is presented as (GP7), the *Principle of Pragmatic Highlighting*. This principle stipulates that “Constituents with special pragmatic functionality (New Topic, Given Topic, Completive Focus, Contrastive Focus) are preferably placed in “special positions”, including, at least, the clause-initial position.” The operation of this principle is said to override principles (G4) (the *Principle of Domain Integrity*) and (G6) (the *Principle of Functional Stability*). However, nothing specific is said in connection with how exactly such principles operate in placing given constituents in particular clauses in certain positions.

What we see from our examination of the construction across eight languages is that there are a number of interacting dependencies holding between the various components of

the construction: If (as is the most common situation) the preposed locative or temporal term is closely linked to the verb, then the fact that it is preposed and does not occur in its canonical position to the right of that verb (in the seven languages besides Turkish examined here), attracts the verb into second position, so that it is adjacent to it (again, Turkish is the one exception to this tendency). The initial position (P1) occupied by the locative or temporal term is determined by the discourse functionality of the construction as a whole (cf. Birner & Ward, 1998, Huffman, 2002). The fact that, when the verb is tightly connected with this preposed term, it “inverts” with (or, in the basic SVO languages, occurs to the left of) its subject, and, as a corollary, the subject is rhematized, entails that the verb is non-predicating, but simply points towards the existence of the entity denoted by the subject.

It is difficult to see how all these properties might be specified independently of the relative ordering of the three constituents concerned, in an underlying clause representation under the standard FG procedure for a clause derivation. And clearly, the fact that, as we shall see in §4.2 below, the subject in the locative inversion construction has lost a number of its typical “subject” properties, means that the term concerned cannot simply have this function assigned at an earlier stage in a clause derivation (that of the extended predication, as standardly), only to lose a certain number of the attributes conferred by this function when, at the Expression level, it is placed in P4 or P0 position because of its pragmatic function as Presentational Focus or New Topic.

In order to account adequately for all these properties, it is necessary to have available a level of analysis at which the determining discourse properties of the construction may be represented. Such a level is provided in Hengeveld’s (2002a,b) *Functional Discourse Grammar* model in the shape of the Interpersonal Level, which feeds the Representational Level at which the grammatical and semantic structuring of the construction may be specified, prior to the Structural Level (morphological form, syntactic function assignment and constituent ordering) and Expression Level, at which matters of phonological and prosodic form are specified. The highest Interpersonal Level also feeds (and is in turn fed by) the Conceptual and Contextual components (see Fig. 3 in Hengeveld, 2002b), assignments from which are also clearly necessary for an adequate and complete analysis of the construction under study. See Cornish (2002b:§4) for brief discussion of the possible treatment of the four FG Topic functions within the FDG model.

Setting the Germanic languages German and Norwegian aside (since here inversion is automatic once the P1 position in the clause is filled, whatever the nature of the filler expression), at the initial *Interpersonal Level* in the FDG model, we may specify the speaker’s discourse intentions in terms of Hannay’s (1991) “modes of message management”, as follows: the mode at issue is his “Presentational mode”, whereby the speaker intends to introduce a new discourse entity to the addressee within a “staging” context constituted by a locative or temporal frame. The speaker’s *move* here, then, is one of wishing to present a discourse-new referent to the addressee. In terms of the ascription of a property to an argument, there is none here, as we have seen (cf. §2.3), the verb in the construction being non-predicating. There is however a referential *act*, involving the establishment of the existence of a discourse-new referent within a given locative or temporal context. According to these values, then, the locative argument or level 1 or 2 satellite in the construction will be assigned (by hypothesis) the pragmatic function “Topic” (more specifically, I would argue, “Sub-Topic”); and the argument whose referent is to be introduced in this context, the function “Presentational Focus”.

At the following Level in the derivation, the *Representational Level*, a verb with the properties [+Loc] or [+Exist] is chosen, in conformity with the absence of property-ascription specified at the preceding Interpersonal Level. The verb is given a first argument (x_1), which by default is indefinite and which will be annotated for “Pres-Foc”; and a second Locative or

Temporal argument $(x_2)_{\text{Loc/Temp}}$ or level 1 $(y_1)^1_{\text{Loc/Temp}}$ or level 2 $(y_1)^2_{\text{Loc/Temp}}$ satellite which is marked for these features and annotated for “Sub-Top”.

Furthermore, at the next stage in the derivation, that of the *Structural Level* (Hengeveld, 2002b), the first argument will be assigned the syntactic function “Subject”.

Finally, still within the *Structural Level*, one of $(x_2)_{\text{Loc/TempSub-Top}}$, $(y_1)^1_{\text{Loc/TempSub-Top}}$ OR $(y_1)^2_{\text{Loc/TempSub-Top}}$ (whichever of these form types is chosen in any instance) will be placed in P1 position²⁹ on the constituent order template in (16), the locative or existential verb in V, and the first argument $(x_1)_{\text{Pres-FocSubj}}$ will go to P0. In the case of the SOV language represented here (Turkish), the latter will be placed under P4, there being no ‘P0’ position available for such languages (cf. Herring & Paolillo, 1995).

