Outline:

- What is the Definiteness Effect (DE)?
    - the simple case (?): copular clauses
    - the "strong"- vs. "weak"-determiner distinction (Milsark 1974, 1977)
- **Puzzle 3A:** What accounts for the DE?
- (The basic contours of) a semantic account
- Expanding the picture
    - raising
    - unaccusatives & passives
    - *...other?*
- Some comments on revisions that the semantic account requires, in light of the aforementioned expanded picture
- **Interlude:** Whither "existential construction"?
- A crash-course *(within a crash-course!)* on Icelandic morphosyntax
    - subjecthood diagnostics and non-nominative finite subjects in Icelandic
    - the Icelandic transitive-expletive construction
    - the behavior of experiencer+infinitive verbs
- The DE in Icelandic
- The fundamental hopelessness of semantic approaches to the DE
    - BONUS: Why there is probably no coherent notion of "existential construction"
- **Puzzle 3B:** divergences between definite-vs.-indefinite and other quantificational distinctions (Vangsnes 2002, *i.a.*)

1. What is the Definiteness Effect (DE)?

1.1. The Basics

(1)   a.   There is a chair in the room.
    b.   There is one chair in the room.
(2)   a.   There are some chairs in the room.
    b.   There are two chairs in the room.
    c.   There are three chairs in the room.
(3)   There are many chairs in the room.
(4)   a.   There is no chair in the room.
    b.   There are no chairs in the room.

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(5)   * There is the chair in the room.   (*cf.* The chair is in the room.)
(6)   a.   * There is every chair in the room.   (*cf.* Every chair is in the room.)
    b.   * There are all (the) chairs in the room.   (*cf.* All (the) chairs are in the room.)
    c.   * There are both chairs in the room.   (*cf.* Both chairs are in the room.)
(7)   * There are most chairs in the room.   (*cf.* Most chairs are in the room.)

- Some empirical caveats:
  - All of these are okay in the "listing" or "mention some" usage. We'll abstract away from that here.
  - It's also important to steer clear of the LOCATIVE interpretation of *there*, when evaluating the well-formedness of these utterances

- So what do we do with all this?
  - Well, first of all, we(=Milsark) found a phenomenon! Let's name it.
  - Ladies and gentlemen: **the *Definiteness Effect* (or *DE*)**.
  - Furthermore, we can now classify determiners into two "bins" —
    - depending on whether they are okay in the frame in (8):

      (8)   There is/are DET <noun> Predicate.

    - the two bins are named:
      - "strong": *the, every, all, both, most*
      - "weak": *a, some, one, two, three, …, many, no*

  - In fact, we could even use this to classify "new" (to us) determiners
    - e.g.:
      Is *all but seven* a "strong" determiner, or a "weak" one?

1.2. **Weak and Strong Determiners**

- weak determiners:
  a, s(ə)m, one, two, three, ..., at most/at least/exactly/more than/nearly/only one, two, three, ..., many, how many, a few, several, no, ...
- strong determiners:
  every, each, the, all, most, both, neither, which of the two, all but two, ...

Of course, this is just question-begging:
What makes a given determiner "strong" or "weak"?

2. (The basic contours of) a semantic account[1]

Milsark 1977 *(Milwark!)*, p. 25:

> "If there be is to be interpreted as an expression of existential quantification on the following NP, no NP which itself contains a quantifier (i.e., a strong determiner) may appear in this position, since this would result in double quantification of the set denoted by the NP."

- Notice that this already stretches the notion of "existen{ce,tial}" somewhat —
  - since one might wonder in what sense (9) reflects an "existential" proposition

  (9)   There isn't a/*the chair in the room.

⇒ Barwise & Cooper 1981:
   (i)   a determiner D is *positive strong* if for every model M and every $A \subseteq E$, if D(A) is defined, then D(A)(A) = 1
   (ii) a determiner D is *negative strong* if for every model M and every $A \subseteq E$, if D(A) is defined, then D(A)(A) = 0
   (iii) a determiner D is *weak* if it is neither positive strong nor negative strong

- Given the generalized-quantifier treatment of determiners, to say that "[D NP] exists" is to say D(⟦NP⟧)(E) (where E is the domain of all individuals in the model)
- All natural-language determiners are *conservative* (Barwise & Cooper 1981) — i.e., for any natural-language determiner D, it holds that $\forall A,B$: D(A)(B) = D(A)(A∩B)
- Therefore, D(⟦NP⟧)(E) = D(⟦NP⟧)(E∩⟦NP⟧), which, because E is the domain of all individuals, is itself equivalent to D(⟦NP⟧)(⟦NP⟧)
- Now, if D is *positive strong*, D(⟦NP⟧)(⟦NP⟧) is tautological;
- If D is *negative strong*, D(⟦NP⟧)(⟦NP⟧) is contradictory;
- Only if D is *weak* is D(⟦NP⟧)(⟦NP⟧) nontrivial.

