Optional Expletive Subjects in Swedish
Elisabet Engdahl
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1. Introduction

A consequence of the symmetric analysis of Germanic verb second (V2) languages – i.e. that the finite verb moves to C⁰ in matrix clauses – is that there are two subject positions, Spec,TP and Spec,CP (cf. Koster 1975, den Besten 1977, Platzack 1986, 1998, Vikner 1995). In non V2 languages like English, on the other hand, the subject normally appears in Spec,TP. In Germanic, the subject appears in Spec,TP in yes/no-questions, (1a), and whenever another constituent appears pre-verbally, (1b). In matrix declaratives, the subject occupies the Spec,CP position, as illustrated in (1c).

(1)  
(a)  Ringde Eva till doktorn?  
\textit{rang}  \textit{Eva to doctor.}\textit{DEF}  
‘Did Eva call the doctor?’

(b)  Sen ringde Eva till doktorn?  
\textit{then rang}  \textit{Eva to doctor.}\textit{DEF}  
‘After that Eva called the doctor.’

(c)  Eva ringde till doktorn.  
\textit{Eva rang}  \textit{to doctor.}\textit{DEF}  
‘Eva called the doctor.’

In this article I explore certain dependencies between Spec,TP and Spec,CP, starting with some data illustrating the strong subject constraint in modern Swedish, section 2. So called \textit{tough} constructions, which turn out to be particularly relevant, are discussed in section 3 and in section 4, I analyze a recently discovered construction in Swedish where expletive subjects are omitted when there is an initial \textit{det} in the clause. The syntactic nature of the strong subject requirement and its connections with the Exended Projection Principle are discussed in section 5. A characteristic feature of the new construction is the presence of an unbounded dependency and in section 6, the processing of \textit{det}-initial clauses is addressed. In section 7, I compare the subject requirement in present-day Swedish with the other Scandinavian languages.

Throughout the article I adopt a \textit{wysiwyg} version of Thráinsson’s ‘Real Minimalist
Principle’ (1996): Assume only those positions in the syntax for which there is overt evidence in the language. With respect to possible subject positions, this means that I will limit myself to postulating one initial position, which I will refer to as Spec,CP, one position in the part of the clause that follows C, which I will refer to as Spec,TP, and one position in Spec,VP. I thus adopt a tripartite clause structure with a C-domain, a T-domain and a V-domain, similar in many respects to what Platzack (1998, 2011) has proposed for Swedish. (1c) can be illustrated with the structure shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Tree for example (1c).

Furthermore I don’t assume that syntactic properties such as agreement or case, or semantic properties such as tense or mood, or information structural aspects such as topic and focus motivate postulating distinct syntactic projections like AgrP, AspP or FocP. I assume that the semantic-pragmatic contribution of a phrase appearing in Spec,CP, as e.g. a contrastive or continuous topic, is determined by the content and phonological realization of that phrase together with a model of the information states of the discourse participants (Engdahl 2001, _______________)

1 *wysiwyg* stands for ‘what you see is what you get’. Thráinsson’s principle concerns the proliferation of functional projections and states: “Assume only those functional categories that you have evidence for” (1996:261).

2 Phenomena like case and agreement marking, which often are taken as evidence for these projections, should, in my view, be handled by local feature checking, possibly using unification as in constraint based approaches such as HPSG, LFG and Construction grammar.
I believe that this is a more transparent approach, which is compatible with several syntactic frameworks such as HPSG, LFG and the Simpler Syntax approach proposed by Culicover & Jackendoff (2005).

2. The subject requirement

There is general agreement in descriptions and reference grammars of Swedish that a finite clause must contain an overt subject, see e.g. SAG 4:42. This is often referred to as ‘the subject requirement’ (Sw. subjektstvånget). If a clause does not have a lexical (referential) subject, then an expletive subject *det* (‘it’) is required. In matrix clauses, *det* appears either postverbally, in Spec,TP or initially in Spec,CP (but see (6) below).

(2) a. Regnade *(det)* i går?.

   raine d  it  yesterday

   ‘Did it rain yesterday?’

b. *(Det)* regnade i går.

   it  rained  yesterday

   ‘It rained yesterday.

In this respect, the mainland Scandinavian languages differ from Icelandic, where the expletive *það* only occurs in Spec,CP (see e.g. Holmberg & Platzack 1995, Thráinsson 2007 chapter 6).

(3) a. Rigndi (*það*) í gær?

   raine d  it  yesterday

   ‘Did it rain yesterday?’

b. *(það)* rigndi í gær.

   it  rained  yesterday

   ‘It rained yesterday.’

2.1 Null subjects in Spec,CP

Subjects in Spec,CP are sometimes not realized overtly, as shown in (4). This is commonly taken to be an instance of *topic drop*, i.e. a topic is not pronounced in a context where the referent is highly accessible (Ross 1982, Mörnsjö 2002, Sigurðsson & Maling 2010, Rosenkvist 2010, Sigurðsson 2011).
Q: Vad gjorde Eva? 
   what did Eva
   ‘What did Eva do?’
A.: Ø Ringde till doktorn.
   rang to doctor.DEF
   ‘(She) called the doctor.’

Topic drop is not limited to subjects, see (5a), but, as is well known, it is limited to the initial position (5b).

