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BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

51st Annual Meeting of the Societas Linguistica Europaea
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It can be argued that the German presentational expletive *es* (cf. (1a) as opposed to 'extraposition' *es* (1b)) is not a subject, while the Norwegian expletive *det* is a subject (cf. (2)), based on persistence of the expletive in subject-verb inversion (cf. Pütz (1974)). The German 'presented' NP, henceforth *presNP*, is arguably a subject (by subject-verb agreement, as in (1a)) while the status of the Norwegian counterpart is unclear: Norwegian *presNP* occurs after the main verb and must be indefinite, as opposed to German (cf. (1 and 2)), and in examples like (3), an NP can precede it, inviting an analysis where the first NP is indirect object and *presNP* a direct object (DO). However, in (4), pronouns with assumed DO status can precede *presNP*, and even sequences pronoun plus object predicative (predicated of the pronoun) can precede *presNP* (cf. (4d)), suggesting that *presNP* is rather some kind of 'chômeur'.

(1) a. Es sitzen (die letzte) drei Personen hier
  EXPL sit-PRES.PL (the last) three person-PL here
 b. Hier sitzen (*es) drei Personen
 c. Warum ist *(es) wichtig dass ich komme?
  Why is it important that I come
(2) a. Det vil komme en inspektør/*inspektøren imorgen
  there will come an inspector/inspector-DEF tomorrow
 b. Imorgen vil *(det) komme en inspektør.
(3) Det venter ham ikke en ulykke /*ulykken
  EXPL awaits him not an accident / accident-DEF
(4) a. Det støttet ham ikke mange mennesker
  There supported him not many people
 b. Det kjørte seg ihjel en formel 1-kjører
  there drove REFL to-death a formel-1-driver

As for 'new'-ness of the construction, the circumstance that the Norwegian *PresNP* must be 'new on the scene' (being indefinite) and the German not, shows this factor to be in principle independent of theticity. This is supported by the circumstance that a pronoun can precede the adverb *ikke* as in (4a), a general criterion that the expression including the pronoun is *presupposed* (cf. Hellan 2012), showing that also a Norwegian presentational can involve 'old' information.

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Theticity in Dutch: Encoded or inferred?

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A wide variety of linguistic structures in various languages has been analyzed as thetic sentences (Kuroda 1972, Rosengren 1997, Sasse 1987, 1995, 2006, Ulrich 1985), as instances of the – closely related – sentence-focus construction (Lambrecht 1987, 1994, 2000) or as presentational sentences (Venier 2002). Also in Dutch a number of sentential constructions have been analyzed as thetic, among which two constructions figure prominently: the Syntactic Inversion with Filler Insertion Construction (henceforth: SIFIC), and the Non-Prototypical Cleft (henceforth: NPC) (cf. Barbier 1996, Elffers 1977, Grondelaers 2000, Kirsner 1979, Sasse 2006, Schermer-Vermeer 1985, Vandeweghe 2004, among others). In the SIFIC the inverted subject follows the verb, which in turn is preceded by the adverbial pronoun *er*, e.g. (1). In the NPC a clefted syntactic structure is introduced by the same adverbial pronoun *er*, e.g. (2), rather than by the pronoun *het*, used in prototypical Dutch clefts:

(1) *Er   valt   sneeuw* (Barbier 1996).
   there   falls   snow
   'It is snowing.'

(2) *Er   is een hond   die   blaft* (Kirsner 1979).
   there   is   a dog   that   barks
   'There is a dog barking.'

However, it has been questioned whether various language-specific constructions really encode a universal notion of theticity (whether defined in logical terms or in information-structural terms) as their conventional meaning or semantics (cf. Matić 2003, Matić & Wedgwood 2013, Sasse 1995, 2006). The status of the NPC as a dedicated thetic construction is furthermore challenged by recent analyses of the NPC in French and Italian demonstrating its broader usage potential (cf. Karssenberg 2016, Karssenberg et al. 2018). Building on an approach that differentiates between the encoded meaning (semantics) of constructions (both lexical and sentential) and discourse-generated senses or conversational implicatures (pragmatics) (cf. Atlas 2005, Carston 2008, Coseriu 1985, 2000, Grice 1989, Levinson 2000), this paper investigates the SIFIC and the NPC in Dutch and examines whether theticity (in one of its possible definitions) can be considered to be the encoded and non-defeasible semantics of the two constructions.