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[1] This section builds (heavily) on a handout by Barbara Partee:
http://people.umass.edu/partee/NZ_2006/NZ15%20Weak%20NPs%20and%20Existential%20Ss.pdf

- Examples:
    - *Every solution is a solution* is true in every model M (including those in which there are no solutions) ⇒ *every* is positive strong ⇒ *There is every solution in the book* is ill-formed.
    - *Three solutions are solutions* is false in models with fewer than three solutions, and true in models with more than three solutions ⇒ *three* is weak ⇒ *There are three solutions in the book* is well-formed.
    - *No solution is a solution* is false in models with at least one solution, but true in models with no solutions ⇒ *no* is weak ⇒ *There is no solution in the book* is well-formed.

- There then emerge some objections to this, for examples on the grounds that the ill-formedness of DE-violating sentences does not seem *(introspectively, I guess…?)* on a par with the ill-formedness of tautologies and/or contradictions
    - leading to other accounts (Keenan, Zucchi, and Keenan again), with arguments about things like:
        - whether the right account should be a semantic-pragmatic hybrid, or purely semantic
        - I will abstract away from these subtleties in most of what follows, and refer to this whole family of approaches as "meaning-based approaches"

- I won't be delving any deeper into these theoretical developments, because **(a)** I'm not qualified to; and **(b)** as I will be arguing, these people are barking up the wrong tree. The DE is a morphosyntactic phenomenon, and cannot be accounted for semantically or pragmatically (under any contentful definition of those two things).

- Before we see that in earnest, though, let's talk a little more about the distribution of the DE…

3. The DE beyond copular sentences

- Copular constructions are not the only thing that exhibits the DE
- It arises, for example, with SUBJ-to-SUBJ raising predicates:

(10) a.   There seem(s) to be a/s(ə)m/three/many/… chair(s) in the room.
     b.   * There seem(s) to be the/every/most/… chair(s) in the room.

                                                    (cf. The/every/most/… chair(s) seem to be in the room.)

- This is entirely general as far as SUBJ-to-SUBJ raising goes
    - i.e., you can substitute *seem* in (10) with *appear, be likely*, etc., and the effects don't change

- What does this mean for meaning-based approaches to the DE?
    - well, here's what we probably <u>don't</u> want to say:
    we don't want to say that facts like (10) have nothing to do with the DE as surveyed in §1–§2
    - that's because the effect in (10) bifurcates determiners into the exact same sets identified by Milsark et alia
    - and so, if some other, unrelated factor F gives rise to the effect in (10), it seems quite likely that F will account for the data in §1–§2, too
        - rendering the account(s) in §2 superfluous

- Why is this important? Because, to the extent that sentences like *There is(n't) a chair in the room* are "existential," we now have to say that sentences like *There (doesn't) seem(s) to be a chair in the room* are also "existential"
- More generally, we now have a substantive question to contend with, which may have seemed trivial earlier, but no longer seems that way:
    - ***What makes a sentence σ an "existential" sentence?***

- Now, it might <u>seem</u> like that's (still) an easy question to answer
    - certainly, looking at English, you can quite easily delude yourself into thinking that having a *there*-expletive subject has something to do with it
    (SPOILER: Nope.)
    - but for now I'm just interested in highlighting that this has suddenly become a relevant question

- Let's get back to a survey of those environments in which we find the DE
- Unaccusatives:

(11) a.   There arrived a/s(ə)m/three/many/… representative(s).
   b.   * There arrived the/every/most/… representatives.
<div align="right">

(cf. The/every/most/… representatives(s) arrived.)

</div>

- Passives:

(12) a.   There {was/were} arrested a/s(ə)m/three/many/… protester(s).
   b.   * There {was/were} arrested the/every/most/… protester(s).
<div align="right">

(cf. The/every/most/… protester(s) {was/were} arrested.)

</div>

- ***What do these environment – copular clauses, SUBJ-to-SUBJ raising, unaccusatives, passives – all have in common?***

4. Interlude

Here are some questions I think are worth pondering at this point:

- What is an "existential construction"? Is it defined syntactically? Semantically? Does it have any definition besides "those constructions that give rise to the DE" (in which case, any appeal to the status of the construction as "existential" in an account of the DE would render the entire account circular)?
- Let's assume for now that there is such a thing as a <u>semantically</u> existential proposition (a SEP). Is there a particular morphosyntactic element that is responsible for making a sentence (or clause) into a SEP? Is it the presence of any existential quantifier anywhere in the sentence (or clause)? Is it the presence of an expletive? Is it the subject remaining in a low position? …
- With respect to the first of these options – the presence of any existential quantifier anywhere in the sentence (or clause) – it is worthwhile to ponder sentences like the following:

(13) a. John sat next to a/s(ə)m/three/many historical monument(s).
    b. John sat next to the/every/most/… historical monument(s).
(14) a. There seems to s(ə)m girl to be a boy in the garden.
    b. There seems to the girl to be a boy in the garden.