(5) a. Han visade i alla fall ett visst intresse.
   he showed in all cases a certain interest
   Ø Ska han ha en eloge för, tycker jag. (Mörnsjö 2002:167)
   shall he  have a eulogy for  think I
   ‘He did at least show some interest. He deserves praise for that, I think.’

b. Han ska ha en eloge för *(det), tycker jag.
   he shall have a eulogy for it think I
   ‘He deserves praise for that, I think’

Topic drop of an initial constituent is quite common in spoken informal Swedish, as well as in blogs and SMS communications, see (6a). Interestingly initial expletive subjects may also be dropped, as shown in the authentic examples from Mörnsjö (2002) in (6b,c). In these cases it would be less appropriate to talk about topic drop.

   we cruised little in South-sea.DEF. then were we on a small island there
   Ø For via Los Angeles dit och via Hong Kong tillbaka.
   went via L.A. there and via Hong Kong back (Mörnsjö 2002:167)
   ‘We cruised a little in the South Seas. Then we were on a small island there.
   (We) went out via Los Angeles and came back via Hong Kong.’

b. Ø Var kallt och blåsigt.
   (Mörnsjö 2002:183)

3 (6a) is from a recorded session with three young women 1999, (6b) is from a Swedish radio broadcast 2001 and (6c) from the Gothenburg Spoken Language Corpus.
was cold and windy

‘(It) was cold and windy.’

c. Är du blyg, Lina? [---] Ø Var ju längesen jag såg dig.  (Mörnsjö 2002:184)

are you shy Lina was PRT long-ago I saw you

‘Are you shy, Lina? (It) is a long time since I saw you.’

In (6a), the first person plural pronoun vi is left out in the third sentence. In (6b) the weather expletive is not pronounced and in (6c) the expletive in a cleft construction is missing.

Although the examples in (6) represent an informal register, and may be considered somewhat marked by certain speakers, there is a sharp contrast between examples with a missing initial expletive and examples with a missing expletive in Spec,TP. The latter are judged to be clearly ungrammatical, as shown below.

(7)  a.  (Det) ska bli gott med kaffe nu.

          it shall be good with coffee now

   ‘It will be nice to have coffee now.’

b.  Nu ska *(det) bli gott med kaffe.  (SAG 4:42)

          now shall it be good with coffee

   ‘Now it will be nice to have coffee.’

The expletive subject det is also required in cleft constructions, (8), and presentational constructions, (9).\(^4\) It is also used when an infinitival or finite clause is extraposed, as shown in (10). Falk (1993) refers to these as clause-anticipating det and I will adopt this term here.

(8)  a.  (Det) var längesen jag såg dig

          it was long-ago I saw you

‘It is a long time since I saw you.’

b.  Var *(det) längesen jag såg dig?

          was it long-ago I saw you

\(^4\)In southern Sweden the form där (‘there’) is often used instead of det in presentational sentences. See Larsson (in prep.) for an overview of the use of expletive forms in the ScanDiaSyn database.
‘Is it a long time since I saw you?’

(9) a.  (Det) kan finnas ormar i gräset.

\[ \text{it can be snakes in grass.} \]

‘There can be snakes in the grass.’

b.  Kan *(det) finnas ormar i gräset?

\[ \text{can it be snakes in grass.} \]

‘Can there be snakes in the grass?’

(10) a.  (Det) var trevligt att träffa dig / att du kunde komma

\[ \text{it was nice-NEUT to meet you / that you could come} \]

‘It is nice to meet you / that you could come.’

b.  Därför var *(det) trevligt att träffa dig / att du kunde komma.

\[ \text{therefore was it nice-NEUT to meet you / that you could come} \]

‘Therefore it is nice to meet you / that you could come.’

2.2 Null subjects in Spec,TP?

Judging from the minimal pairs in (7)–(10) it looks like \textit{det} is obligatory in Spec,TP. There is however one context where \textit{det} is frequently left out, viz. when there is a locative adverbial in Spec,CP, as in (11a).

(11) a.  I gräset kan (det) finnas ormar.

\[ \text{in grass. can (it) be snakes} \]

‘In the grass there can be snakes.’

b.  På morgonen kan *(det) finnas ormar i gräset.

\[ \text{in morning. can (it) be snakes in grass.} \]

‘In the morning there may be snakes in the grass.’

This type has been discussed by i.a. Sundman (1980), Falk (1993) and additional examples are given in SAG (4:54).\(^5\) Most speakers accept examples like (11a) but find structurally similar

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\(^5\) Examples with fronted predicative adjectives, often in the superlative, also occur:
examples with non-locative initial adverbials, as in (11b), less acceptable. In her 1993 book, Falk assumes that “the subject position [in Spec,TP] is empty and licensed by the topicalized phrase, but at the same time connected with the VP-internal argument” (Falk 1993:284). Her analysis is given in (12).

\[(12) \quad [_{CP} \text{I gräset, } \text{kan }_{TP} \text{ tij }_{VP} \text{ v finnas ormar, tij, }]]\]

in grass.DEF can be snakes

The subject position thus acts as a ‘link’ between the constituent in Spec,CP and an argument in the VP. This analysis, which involves double indexing, is presumably not available on current assumptions about syntactic structure.