4.2 *The agreement properties of the construction in certain languages, the subjecthood of postposed “subject” terms, and the impersonal status of locative inversion*

Let us turn now to the question of agreement, and whether the postposed subject is still a genuine “subject”. We have noted at several points in the comparison of the locative inversion construction in the eight languages up to now that agreement in number could be lacking between preposed verb and postposed subject: this was the case with the unaccusative verbs in European Portuguese (examples (10a’, b’ et c’)), but only in the context of the colloquial, spoken language³⁰; as well as in the case of Arabic, whatever the type of verb involved³¹. Arabic goes even further than colloquial European Portuguese, in that it allows non-agreement in number even in the case of the order subject-verb: this would be motivated by the fact that the subject is inanimate and plural.

This state of affairs, that is, the absence of agreement between a verb and its subject, where agreement is otherwise regularly expressed between these two items in the language in question, is not rare in the world’s languages, as Lazard (1994) reminds us. One factor which would motivate this, according to Lazard, is what he calls the speaker’s “communicative goal” (“la visée communicative”) – in other words, the thematic or rhematic status assigned either to the verb, or to the subject, or to the subject+verb (or verb+subject) unit:

- (17) “...En règle générale, l’accord tend à ne pas se faire quand l’actant concerné et le verbe appartiennent au même membre (rhème ou, plus rarement, thème) de la structure de visée. Au contraire, un actant thématique tend à être coréférencié dans la forme verbale, qui est par nature typiquement rhématique.” (Lazard, 1994: 212)

‘As a general rule, agreement tends not to occur when the argument concerned and the verb belong to the same unit (rheme, or more rarely, theme) of the information structure. On the other hand, a thematic argument tends to be cross-referenced on the verb, which is by nature typically rhematic’

Although it does not involve subject-verb inversion, one of the examples presented by Lazard is particularly instructive. See the pair of Persian sentences taken from Lazard (1994: (2a,b), p. 174) under (18a and b):

²⁹ In fact, in the case of the choice of a level 2 locative or temporal satellite, it would seem that there are two possible positions for such a form type to occupy: either P1 (as for level 1 satellites), in which case the verb will follow without interruption (see example (3a) in §2.1), or P2, in which case it will have a “Theme”-type value and not a “(Sub-)Topic” one (see example (3b)). In such a situation, the verb will not need to follow the satellite immediately, and the subject term can then occupy P1 - not as Topic, but as Focus.

³⁰ An identical situation obtains with preposed unaccusative verbs in the Bergamasco dialect of northern Italy, according to M-N. Carminati (p.c.), as already noted.

³¹ Examples (7b’’’’’), (7e’’’’’) and (7h’’’’’), the first two containing an unaccusative verb, and the last, an unergative one.

- (18) a mehmân-hâ âmad-and.
 guest-PL come/PAS-3PL
 ‘The guests have come’
- b mehmân-hâ âmad-ø
 come/PAS-3SG
 ‘There have come a number of guests’

As Lazard (1994: 214) explains, from the point of view of information structure (la “visée communicative”), (18a) includes two units, a theme, *mehmân-hâ* ‘the guests’, and a rheme, *âmad-and* ‘have come’, and the verb agrees in number and person with the theme constituent. According to Lazard (1994: 214), “the sentence is pronounced with two pitch-accents”. In (18b), on the other hand, there is only a single pitch accent, which falls on the nominal term, the sentence is “entirely rhematic”, and the verb does not agree (at least in number). Lazard’s comment (p. 234) on the rhematic subject which no longer determines an agreement marking on the verb in this configuration, is eloquent: “...can we still call it a subject?”; for indeed, one of the cross-linguistic properties of the subject is the determination of an agreement marking in the verb with which it is in construction.

It is precisely this state of affairs which characterizes the examples mentioned a moment ago where the subject is postverbal, bearing a rhematic function, then, and where agreement with the subject (in number, at least) is not expressed. It is in fact no accident that, in every case, it is the 3rd person singular form of the verb which appears; for it is precisely these values which are the unmarked feature values of the morphosyntactic categories involved – namely, 3rd for the category of person, and singular for that of number.

Perlmutter (1983), in a very interesting article in relation to constructions with and without inversion in Italian, claims that inversions involving unaccusative verbs (whose subject corresponds to an “internal” but not “external” argument, in relation to the verbal predicate) are equivalent to an impersonal construction, where the subject is an unexpressed expletive pronoun. Whenever the verb does not agree with its (lexical) subject, as in the examples of spoken Portuguese and standard Arabic we saw earlier, the true impersonal status is manifest, via the “default” verbal inflections, i.e. 3rd person, singular number and neuter gender, where relevant – the subject then being an unexpressed expletive pronoun. This is manifest overtly in French with the impersonal construction which is possible with unaccusative verbs, as in: *Il est arrivé/venu quinze touristes* ‘There arrived/came 15 tourists’. The impersonal status which inversion constructions would represent - where there is a choice with respect to an uninverted variant - would be entirely congruent with the “presentational” function of inversion constructions generally.