Are (13a) and/or (14a) "existential constructions"? Are they SEPs?
And if so, why are (13b)/(14b) good?

5. Icelandic morphosyntax on one leg

- Icelandic is an insular Scandinavian language, spoken by about 350,000 people
- Some of its noteworthy features:
  - a relatively rich morphological case system
  - both finite and participial agreement systems
  - concord within the noun phrase
- But perhaps the most famous (notorious?) feature of Icelandic syntax is…
  - the evidence it provides for *quirky case* and for *dependent case*

5.1. Quirky case in Icelandic

- Like verbs in many other languages, Icelandic verbs can idiosyncratically select for a particular case on their argument
  - think of, e.g., ACC on the argument of *hear* vs. DAT on the argument of *listen*

(8) a. Ég hjálpaði honum.   DAT
    I   helped   him(D)

    b. Ég mun sakna hans.   GEN
    I   will   miss   him(G)

<div align="right">(Zaenen, Maling & Thráinsson 1985:445)</div>

- Crucially, though:
  Icelandic also has verbs that select for idiosyncratic case on their **subjects**

- It is possible that all of these are underlyingly *internal arguments*;
- Certainly, the easiest way to find them is just taking one of these quirky-object verbs
  (cf. ZMT's (8a–b), above), and passivizing them

(11)a.   Þeim   var hjálpað.
         them(D) was helped

   b.   Hennar var saknað.
        her(G) was missed

<div align="right">(ZMT:446)</div>

- Now, at this juncture, some linguistic historiography might be in order:
  - Icelandic is a V2 language —
    - in matrix (and some embedded) clauses, the finite verb always occurs in <u>second position</u>, preceded by some other XP
    - which XP it is that will show up pre-verbally is rather flexible, at least in matrix clauses
    - therefore, it's not immediately clear from just the word order in, e.g., ZMT's (11a–b), that these pre-verbal XPs are in fact **subjects**
  - indeed, other Germanic languages have essentially identical V2 word-orders in passives, where the pre-verbal XP turns out not to be a subject at all:

(4)   Ihm   wurde geholfen. (German)
        Honum var   hjálpað. (Icelandic)
        him(D) was   helped

<div align="right">(ZMT:444)</div>

  - this alternative analysis (viz. that the preverbal XP is not a subject) is made even more plausible by the fact that these are languages that allow a particular kind of so-called "impersonal" passive —

(9)a.   Það   var dansað í gær.
        There was danced yesterday

   b.   Í gær var dansað.

<div align="right">(ZMT:445)</div>

- HOWEVER, it turns out that Icelandic is fundamentally different from German in this regard;
- Specifically, these pre-verbal XPs behave like **subjects** in Icelandic, though they don't in German.

- Diagnostics for subjecthood of quirky(≈non-nominative) DPs

  o raising-to-OBJ:

(14) a. Guðrún   saknar Haraldar.
         Gudrun(N) misses Harold(G)

     b. Ég taldi   Guðrúnu   í barnaskap mínum sakna
         I believed Gudrun(A) in foolishness my   to-miss
         Haraldar.
         Harold(G)

     c. Haraldar   saknar Guðrún.
         Harold(G) misses Gudrun(N)

     d. *Ég taldi ⎰Haraldar⎱ sakna ⎰Guðrún ⎱
                  ⎱Harald ⎰   ⎱Guðrúnu⎰

        I believed ⎰Harold(G)⎱ to-miss ⎰Gudrun(N)⎱
                   ⎱Harold(A)⎰   *⎱Gudrun(A)⎰*

(16)   Ég tel   henni hafa   alltaf þótt
       I   believe her(D) to-have always thought
       Ólafur   leiðinlegur.
       Olaf(N) boring(N)

(30)   Ég tel   þeim   hafa   verið hjálpað í prófinu.
       I   believe them(D) to-have been helped in the-exam

                                        (ZMT:448–449, 455)

o   subject-oriented reflexives:

(17)a.   **Sigga**   barði mig   með dúkkunni **sinni/*hennar**.
          Sigga(N) hit   me(A) with doll(D)   her(*[−REFL])
          Sigga hit me with her doll.

      b.   Ég barði **Siggu**   með dúkkunni **hennar/*sinni**.
            I   hit   Sigga(A) with doll   her(*[+REFL])
            I hit Sigga with her doll.

      c.   **Siggu** barði ég með dúkkunni **hennar/*sinni**.
            Sigga I hit with her doll.