Examples without expletive subjects like (11a) are used in written, often rather formal language, and hardly occur in spoken language. Younger speakers tend to think that they sound old-fashioned and prefer to use an overt expletive. We can summarize the situation in present-day Swedish as follows: All finite clauses require a subject, either a referential subject or the expletive det. Subjects in Spec,CP may be left out in informal speech, but neither referential nor expletive subjects in Spec,TP can be omitted.\(^6\)

### 3. Tough constructions

Let us look a bit closer at the structures involved. In a polar interrogative as in (13a), the finite verb appears in C and the expletive det occupies Spec,TP. \(v\) indicates the verb positions in TP

(i) Ledsammast har varit att han aldrig har ställt upp. (SAG 3:556)
    ‘The saddest thing is that he has never volunteered.’

Based on a corpus study of presentational constructions, Roberts (1999) noted that a majority of the examples without overt det were in the perfect tense.

6 Subjects are also obligatory in Spec,TP in embedded clauses.

(ii) Jag minns att *(det) regnade igår.

\(i\) remember that \(i\) rained yesterday

(ii) Alla tyckte att *(det) skulle bli gott med kaffe.

\(a\)l\(a\) thought that \(a\) should be good with coffee
and VP. In a declarative clause, the expletive is fronted to Spec,CP.

(13) a. \[ \text{CP} \left[ \text{CP} \left[ \text{C} \text{Regnade} \right] \right] \text{TP} \left[ \text{VP} \text{v i går?} \right] \]  
\[ \text{rained} \quad \text{it} \quad \text{yesterday} \]  
‘Did it rain yesterday?’

b. \[ \text{CP} \left[ \text{Det} \left[ \text{CP} \text{v i går.} \right] \right] \]  
\[ \text{it} \quad \text{rained} \quad \text{yesterday} \]  
‘It rained yesterday.’

In examples with meteorological predicates like (13), the expletive is often analysed as a quasi argument (Holmberg & Platzack 1995). An initial det can also function as an anaphoric referential pronoun, as in (14) where coindexing indicates intended coreference.

(14) a. – Var är brevet?  
\text{where is letter.DEF}  
‘Where is the letter?’

– Det, lade jag på byrån.  
\text{it} \quad \text{put I on dresser.DEF}  
‘I put it on the dresser.’

b. \[ \text{[CP Det, lade TP jag v [VP v e_i på byrån]]} \]  
\[ \text{it} \quad \text{put I on dresser.DEF} \]  

It is less clear whether examples with extraposed clauses, as in (10), should be treated as co-reference, but in order to make the analysis easier to follow, I will annotate such uses with a subscript \( x \) on both the clause-anticipating det, the empty subject position and the extraposed clause.

(15) a. Det var trevligt \( x \) att träffa dig  
\text{it was nice.NEUT to meet you}  

b. \[ \text{[CP Det, var TP e_i v [VP v trevligt [att träffa dig],_x]]} \]  

A particularly interesting case is the so called tough construction, where the subject of the predication in the matrix clause is simultaneously interpreted as the object of an embedded predicate, as in (16).

(16) Du \( \text{NOM are hard.UTR to please} \)
‘You are hard to please.’

This construction has been much discussed in the literature (see e.g. Chomsky 1977, 1981, Nanni 1978, 1980, Bennis 2000, Dalrymple & King 2000, Rezac 2006 and Hicks 2009). An analysis on which the matrix subject du has been moved from the object position of behaga runs into several problems. Du is nominative whereas behaga assigns accusative to its object, and the fronting of du violates locality conditions on extractions. Furthermore there is ample evidence from scope and selection that the subject is an argument of a two-place tough adjective which also takes an infinitival complement (for an overview, see Dalrymple & King 2000, Rezac 2006). I will here adopt an analysis where the matrix adjective forms a complex property with the infinitival phrase which is predicated of the subject.\(^7\) In (16), svår (‘hard’) composes with the property of being a k such that an arbitrary referent (PRO) pleases k. See the analysis in (17) where the superscripted k indicates predication.\(^8\) Just as in previous examples, the matrix subject is coindexed with an empty subject position in Spec,TP. The adjective svår (‘hard’) agrees with the subject and has the non-neuter form as is expected in predication. Non-neuter gender is often called utrum in Scandinavian grammars.

\[
\text{you.nom are hard.utr to please}
\]

Next consider the example in (18) where the initial constituent has been fronted from the object position and is in the accusative case. Here the Spec,TP position is filled with an expletive det, presumably the clause-anticipating det. The adjective svår (‘hard’) is in the neuter form, agreeing with det.

(18) a. Dig är det svårt att behaga.

\[you.acc is it hard.neut to please\]

‘You, it is hard to please.’

b. [\(\text{CP}\)[\(\text{Dig,}\) är det svårt v \(\text{[vp, v [op, svår k[att PRO behaga e_{i,k}]k]]}\)]]

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\(^7\) My analysis is similar in spirit to the one proposed within LFG in Dalrymple & King (2000). On this analysis, the subject of the tough predicate is linked via anaphoric control to an unexpressed topic in the infinitival complement clause which in turn controls the gap via functional control. See also Culicover & Jackendoff 2005:342–347.

\(^8\) The operator in the infinitival clause which binds the missing object corresponds semantically to lambda abstraction, i.e. it forms the property of being a k such that an arbitrary referent pleases k.
The agreement patterns here are very clear. Nominative case is not possible if the initial constituent does not act as a subject of the predication, (19a), and the non-neuter form of the adjective is not possible with an initial accusative, non subject, constituent, (19b).