Moreover, the postposed subjects of unaccusative verbs in Italian cannot control the reference of the unexpressed subject (“PRO” in Generative terminology) of an embedded infinitival or participial clause, nor even act as antecedent for a 3rd person pronoun within the sentence of which the preposed verb is main verb, according to Carminati (2001: ch. 3). I would explain these “defective antecedent” properties in terms of the following consideration: a definite unaccented pronominal expression is *ipso facto* thematic, in other words, its referent is assumed to be familiar to the addressee; yet at the same time, the referent of the postposed subject (in SVO languages) is rhematic, focal, hence presented as “discourse-new” to the addressee: whence the contradiction and the impossibilities observed. The following (constructed) example of defective cataphora illustrates the problem:

- (19) #While *he_i* was leaving the house *he_i* had just broken into, the alarm was

accidentally set off by *a Dover-based burglar*_i³².

For Relational Grammar (the framework chosen by Perlmutter for his study), postposed subjects of unaccusative verbs would have the status of grammatical “chômeurs”, since their prime function of acting as ‘pivot’ at an earlier stratum in the derivation would have been “usurped” by another nominal constituent at a later stratum – in the present case, that of the null expletive, which we can identify with the abstract LOC constituent proposed by Pinto (1997) (see §3.1 above).

If the locative inversion construction is at base an impersonal construction, then it should be possible to insert in preverbal subject position, in those SVO languages which do not allow the non-realization of a pronominal subject, an expletive pronoun (e.g. *there* in English and impersonal *il* in French). Let us try to apply such insertions first of all in the canonical English, then the French examples presented earlier in (7a-h) and (7a'-h'), respectively:

- (20)a In a clearing there *could be seen* a charming cottage.
 b At the end of a courtyard there *stood* some ageing huts.
 c On the wall there *hung* an antique chimney hook.
 d In the distance there *was* slowly *sinking* a patched-up oil tanker.
 e Into the garden there suddenly *ran* three young barefoot boys.
 f ?On the door there *was engraved* in gothic letters a mysterious inscription.
 g Nestling in a pile of dead leaves there *was* a tiny reddish bird.
 h ?In this office there *work* four people.
- (21)a Dans une clairière il *se voyait* une coquette chaumière.
 b Au fond d'une cour il *se dressait* de vétustes baraquements.
 c ?Sur le mur il *pendait* une antique crémaillère.
 d ?Dans le lointain il *coulait* lentement un pétrolier rafistolé.
 e ?*Dans le jardin il *accourut* soudain trois jeunes garçons aux pieds nus.
 f ?* Sur la porte il *était gravée* en lettres gothiques une inscription mystérieuse.
 g Tapi dans un tas de feuilles mortes il *y avait* un oiselet rougeâtre.
 h ?* Dans ce bureau il *travaille* quatre personnes.

On the whole, such insertions do not greatly affect the grammaticality of the inversion sentences, nor the type of interpretation to which they give rise – though this is more clearly the case in English with expletive *there* than with the impersonal pronoun *il* in French. As far as the latter realizations are concerned, we may observe that the more the preposed verb is ‘empty’ semantically (tending towards a mere copula, as in (21a,b) – cf. Blinkenberg (1928: 105) -, the less the insertion of impersonal *il* is likely to modify the meaning and grammaticality of the original example. In (21g), the copula *était* ‘was’ would be replaced by the existential presentational form *il y avait* ‘there was’. (21e) and (21h) would not be candidates for the impersonal construction, since their verbs (respectively, *accourir* ‘to run up’ and *travailler* ‘to work’) are unergatives and not unaccusatives. As such, their sole argument is not internal, but external. This supports Perlmutter’s (1983) analysis, then, according to which it is only unaccusative verbs which give rise to an impersonal construction

³² The co-indices here indicate the identity of the intended referents, and the crosshatch, the pragmatically defective character of the example as a potential utterance.

when their ‘subject’³³ is postposed in relation to the verb. It is for the same reason that (20h) is not fully acceptable in English (as was already its inverted counterpart (7h)).

Yet, rather than subscribing entirely to Perlmutter’s (1983) hypotheses, it would seem preferable to conclude from these non-subject properties of postposed subjects of unaccusative verbs³⁴, that these NPs are still “subjects”, but not canonical ones. This is also the position defended by Lambrecht (1994: 22). It is in the last analysis the subject’s marked status as bearer of the pragmatic function Focus, and not the unmarked one of Topic, strongly expected in the case of canonical subjects, which seems to lie behind all these non-subject properties. This would be yet another example of a pragmatic property overriding a syntactic one.

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³³ In fact, internal argument, since it is made a “chômeur” by the unexpressed expletive which fulfils the subject function in this case.

³⁴ Position to the right and not the left of the verb, possible absence of agreement in number expressed by the verb, impossibility of controlling the reference of the unexpressed subject of a non-finite subordinate clause, etc.

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