(18)a.   **Henni** þykir bróðir   **sinn/*hennar** leiðinlegur.
          her(D) thinks brother(N) her(* − REFL) boring

      b.   **Hverjum**   þykir **sinn**   fugl   fagur.   (Proverb)
            everyone(D) thinks his[+REFL] bird(N) beautiful

(31)   **Honum** var   oft   hjálpað af foreldrum **sínum/*hans**.
        he(D)   was often helped by parents   his[+REFL]/
                                                 *[−REFL]

(ZMT:449–450, 456)

○   post-verbal position in topicalizations and yes-no questions:

(19)a.   **Refinn   skaut Ólafur   með þessari byssu.**
      the-fox(A) shot   Olaf(N) with this   shotgun

   b.   ***Með þessari byssu   skaut refinn   Ólafur.**
      with this   shotgun shot   the-fox(A) Olaf(N)

(20)a.   **Sigga   hafði aldrei hjálpað Haraldi.**
      Sigga(N) had   never helped   Harold(D)

   b.   **Hafði Sigga   aldrei hjálpað Haraldi?   (*Yes-No-Question*)**
      Had   Sigga(N) never helped   Harold(D)

   c.   ***Hafði Haraldi Sigga aldrei hjálpað?**

   d.   **Hvenær hafði Sigga hjálpað Haraldi?   (*Wh-question*)**
      When   had   Sigga helped   Harold(D)

   e.   ***Hvenær hafði Haraldi Sigga hjálpað?**

   f.   **Haraldi hafði Sigga aldrei hjálpað. (*Topicalization*)**

(21)a.   **Hefur henni alltaf þótt   Ólafur   leiðinlegur?**
      has   she(D) always thought Olaf(N) boring(N)

   b.   **Ólafur   hefur henni alltaf þótt   leiðinlegur.**
      Olaf(N) has   she(D) always thought boring(N)

   c.   ***Hefur Ólafur   henni alltaf þótt   leiðinlegur?**
      has   Olaf(N) she(D) always thought boring

   (32)a.   **Var honum aldrei hjálpað af foreldrum sínum?**
      was he(D) never helped by parents   his

   b.   **Í prófinu var honum víst   hjálpað.**
      in the-exam was he(D) apparently helped

(ZMT:450–451, 456)

o   ability to be PRO:

(28)a.   Ég vonast til   að fara heim.
        I   hope   for to go   home

    b.   Að fara heim   snemma er óvenjulegt.
        to   go   home early   is unusual

(29)a.   Mig   vantar peninga.
        me(A) lacks   money(A)

    b.   Ég vonast til   að vanta ekki peninga.
        I   hope   for ____(A) to lack   not   money(A)

    c.   Að vanta peninga er alltof   algengt.
        to   lack   money   is all-too common

(36)a.   Ég vonast til   að verða hjálpað.
        I   hope   for to be   helped

    b.   Að vera hjálpað í   prófinu   er óleyfilegt.
        to   be   helped on the-exam is un-allowed.

                                                                    (ZMT:454–455, 457)

- TAKE-HOME MESSAGE:
  o   Icelandic has subjects that bear quirky case
  o   these non-nominative noun phrases behave as bona fide subjects according to a whole series of diagnostics
      - in fact, I've only shown you <u>some</u> of them here (!)
      - there's more than a dozen such diagnostics in total
        (Zaenen, Maling & Thráinsson 1985; Sigurdsson 1989, 1991, 1993, 1996; *i.a.*)
      - and these non-nominative noun phrases in Icelandic pass <u>all</u> of them, except for two:
        - their case (obviously);
        - and their inability to control finite verb agreement
          (Zaenen, Maling & Thráinsson 1985; Bobaljik 2018; *i.a.*)

5.2. The transitive-expletive construction in Icelandic

- In English, the distribution of *there*-expletives and *it*-expletives is limited in various ways
- Roughly speaking —
    - *it*-expletives requires a clausal "associate"; thus:

(15) a.   That another galaxy exists was discovered ?(yesterday).
     b.   It was discovered (yesterday) that another galaxy exists (?yesterday).
(16) a.   Another galaxy was discovered (yesterday).
     b.   * It was discovered another galaxy.

    - *there* expletives require a nominal "associate" <u>that is an internal argument</u>; thus:

(17) a.   There arrived three representatives.
     b.   ? There were arrested three dangerous criminals.
(18) a.   * There has a boy danced.
     b.   * There has a boy kicked the ball.