(19) a. *Du är det svårt att behaga.

    \textit{you.NOM} \textit{is it hard.NEUT to please}

b. *Dig är svår att behaga.

    \textit{you.ACC are hard.UTR to please}

Against this background, the example in (20) is somewhat unexpected. Here the initial constituent is accusative, indicating that it is not a subject. The adjective has the neuter form, but there is no subject with which it can agree. Given what we have seen so far, the structure must be as shown in (20b). Ø here marks an empty Spec,TP position.

(20) a. Dig är svårt att behaga.

    \textit{you.ACC} \textit{is hard.NEUT to please}

    ‘You, it is hard to please.’

    b. [\textit{CP} Dig är [\textit{TP} Ø [\textit{VP} [\textit{VP} v [\textit{AP} svårt] [\textit{att PRO behaga}]]]]

    \textit{you.ACC} \textit{is hard.NEUT to please}

(20) shows that the generalization expressed at the end of section 2.2 is not correct; expletive subjects \textit{can} be left out in Spec,TP under certain conditions.\textsuperscript{9} Let us look closer at what these conditions might be. (21) shows an example where the infinitival clause acts as a subject; the adjective obligatorily has the neuter form. (22) shows the extraposed version.

(21) a. Att behaga dig är svårt/*svår.

    to \textit{please} you is hard.NEUT/UTR

b. [\textit{CP} [\textit{Att PRO behaga dig}] är [\textit{TP} e, [\textit{CP} v [\textit{VP} [\textit{VP} [\textit{AP} svårt] [\textit{ATT} PRO behaga]]]]]

    to \textit{please you is hard.NEUT}

\textsuperscript{9} The structure in (20b) differs from the examples with fronted locatives (12) in several ways. In (12) there is an overt subject, \textit{ormar} (‘snakes’) in the matrix VP and the fronted constituent \textit{i gräset} (‘in the grass’) is linked to an empty position in the matrix VP. In (20b), there is no overt subject at all and the initial \textit{dig} is linked to an empty position inside an embedded infinitival clause.
(22) a. Det är svårt att behaga dig.

   *it is hard*NEUT to please you

b. \[c_p \text{Det}_x \in [\text{TP} e_x \land [\text{vp} v [\text{vp} v [\text{vp} svårt] [att PRO behaga dig],]]] \]

   *it is hard*NEUT to please you

In (22b) the clause-anticipating *det* acts as a subject, as shown by *e* in Spec,TP. (20b) has a similar structure, but there is no *e* in Spec,TP, since the accusative *dig* in Spec,CP cannot be analysed as a subject.

We thus have some evidence that examples (16) and (20) differ structurally. The structure of (16), repeated here in (23), involves an initial constituent which acts as a subject of the matrix clause and where the agreeing adjective forms a complex property with the infinitival clause which is predicated of the subject.

(23) Du är svår att behaga.

   *you Nom are hard UTR to please*

b. \[c_p \text{Du}_i \in [\text{TP} \emptyset \land [\text{vp} v [\text{vp} v [\text{vp} svårt] [att PRO behaga e]]]]] \]

   *you Nom are hard UTR to please*

In the structure of (20), repeated here in (24), the initial *dig* does not act as a subject at any point. Presumably it is linked directly to the empty object position in the infinitival clause. The adjective *svår* does not form a complex property with the infinitival clause *att behaga*; rather *svår* is predicated of the infinitival clause, as in (21)–(22).

(24) a. Dig är svår att behaga.

   *you Acc is hard NEUT to please*

   ‘You, it is hard to please.’

b. \[c_p \text{Dig}_i \in [\text{TP} \emptyset \land [\text{vp} v [\text{vp} v [\text{vp} svårt] [att PRO behaga e]]]]] \]

   *you Acc is hard NEUT to please*

Additional evidence for distinguishing the two structures comes from tests involving fronting of the AP. Modifying and fronting the complex property in (23) is perfectly grammatical, as shown in (25a). The subject *du* here occupies Spec,TP. Fronting just the infinitival part is not felicitous, (25c).


   *particularly hard UTR to please are you Nom not*
‘You are not particularly hard to please.’

b. \[ \text{[TP,} \text{CP,} \text{Särskilt} \text{ svårt} \text{ att behaga} \text{ e}_k \text{]} \text{, är} \text{[TP,} \text{du} \text{ inte} \text{[VP,} \text{e}_i \text{]]]} \]
   particularly hard.UTR to please are you.NOM not
c. *?Att behaga är du inte svår.
   to please are you.NOM not hard.UTR

In the other structure, the initial dig can not be analysed as a subject in Spec,TP. Consequently it is not possible to front the AP since dig already occupies Spec,CP.

(26) a. * Särskilt svårt att behaga är dig inte.
   particularly hard.NEUT to please are you.ACC not

   to please is you.ACC not hard.NEUT

b. *?Att behaga är dig inte svårt.
   to please are you.ACC not svårt.

In (23) and (24), the case marking of the initial constituent makes it clear that we have two different structures. However, in modern Swedish only certain pronouns have distinct forms in nominative and accusative. Lexical noun phrases are not case marked, but sometimes agreement facts distinguish the two structures, as in (27).