On the basis of a corpus-research of both spoken and written Dutch the various possible uses of the two constructions were analyzed. Construction tokens and their contexts were randomly extracted from the *SoNaR Corpus* and annotated via a qualitative analysis for various factors related to the various possible definitions of the notion theticity. The factors used include the kind of logical judgment involved (thetic or categorical), topic-comment structure (sentence with or without topic expression) and presupposition-assertion articulation (predicate, argument or sentence focus). By reporting on the various thetic *and* non-thetic uses of the SIFIC and NPC, this paper aims not only to shed light on the semantics and pragmatics of the two constructions, but also to contribute to the ongoing discussion regarding the linguistic or conceptual nature of theticity. On the basis of the corpus data it will be argued that theticity should not be seen as an encoded linguistic meaning in Dutch, but rather as a logical and/or discourse oriented phenomenon that can be communicated by means of non-dedicated linguistic structures via a process of implicature and inference.

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Predication in thetic constructions: A case study in Ancient Hebrew

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Debate about what constitutes predication has occurred since the time of Aristotle. The notion of *saturation* of an open predicate by its argument (Subject) has been a predominant description in the literature (Rothstein 2001). Certain sentence types, however, have defied a clear Subject-Predicate structure, leading to the need for further studies of predication. Sentences such as *It's raining* or *There is hot coffee in the kitchen* have led to a research tradition devoted to discerning their fundamental predication.

Francez (2009) has presented an argument for the primary predication in existentials. He claims that the predicate is the pivot (post-verbal NP) and the (implicit) argument is the contextual domain of the sentence. Like existentials, thetic constructions disrupt the categorical interpretation of sentences utilizing syntactic or prosodic means (Sasse 1987). Existentials have even been referred to as entity-thetics (Gast and Haas 2011). In this paper, I apply the description of existential predication presented by Francez (2009) to that of thetic constructions. This predicate structure is evident in one construction used in Ancient Hebrew (AH) for thetic assertions.

In AH the copula *hyh* may be used as a genuine copula to license TAM features in certain contexts, but may also be used in clause-initial position with defective agreement. Example (1) demonstrates that this construction lacks φ-agreement (defaults to $_{3MS}$) but mirrors the TAM agreement of the matrix clause it precedes.

(1)   Genesis 39.7

wayhi   *ʾaḥar had- dəḇārim hā -ʾellê   wattiśśāʾ   ešeṯ   ʾăḏōnāyw*

COP.PRET.3MS after $_{ART}$-things $_{ART}$- these lifted.3FS.PRET wife.GEN master.3MS

ʾeṯ -ʿenehā   ʾel-yôseṗ

OBJ- eyes.3FS   to-Joseph

It happened, after these things, the wife of his master lifted her eyes to Joseph.

This construction iconically supports the view that the primary assertion is the event and not the categorical relationship between Subject and Predicate. This construction has been identified as a dislocation construction which serves to indicate that the primary assertion is not the Topic-Comment structure of the matrix sentence but the entire sentence itself (Wilson 2016, 2017).

Several other languages have displayed similarities with the AH construction under consideration, i.e. not functioning as a complete clause but anticipating another clause to complete it. (Deguchi 2012; Shkapa 2012; Rigau 2001; Shwartz 2010; Zólyomi 2014). The English pseudo-clefts *What happened was…* and *It turned out that…* are related to this phenomenon. The anticipatory nature of these constructions give further evidence that the matrix sentence is an open function which needs saturation. The open function, or *common ground*, of these thetic constructions is that *something happened*. Just as existential constructions use the contextual domain as their implicit argument, thetic