        (exx. (18a–b) are an attempt to leave *a boy* in its theta position / highest A-position excluding the position of the expletive)

    - "associate" here means something along the lines of "phrase that <u>would</u> occupy the canonical subject position if the expletive wasn't there"
        - *remember this…!*

- **This is <u>not</u> how it works in Icelandic.**
- First, Icelandic has only one expletive, *það*
    - calqued from pronominal/demonstrative morphology (*það* "it, that")
- Second, there are few (if any) restrictions on what can be an "associate" of *það*:

    (2)   *Transitive expletive construction (TEC)*
          Það borðuðu sennilega *margir jólasveinar*   bjúgun.
          there ate   probably many Christmas.trolls the.sausages
          'Many Christmas trolls probably ate the sausages.'

                                                              (Bobaljik & Jonas 1996:196)

        - <u>NB:</u> Icelandic is a V-to-T(-to-C?) language, and so the verb phrase in Bobaljik & Jonas' (2) actually consists of *[many Christmas.trolls t_{ate} the.sausages]*

- One way to think of this is the following:
    - Since there are no restrictions on what can be the "associate" of *það*, it doesn't actually make much sense to talk of an "expletive-associate" relation in Icelandic at all (!)
    - Instead, in Icelandic, there are just **subjects that stay low**

- When the Icelandic subject stays low, two things happen:
    - (i) the noun phrase that controls agreement is located below (and to the right of) the agreeing verb
    - (ii) something (other than the low subject) must fill the canonical subject position

- IMPORTANTLY:
    - <u>both</u> of these properties can be observed completely independent of expletives

- property (i) is most clearly observable in our old friends, the quirky-subject verbs
    - we didn't spend much time discussing agreement with these verbs (except to note that it was one of the two properties, along with case, where these quirky subjects did not behave like run-of-the-mill subjects);
    - but what happens with these verbs is that the quirky subject <u>cannot</u> control finite verb agreement;
    - and instead, the structurally-closest nominative controls finite agreement[2]

(151)   Morgum studentum   **liki/*lika**   verkið.
        many   student.PL.DAT like.**3SG/*3PL** job.the.NOM
        'Many students like the job.'
        (Harley 1995)

(171)   Jóni   líkuðu [þessir sokkar].
        Jon.DAT liked.PL [these socks].NOM
        'Jon liked these socks.'
        (Jónsson 1996:149)

    - thus, it is entirely superfluous to assume that the expletive in an example like Bobaljik & Jonas' (2) (repeated from earlier) plays any role whatsoever in finite agreement:

(2)   *Transitive expletive construction (TEC)*
      Það borðuðu sennilega *margir jólasveinar*   bjúgun.
      there ate   probably many   Christmas.trolls the.sausages
      'Many Christmas trolls probably ate the sausages.'

                                                          (Bobaljik & Jonas 1996:196)

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[2] This can be made more precise in several respects. First, when 1st/2nd person pronouns are involved, *neither* the quirky subject nor the closest nominative can control agreement (see Sigurdsson & Holmberg 2008, and references therein, for discussion). Second, the quirky subject may intervene even in number agreement if it remains low (e.g. by participating in the transitive-expletive construction). Third, the notion of 'structurally closest' is best captured in terms of *Iterative Downward Search* (see Preminger [*Glossa*, to appear] for discussion).

- o property (ii) amounts to the observation that the canonical subject position –
in *Icelandic* – <u>is</u> the "first position" that defines its V2 behavior
    - • that is, *það*-clauses are freely interchangeable with clauses in which, e.g.,
some adverb occupies the pre-V2 position
        - • thus, examples like (19a) alternate quite freely with examples like (19b):

(19) a. það   hafa verið nokkrir kettir í   eldhúsinu
         EXPL have been some   cats in kitchen.the
         "There have been some cats in the kitchen."
     b. Í dag (*það)   hafa (*það)   verið nokkrir kettir í   eldhúsinu
         today (*EXPL) have (*EXPL) been some   cats in kitchen.the
         "There have been some cats in the kitchen today."

                                                          (data from Vangsnes 2002)

- • this contrasts, of course, with what one finds in English – compare (19b)
with (20b):

(20) a.   There have been some cats in the kitchen.
     b. * Today have been some cats in the kitchen.

- • Thus, it seems fair to say that there is no "expletive-associate" construction <u>as such</u> in Icelandic;
- • Expletives are but one of the many things that can fill the Canonical Subject Position (CSP) when
a potential subject fails to do so;
- • But they play no special role, it seems —
    - o neither in determining agreement;
    - o nor in facilitating this ability of the subject to remain low.
- • SPOILER: *Expletives play no role in the Definiteness Effect, either.*

5.3. The behavior of experiencer+infinitive verbs in Icelandic

- • This subsection – believe it or not – is all about the behavior of verbs like *seem* in Icelandic

(21) There seems [to <experiencer>] [<infinitive>]   (English)

- • In English, the "potential subject" in this construction (if it is not *there*), is the subject of
the infinitive
    - o thus, (22a) alternates with (22b):

(22) a. There seems (to me) [to be someone in the room].
     b. Someone seems (to me) [to be *t* in the room].