(27) a. Tre barn är omöjliga att ta hand om, (nämli
   three children are impossible.PL to look after (viz. A, B and C)
   ‘Three children are impossible to look after.’

   b. Tre barn är omöjligt att ta hand om, (*nämligen A, B och C).
   three children is impossible.NEUT to look after (viz. A, B and C)
   ‘It is impossible to look after (as many as) three children.’

In (27a) the adjective *omöjliga* agrees in number with *tre barn*, which are interpreted as the subject of the predication of the complex property ‘impossible to look after’ and which can be distributed over the individual children, cf. the structure in (23b). In (27b) on the other hand, the adjective *omöjligt* is in the singular neuter form and does not agree with the initial plural NP which means that *tre barn* does not act as a subject in Spec,TP.¹⁰ The absence of agreement suggests the same structure as in (24b), viz. with an empty expletive in Spec,TP. The amount interpretation further

₁₀ There is a large literature on non-agreeing predicative constructions in Swedish, see Cooper 1986, Källström 1993, Enger 2004 and Josefsson 2006, 2009 and references therein.
supports this analysis; it is the looking after (as many as) three children that is claimed to be impossible. The pair of examples in (28) from Malmgren (1990:104f.) illustrate a similar distinction in interpretation.

(28) a. Båda hoten är svåra att parera.

   both threats are hard.PL to counter

   ‘Each of the threats is hard to counter’

b. Båda hoten är svårt att parera.

   both threats is hard.NEUT to counter

   ‘It is hard to counter both threats at the same time.’

In (28a), with the agreeing adjective, the predication is interpreted distributively – it holds for each threat – whereas in (28b) it is the simultaneous countering of the two threats which is judged to be hard.

3.1 Tough-constructions with initial det

We have thus established that clause-anticipating expletive detₙ may be left unrealized in Spec,TP under certain conditions. The crucial factor seems to be that there is a constituent in Spec,CP which is linked to an empty position in an embedded infinitival clause. As shown in (7)–(10), an expletive subject in Spec,TP is required in verb initial clauses and in declaratives where Spec,CP is occupied by a connecting adverbial like därför (‘therefore’) or temporal adverbials like nu (‘now’). So far we have looked at examples where the initial constituent is either clearly a non-subject (dig) or does not act as a subject (lack of agreement). However, the overwhelming majority of authentic examples are introduced by det, which, as we have seen, can be either a referential anaphoric pronoun or an expletive. Sometimes the status of an initial det is unambiguous, as in (14), repeated here as (29), where it must be referential, or in (15), repeated here as (30), where it must be analysed as a clause-anticipating expletive det.

(29) \[\{\{\text{CP} \text{Det} \text{v} \{\{\text{TP} \text{v} \{\{\text{VP} \text{e} \text{på byrån }\}\}\}\}\}\}\]

   ‘I put it on the dresser.’

(30) \[\{\{\text{CP} \text{Det} \text{x} \{\{\text{TP} \text{x} \{\{\text{VP} \text{trevligt} \{\{\text{att träffa dig} \text{x} \}\}\}\}\}\}\}\]

   ‘It was nice to meet you.’
But what about examples like (31)?

(31) Det är svårt att säga.

'It is hard to say.'

(31) can either be analysed as in (32a) where the complex property ‘hard to say’ is predicated of the initial $\text{det}_i$, which consequently acts as the subject of the matrix clause, as shown by the coindexed $e_i$ in Spec,TP. Or it can be analysed as in (32b) where the expected clause-anticipating $\text{det}_x$ in Spec,TP is absent and marked by $\emptyset$ as in (24b).

(32) a. $[\text{cp} \text{Det}_i \text{å} [\text{tp} e_i \text{v} [\text{vp} \text{svårt} \text{[Op}_k \text{att säga} e_i]]]]$

   $\text{it}$ $\text{is}$ $\text{hard}$ $\text{to}$ $\text{say}$

b. $[\text{cp} \text{Det}_i \text{å} [\text{tp} \emptyset \text{v} [\text{vp} \text{svårt} \text{[att säga} e_i]_x]]]$

   $\text{it}$ $\text{is}$ $\text{hard}$ $\text{to}$ $\text{say}$

(31) thus displays a structural ambiguity. It is either an instance of a *tough* construction, where the initial $\text{det}$ acts as a subject of the *tough* adjective svårt, or it is a case of topicalization out of an extraposed infinitival clause, but without the expected overt clause-anticipating $\text{det}_x$ in Spec,TP. Inserting such a $\text{det}_x$ in (31) is possible in Swedish, as shown in (33):

(33) Det är det svårt att säga.

'It is hard to say.'

To me, (31) and (33) have the same range of interpretations. Given the strong subject requirement in modern Swedish, one might expect (33) to be preferred, but in actual fact, this structure with an overt $\text{det}_x$ is hardly used at all. A search in the 19 million word PAROLE corpus gave no clear examples of this type.\textsuperscript{11} Instead the pattern in (32b) seems to be

\textsuperscript{11} (33) sounds more natural if the initial $\text{det}$ is stressed, as in (i) where stress is indicated by ' and lack of stress by a lowered 0. Expletive subjects are never stressed. When the expletive subject is absent, both stressed and unstressed initial $\text{det}$ is possible (iii).

