

January 23, 2003

## CLASS 12: Subjects

### Expletive *there*

Consider ***there* in subject position** in (1): it doesn't bear semantic meaning (it lacks a theta-role, is not an argument of the verb), but only fulfills the purpose that the **subject position be filled**.

- (1) a. **There** is *a student* there. (cf. **There** is *a student* over there / here / in the hall.)  
b. **There** is *someone / nobody* waiting for you.  
c. **There** are *several professors / many students / some secretaries* demonstrating today.  
d. \* **There** is/are *the best student / this professor / those secretaries* waiting for you.

**Properties of *there*** include obligatory occurrence in **subject position** and **agreement** with the auxiliary (*is/are*). And of course, lack of semantic content/argument status/theta-role — it's an **expletive** (*pleonastic* or *dummy* element), unlike the **contentful locative *there*** (cf. (1a)).

But it **acts like a subject** in participating in **tags** and subject-auxiliary **inversion**, for example:

- (2) a. **There's** a student there, isn't ***there***?  
b. **There** are some secretaries demonstrating today, aren't ***there***?  
(3) a. ***Is there*** a student at the door?  
b. ***Are there*** some secretaries demonstrating today or?

Fair enough. Expletive *there* is a dummy subject. Its position is clear: SpecIP. **But what about the real subject?** Clearly we do have a real argument subject bearing a theta-role in (1a-d).

Welcome to the world of the **VP-internal subject hypothesis** (or better **predicate-internal**).

- (4) a. [<sub>IP</sub> there is [<sub>VP</sub> **nobody** [<sub>V'</sub> waiting for you ]]]  
b. [<sub>IP</sub> there are [<sub>VP</sub> **some secretaries** [<sub>V'</sub> [<sub>V'</sub> demonstrating ] today ]]]

If this is so, we would expect **all subjects to be derived**, i.e. moved from **SpecVP to SpecIP**.

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### Homework: Exercise 11

- A. 📖 Prepare next class by thoroughly reading the entire **chapter 7!**  
B. ✍️ **NO "REAL" HOMEWORK: If you want to do some additional exercises (especially if you're short on graded homework exercises!!!), you can turn in ANY TWO of the exercises that you haven't already turned in to get a grade FOR ONE exercise.**