- In Icelandic, however, **this is not the case!**
  - o remember, Icelandic "has quirky subjects"
    - which is just a fancy way of saying:
      In Icelandic, it is the structurally closest DP <u>regardless of case-marking</u> that is the candidate for movement to subject position.

- Thus, in the Icelandic experiencer+infinitive construction, it is the **(dative) experiencer** that is the candidate to undergo movement to subject position:

(23) a. það   virðist   einhverjum manni   hestarnir   vera   seinir
          EXPL seem(3sg) some   man.DAT horses.the.NOM be(INF) slow.NOM
          "It seems to some man that the horses are slow."
  b. Manninum   virðist   hestarnir   vera   seinir
      man.the.DAT seem(3sg) horses.the.NOM be(INF) slow.NOM
      "It seems to the man that the horses are slow."
  c. * hestarnir   virðist   einhverjum manni   vera   seinir
        horses.the.NOM seem(3sg) some   man.DAT be(INF) slow.NOM
       Intended: "It seems to some man that the horses are slow."
          (or: "The horses seem to some man to be slow.")

                                      (Holmberg & Hróarsdóttir 2003:998ff.)

- Here are some conclusions we can already draw from this —
  - o in fact, these are what I'd call some "modest" conclusions; we could go further
- First, **there is no hope whatsoever for a semantic notion of *subject***.
  - o that's because English and Icelandic choose different constituents in the experiencer+infinitive construction as *subject*
  - o but the difference between the two languages is morphosyntactic, not semantic
    - namely, Icelandic allows (but English disallows) dative subjects
    - meanwhile, the semantics of English *seem* and Icelandic *virðast* are, as far as anyone has been able to tell, exactly the same
- Second, and consequently:
  - o **any so-called "semantic" account that makes any reference to the notion *subject* is a morphosyntactic account in disguise**
    - since there is no way to determine which constituent is the "subject" except morphosyntactically (sorry Aristotle)
    - *remember this…!*

6. The DE in Icelandic

- SUPER SHORT VERSION:
  - the DE applies (in Icelandic, and in any other language) to DPs that *could* have moved to canonical subject position (CSP), but didn't
    - since "could have moved to canonical subject position (CSP)" is an irreducibly morphosyntactic notion —
      - there is no hope for a semantic account of DE

Okay, so let's do the not-super-short version…

- In Icelandic experiencer+infinitive constructions, the noun phrase to which the DE applies is …
  - **the dative experiencer!**
    - and, just as importantly, <u>not</u> the nominative infinitival subject

(292) a. * það   virtist   [**dómurunum**]$_{DAT}$ [kona/konan]$_{NOM}$ hafa   skrifað

   EXPL seemed **judges.the.DAT**   woman.NOM/woman.the.NOM have.INF written

   bókina.

   book.the.ACC

   'It seemed to the judges that a/the woman had written the book.'

   b. ? það   virtist   [**bara tveim af dómurunum**]$_{DAT}$ [kona/konan]$_{NOM}$

   EXPL seemed **just two   of judges.the.DAT**   woman.NOM/woman.the.NOM

   hafa   skrifað bókina.

   have.INF written book.the.ACC

   'It seemed to only two of the judges that a/the woman had written the book.' *[≈(213)]*

   (Preminger 2014:221)

- Recall —
  - in Icelandic, it is the dative experiencer – and *not* the infinitival subject – that is a candidate for movement to CSP:

(24) a. Dómurunum   virtist   konan   hafa   skrifað   bókina.
      judges.the.DAT seemed woman.the.NOM have.INF written   book.the.ACC
      (*lit.*: "To the judges seemed the woman to have written the book.")
      "It seemed to the judges that the woman has written the book."
       / "The woman seemed to the judges to have written the book."

   b. * konan   virtist   Dómurunum   hafa   skrifað   bókina.
        woman.the.NOM   seemed judges.the.DAT have.INF   written   book.the.ACC

- Thus, in Icelandic:
  - the nominative (*konan* "woman.the.NOM") is no more affected by the DE than the accusative (*bókina* "book.the.ACC") is
    - and for both, it is for the very same reason:
    neither is a candidate for movement to CSP.
- As you might expect, when the closest DP to subject position *is* nominative —
  - Icelandic reverts to English-like behavior
    - i.e., it is the nominative DP that is subject to the DE:

  (294) a. **Konan**   hefur skrifað bókina.
            woman.the.NOM has   written book.the.ACC
            'The woman has written the book.'
     b. * Það   hefur **konan**   skrifað bókina.
          EXPL has   **woman.the.NOM** written book.the.ACC

(Preminger 2014:221)

- To repeat, the distribution of the DE (in Icelandic, in English, and – to the best of my knowledge – everywhere else) is precisely the following:

(25)   a subject[3] *α* will be exhibit the DE in language L **iff** *α* is a candidate for movement to canonical subject position (CSP) in L and has not undergone such movement.