(i) 'det är $\emptyset$det svårt att säga

   $\text{it}$ $\text{is}$ $\text{it}$ $\text{hard}$ $\text{to}$ $\text{say}$

(ii) $??_0$det är $\emptyset$det svårt att säga
4. Not just tough constructions

In addition to examples like (31) we find examples like (34a), first discussed in Engdahl (2007, 2010), where an initial det must be interpreted as the missing object in the embedded finite clause; sa (‘said’) requires an object as shown in (34b).

(34) a. Deti var dumt att du sa e.  
   _it_ was stupid._NEUT_ that you said  
   ‘It was stupid that you said it/that.’

   _I heard_ that you said  
   ‘I heard that you said it/that.’

Note that there is no expletive subject in Spec,TP in the matrix clause. Some additional examples from informal conversations or radio broadcasts are given in (35). Main stress is indicated by a ’ in front of the stressed word.

(35) a. Deti är _'klart_ att du ska göra e.  
   it _is clear._NEUT_ that you shall do  
   ‘Of course you should do it.’

b. Deti är ju _roligt_ om hon får e.  
   it _is PRT nice._NEUT_ if she gets  
   ‘It is nice if she gets it.’

c. Deti är helt _'nödvändigt_ att dom gör e.  
   it _is absolutely necessary._NEUT_ that they do  
   ‘It is absolutely necessary that they do it.’

d. Deti kan hända att vi _'inte har_ e.  

(iii) {0i det/det} är Ø svårt att säga.

Note that corresponding examples in English with overt topicalization are not felicitous:

(iv) * That/it, it is hard to say.
it may happen that we not have

‘Maybe we don’t have it.’

In these examples, the matrix clause contains an evaluative or modal adjective or a modal verb together with a finite complement clause. The initial det in (34) and (35) must be interpreted as a fronted object since the Swedish verb göra (‘do’) in (35a,c) cannot replace an entire VP which English do can do. Versions without fronting are of course grammatical, see (36a) where the initial det must be analysed as a clause-anticipating deti (36b) with ei in Spec,TP.

(36) a. Det var dumt att du sa det.

\[ \text{it was stupid that you said it} \]

‘It was stupid that you said it.’

b. \[ [_{CP} \text{Deti} \text{var} \text{[}_TP e_i \text{v [}_VP \text{v [}_AP \text{dumt} \text{[}_CP \text{att du sa det}_i \text{]}]}]] \]

\[ \text{it was stupid that you said it} \]

(34), with a fronted referential object det, is most plausibly analysed as in (37) with an unrealized expletive subject in Spec,TP.

(37) \[ [_{CP} \text{Det}_i \text{var} \text{[}_TP \text{Ø} \text{v [}_VP \text{v [}_AP \text{dumt} \text{[}_CP \text{att du sa e}_i \text{]}]}]} \]

\[ \text{it was stupid that you said} \]

The structure in (37) is very similar to (32b), the main difference being that in (37) the initial deti is linked to an empty object in a finite complement clause whereas (32b) has an infinitival clause.

In addition to the examples with complement clauses in (34) and (35) there are examples involving what looks like relative clauses, see (38). I indicate the main sentence stress with ‘.

(38) a. Deti är ju så ’många som gör e_i. (woman 50 years, 2005)

\[ \text{it is PRT so many that do} \]

‘There are so many that do it.’

b. Titta en rund potatis! Deti är inte ’ofta man ser e_i. (teenager March 2003)

look a round potato it is not often one sees

\[ \text{In this example, the initial det does not refer to any particular potato: rather it acts as a type anaphor, see Borthen 2004.} \]
‘Look a round potato! You don’t see that very often.’

(39)  a. Det, är nog bara ’jag som klarar e,.

   it is probably only I that manage

   ‘I’m probably the only one who can fix that.’

These examples resemble both presentational and cleft constructions. Just like typical cleft constructions, the main verb is the copula vara (‘be’) and the clefted constituent is stressed. Similar to presentational constructions, the head of the relative clause often consists of an indefinite quantity expression (många, ofta,) and the relative clause contributes new information. This type of clause has been discussed in connection with extractions from relative clauses in the mainland Scandinavian languages (see e.g. Engdahl 1982, 1997, Erteschik-Shir 1982, Lambrecht 1988). But note that the expected version with an extraction would be as in (39a), with an expletive det in Spec,TP, as shown in (39b). Recall that in standard Swedish, presentational sentences are introduced by det.

(39)  a. Det, är det så många som gör e,.

   it is it so many that do

   ‘There are so many that do it.’

The type in (39a) is used, but it seems to me that the version without an expletive subject is gaining ground. Such utterances are typically used when the speaker provides a comment on how many or which people do, have, see or participate in the event that the comment is about and which is often anaphorically referred to by an utterance initial det. The initial det is usually unstressed, but utterances with a stressed det occur, as in (40), where the speaker, a 12-year old girl, commented on having a newly washed car. Expletive subjects are never stressed.

(40)   ’Det är inte ofta man har.

   it is not often one has

   ‘You don’t have ’that very often.’

4.1 Examples in context
In order to give the reader a better idea of how and when these constructions are used, I provide a few transcribed examples with more context. The sound files are available via Språkbanken. The two first examples come from the popular radio program Språket (’the language’) where Lars-Gunnar Andersson, professor of Modern Swedish, answers questions from the listeners. In (41), the topic of the discussion is how come the use of double supine forms is more common in spoken language than in written. See Appendix 1 for transcription conventions.