---

[3] "Subject" here means passing the diagnostics in section 5.1. Thanks to Susi Wurmbrand for illuminating discussion of this point.

- o this explains:
    - why the dative in exx. (292a–b), above, exhibits the DE;
    - why the nominative in those same examples does not exhibit the DE;
    - why the nominative in exx. (294a–b) does exhibit the DE;
    - why the accusative (*bókina* "book.the.ACC") exhibits the DE in neither exx. (292a–b) nor exx. (294a–b)
    - and why, in English, it would be the nominative DP that exhibited the DE in all of these examples
        - (because English has no non-nominative DPs that are finite subjects)

- This also sheds new light on what seemed (to semanticists…) like a non-puzzle, but actually is:
    - o why, in examples like (26), is *the girls* not subject to the DE?

(26)   There seems to **the girls** to be a boy playing in the garden.

(Preminger 2014:221)

- after all, this is a definite DP that has stayed vP-internal / to the right of the finite verb / in the c-command domain of *seem* / …

    - o this is <u>not</u> because datives and/or DPs with an EXPERIENCER θ-role are somehow "exempt" from the DE
        - say, because they are "not in the scope of existential quantification" (?)

    - o as Icelandic shows, neither of these claims would be correct;
    - o instead, it is because <u>in English</u>, the experiencer argument of *seem* will never satisfy the lefthand clause in (25).

- There <u>is</u> one way in which Icelandic may differ from English that does not follow from (25):
  - indefinites in CSP are actually quite bad in Icelandic —
    - compare (294), repeated from earlier, with (295):

(294) a. **Konan**   hefur skrifað bókina.
        woman.the.NOM has   written book.the.ACC
        'The woman has written the book.'

      b. *Það   hefur **konan**   skrifað bókina.
        EXPL has   **woman.the.NOM** written book.the.ACC

(295) a. ??**Kona**   hefur skrifað bókina.
        woman.NOM has   written book.the.ACC
        'A woman has written the book.'

      b. [?] Það   hefur **kona**   skrifað bókina.
        EXPL has   **woman.NOM** written book.the.ACC
        'A woman has written the book.'

(Preminger 2014:221)

- most sources on definiteness in English consider the counterpart of ex. (295a) to be fine[4]
- if so, then this is a genuine point of difference between Icelandic in English
  - though it hardly vindicates the semantic account —
    - given that it crosscuts nominative as well as non-nominative subjects in Icelandic.

7. "Existential construction"?

- We already saw, in section 5.2, that expletives:
  - (i)   play no special role in agreement
  - (ii)   play no special role in allowing subjects to remain "low"[5]

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[4] For what it's worth, the Partee handout from which the earlier parts of this handout were cobbled (see fn. 1) marks such examples with a "(?)":

(i)   (?) A cat is on the sofa.   (Partee 2006:1)

[5] That is, expletives are one of potentially many ways a language can allow for "low" subjects. In pro-drop languages, perhaps nothing at all is required to allow a subject to remain low. In Icelandic, not only expletives but *any* XP occurring pre-verbally allows the subject to remain low. And, depending on the proper analysis of Locative Inversion in English, it is possible that Locative Inversion – alongside expletives – constitutes a second way in which English allows for low subjects.

- Do expletives play any role in making a particular clause or sentence into an "existential"?
  - I would like to suggest that the answer is no.
- Here is some suggestive evidence:
  - first, as noted by Vangsnes 2002 (and as alluded to in section 5.2) —
    - the DE arises in Icelandic whether it is an expletive in particular that fills the CSP, or it is some other non-subject XP:

(7) a. Það hefur verið ***kötturinn/*Pétur** í eldhúsinu.
         EXPL has been cat.the / Peter in kitchen.the

     b. Það hefur verið ***þessi köttur/*köttur Péturs** í eldhúsinu.
         EXPL has been this cat / cat Peter's in kitchen.the

     c. Það hefur verið **sérhver köttur /*<u>einn af köttunum</u>* í eldhúsinu.
         EXPL has been each cat / one of cats.the in kitchen.the

     d. Það hafa verið **allir kettirnir/*báðir kettirnir* í eldhúsinu.
         EXPL have been all cats.the / both cats.the in kitchen.the

     e. Það hafa verið nokkrir kettir/*<u>sumir</u>   kettir í eldhúsinu.
         EXPL have been some   cats / some.of.the cats in kitchen.the

(8) a. Í dag hefur (*það) verið *kötturinn/*Pétur í eldhúsinu.
         today has   EXPL been   cat.the / Peter in kitchen.the

     b. Í dag hefur (*það) verið *þessi köttur/*köttur Péturs í eldhúsinu.
         today has   EXPL been   this cat/*cat Peter's in kitchen.the

     c. Í dag hefur (*það) verið *sérhver köttur /*einn af köttunum í
         today has   EXPL been   each cat / one of cats.the in
         eldhúsinu.
         kitchen.the

     d. Í dag hafa (*það) verið *allir kettirnir/*báðir kettirnir í eldhúsinu.
         today have EXPL been   all cats.the/ both cats.the in kitchen.the

     e. Í dag hafa (*það) verið nokkrir kettir/*sumir   kettir í
         today have EXPL been   some   cats / some.of.the cats   in
         eldhúsinu.
         kitchen.the

(Vangsnes 2002:5)

- o   second, and equally important:
  - • since Icelandic allows subjects to stay low even if they are external arguments, a.k.a. "underived subjects" —
      - (another way of saying Icelandic has a transitive-expletive construction)
  - • Icelandic shows the DE even in run-of-the-mill transitives (as already shown in exx. (294a–b), repeated here)

(294) a.   **Konan**   hefur skrifað bókina.
            woman.the.NOM has   written book.the.ACC
            'The woman has written the book.'

     b. * Það   hefur **konan**   skrifað bókina.
            EXPL has   **woman.the.NOM** written book.the.ACC

<div align="right">(Preminger 2014:221)</div>

- o   thus, to the extent that the DE is indicative of something being an "existential construction" —
  - • it appears <u>everything</u> is an "existential construction"
  - • the English counterpart of exx. (294) just happens not to show the DE because English lacks a transitive-expletive construction
      - • but that, again, is a morphosyntactic fact, not a semantic one
  - • thus, there would be no recourse except to concede that run-of-the-mill transitives are "existential constructions" in English too
  - • **I believe this empties the term "existential construction" of any content**
      - • surely, there is such a thing as *existential force*, semantically speaking;
      - • but "existential <u>construction</u>" suggests that there is such a thing as existential morphosyntax
      - • and the latter notion cannot be maintained, I don't think.

8. Divergences between definite-vs.-indefinite and other quantificational distinctions

- • Vangsnes (2002) shows that in complex tenses, Icelandic has a second "associate" position —
  - o   in between the auxiliary (which is in V2 position) and the main verb (which is later)
- • Crucially, noun phrases in this "intermediate" position show the standard DE pattern **if they are simple definites & indefinites** —

(12) a.   Það hefur köttur/*****kötturinn**/*****Kalli** étið   mýsnar.
            EXPL has   cat / cat.the / Kalli eaten mice.the

     b.   Það hefur *****þessi köttur**/*****köttur Péturs** étið   mýsnar.
            EXPL has   this cat / cat   Peter's eaten mice.the

<div align="right">(Vangsnes 2002:7)</div>

- But **other determiners** cleave apart in the "intermediate" vs. "associate" positions:

(20) a.   Það hafa margir fiðluleikarar verið greindir   í   þessari hljómsveit.
            EXPL have many violists   been intelligent in this   orchestra

      b. * Það hafa verið margir fiðluleikarar greindir   í   þessari hljómsveit.
            EXPL have been many   violists   intelligent in this   orchestra

(21) a.   Það hafa margir fiðluleikarar verið þreyttir á tónleikunum.
            EXPL have many violists   been tired   at concert.the

      b. * Það hafa verið margir fiðluleikarar þreyttir á tónleikunum.
            EXPL have been many   violists   tired   at concert.the

(Vangsnes 2002:9)

- Now, I have done some informal facebook data-gathering, and it seems to me that these facts might be somewhat general;
- Here's what I mean:
  - because of the semantically-dominated approach to the DE over the years, few people (if any) have paid careful attention to, say, which quantifiers can & cannot occur as the determiner in the dative experiencer argument of *seem*
  - but from the judgments I've gathered, there's a fairly clear preference for (27b) over (27a) —

(27) a.   (??) There seems to most people to be a chair in the room.
      b.   It seems to most people that there is a chair in the room.

  - which suggests that perhaps "real quantifiers" (i.e., things that are not the definite/indefinite determiner) are subject to a much simpler, Heim/Diesing style *Mapping Hypothesis*:
    - you stay within the verb phrase ⇒ you have to be "weak"
      - cf. (27a–b), as well as Vangsnes' exx. (20–21)
  - this – in contrast to the Definiteness Effect – might very well be amenable to semantic explanation (see, in particular, Diesing 1992)
  - but let me be as clear as I can about the following:
    - in light of the results surveyed in section 5–7, **this cannot have <u>anything whatsoever</u> to do with the Definiteness Effect!**

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