(41) Discussion about ‘double supine forms’ (SR P1 21/9 2008)

L-GA: nå: å de e väl så också att när man eh (.) läser igenom
no and it is PRT so also that when one eh reads through
en text man har skrivit så kanske man lägger märke till dom här
a text one has written so maybe one lays mark to these here
de e ju inte säkert att man gör när man (.) pratar på eh
it is PRT not certain that one does when one speaks on
‘No, and it is probably the case that when you read through a text you have written,
you may notice these ones. It is not certain that you do this when you keep talking.’

First L-G Andersson comments that that it is normal to notice these double supines when you read through your text. The initial de in the bold segment refers to ‘to notice the double supines’ and Andersson continues; this is not certain that you do when you are busy talking.

In the next example, a listener has asked about the expression koka ner (‘boil down’), presumably a direct translation from the English expression. The program host, Anna-Lena Ringarp, first conveys what the listener has said and then Andersson makes a comment.

(42) Discussion about koka ner (SR P1 24/9 2008)

A-LR: ja tycker de låter konstigt säger han
I think it sounds strange says he
‘I think it sounds strange, he says.’

L-GA: å de e väl många som gör först (.) å sen vänjer man sej
ånd it is PRT many that do first and then get-used one SELF
kanske
maybe

---

13 <http://spraakdata.gu.se/sveee/Engdahl_2010-subjektsloshet/>
‘Yes, and there are probably many who do at first. And then maybe you get used (to it).’

Here Andersson’s initial de presumably refers back to the listener’s reported view: *it sounds strange*. He continues and affirms that there are probably many who find this expression strange. Note that Swedish does not allow the kind of VP deletion used in the English paraphrase, where the proverb *do* replaces the entire VP *do this*. There is clearly a missing object after gör in (42).

In (43) former journalist Barbro Hedvall features in the early morning program *Tankar för dagen* (‘Thoughts for the day’), talking about the role of clothes and hair styles in politics.

(43) Barbro Hedvall in *Tankar för dagen* (SR P1 28/1 2010)

BH: skulle alltså okrainska Julia Timosjenko ha sin flätfrisyr av en
should then Ukrainian Julia Timosjenko have her braid-hairdo of a
tillfällighet (.) skulle den inte ha ett budskap (.)
coincidence should it not have a message
de e klart att den har.
it is clear that it UTR has

‘Is it a coincidence that the Ukrainian Julia Timosjenko sports her special braided hair style? Doesn’t it have a message? Of course it does.’

Hedvall here asks two rhetorical questions about Julia Timosjenko’s choice of hair style and then delivers the answer herself at a quicker pace. Hedvall presumably reads from a manuscript. The initial de in her reply refers back to *ett budskap* (‘a message’) in the preceding question and den refers back to *frisyr* (‘hair style’). Just like in the previous example, there is clearly a missing object after the verb *har*, a fact that is not conveyed by the English paraphrase.

Until now I have collected approximately 130 examples of *det*-initial utterances with missing expletive subjects from informal conversations and radio broadcasts. In the extracts from the radio which I have been able to analyse more closely, the relevant sequences were produced quickly, with a single intonation contour. I have not found any instances where the speaker interrupts the delivery and corrects him/herself by inserting an expletive subject. I have also not found any indications in the interaction that the listener has difficulties understanding the utterance. I take this as evidence that the construction type is a normal feature of Modern Swedish.
### 4.2 Unexpressed det

In my collection of attested examples, the most common type is the one exemplified in (43) and (35a), repeated here as (44a), where the utterance starts with *de e klar* (*it is clear*). In addition, there are also a number of examples like in (44b).

(44)  
\[ a. \quad \text{Det, är 'klart att du ska göra e.} \quad \text{(woman 50 years, 2001)} \]  
\[ \text{it is clear that you shall do} \]  
\[ '\text{Of course you should do it.'} \]  
\[ b. \quad \text{Klart att du ska göra e.} \]  
\[ \text{clear that you shall do} \]  
\[ '\text{Of course you should do it.'} \]  

As shown by the English paraphrases, both utterances convey an affirmative reaction, adequately rendered by the utterance initial *of course* in English. In (44a), the missing object after *göra* is co-indexed with the topicalized *det*. In (44b), there is no topicalized antecedent. However, it seems plausible that (44b) is the result of topic drop together with a left out copula. As we saw in section 2.1, anaphoric elements in Spec,CP are often not realized phonetically, cf (5)–(10). In evaluative utterances, both an initial *det* and the copula are often left out in spoken Swedish, as pointed out in SAG (4:966) from where the examples in (45) are taken.

(45)  
\[ a. \quad \text{Bra gjort. Jfr: Det var bra gjort.} \]  
\[ \text{Well done. Compare: That was well done.} \]  
\[ b. \quad \text{Trist att det regnar. Jfr: Det är trist att det regnar.} \]  
\[ \text{Sad that it rains. Compare: It is sad that it rains.} \]  

Given the tendency to leave out utterance initial *det är/var* (*it is/was*) in spoken Swedish, I assume that (44b) has the structure shown in (46b) with a missing topicalized object and a missing finite verb. For perspicuity I have indexed the missing elements (cf also (37)).

(46)  
\[ a. \quad \text{Klart att du ska göra e.} \]  
\[ \text{clear that you shall do} \]  

---

14 Hellberg (2001) analyses examples like (44b) as being introduced by an invariant clause type marker. Some problems with this analysis are discussed in Julien (2009) and Engdahl (2010).
Evidence that (46) involves an empty referential element in Spec,CP and an empty expletive element in Spec,TP comes from data like the following. In (47a) the subject is missing and is conventionally interpreted as first person, as shown in (47b). In (48) the object of the embedded clause is missing, analyzed as an instance of topic drop.

(47) a.  Hoppas att ni gör det.
   *hope     that you do it
   ‘(I) hope that you will do it.’

b.  \[cPØi \ Øv \ [TPØi v \ [vp v [att du ska göra ei]]]\]

(48) a.  Hoppas jag att ni gör e.
   *hope     I that you do
   ‘I hope you do.’

b.  \[cPØi hoppas [TPjag v \ [vp v [att ni gör ei]]]\]

Both (47) and (48) are common in ordinary conversation and contrast with (49) which is clearly ungrammatical. As shown in the analysis in (49b), this would involve two empty elements in Spec,CP, which would be unexpected in a V2 language.

(49) a.  *Hoppas e att ni gör e.
   *hope     that you do

b.  \[cPØi Øv \ [TPØi e \ [vp v [att ni gör ei]]]\]

4.3 Comparison with tough constructions

The data discussed in section 4 show many similarities with the tough constructions discussed in section 3. In both cases, an expletive subject in Spec,TP is not pronounced when there is a referential det (overt or silent) in Spec,CP linked to an empty position in an embedded clause. However, there are also some differences. In the case of tough constructions, we established that there is a structural ambiguity, shown in (32) and repeated here in (50). The initial det is either a subject of the complex predication är svårt att säga (‘is hard to say’) as shown in (50a), or it is the fronted object of att säga (‘to say’) as shown in (50b), in which case the expected expletive subject is missing.
(50) a. \([_{\text{cp}} }^{\text{a}} \text{Det}, \text{är } [_{\text{tp}} e_i \text{ v } [_{\text{cp}} v [_{\text{ap}} ^{\text{b}} \text{svårt } [_{\text{op}} ^{\text{b}} \text{att säga } e_k]]]]\]

\[\text{it is hard to say}\]

b. \([_{\text{cp}} \text{Det, är } [_{\text{tp}} \text{ Ø v } [_{\text{cp}} v [_{\text{ap}} \text{svårt } [_{\text{op}} \text{att säga } e_k]]]]\]

\[\text{it is hard to say}\]

The examples with fronting from finite clauses are not structurally ambiguous. In the proposed structure in (37), repeated here in (51), the initial det is analysed as the fronted object of att du sa (‘that you said’).

(51) \([_{\text{cp}} \text{Det, var } [_{\text{tp}} \text{ Ø v } [_{\text{cp}} v [_{\text{ap}} \text{dumt } [_{\text{op}} \text{att du sa } e_i]]]]\]

\[\text{it was stupid that you said}\]

There is no alternative analysis corresponding to (50a) where the initial det also acts as the subject of the matrix predicate var dumt (‘was stupid’). Whereas it is semantically plausible to analyse tough constructions as composite predications (the property of being hard composes with the property of being an x such that it is hard for someone to say x), this is not an option for examples like in (51). The finite complement clause ‘that you said x’ expresses a proposition (provided that x is given a value) and acts as an argument of the matrix predicate ‘was stupid’. Consequently we expect to find grammatical examples where det is realized in the Spec,TP subject position in tough constructions, but not in the constructions involving finite clauses. This prediction is borne out, as shown in (52) and (53).

(52) a. Är det svårt att säga?

\[\text{is it hard to say}\]

b. Är du svår att behaga?

\[\text{are you hard to please}\]

(53) a. * Var det dumt att du sa?

\[\text{was it stupid that you said}\]

b. * Är det många som gör?

\[\text{is it many that do}\]

I have no attested examples like the ones in (53) and to my ears they sound ungrammatical. Verbs like säga (‘say’) and göra (‘do’) require overt objects in Swedish, hence the ungrammaticality. It is impossible to analyze these yes/no questions as involving topic drop or to assume that the object has been fronted to Spec,TP, which is an A-position.
4.4 Comparison with other null subjects in Spec,TP

In section 2.2, I brought up one type of example where expletive subjects are frequently left out, viz. (11a), repeated here as (54a) together with a few additional examples.

(54) a. I gräset kan (det) finnas ormar. (Falk 1993:286)
   in grass DEF can (it) be snakes
   ‘In the grass there can be snakes.’

   b. I den trakten har (det) funnits glador så länge jag kan minnas. (SAG 4:54)
   in that region have (it) been kites as long as I can remember
   ‘In that region there have been kites as far back as I can remember.’

   c. Ledsammast har (det) varit att han aldrig har ställt upp. (SAG 3:556)
   saddest has (it) been that he never has stood up
   ‘The saddest thing has been that he has never volunteered.’

In these examples there is a locative adverbial or a superlative predicative adjective in Spec,CP and there is often a temporal or modal auxiliary. The initial constituent is always linked to an empty argument position in the VP, as shown in (55), on the assumption that these locatives actually behave as arguments, in contrast with temporal modifiers (cf (11b)).

(55) a. [CP I gräset, kan [TP Ø v [VP v [VP finnas ormar e]]]]
   in grass DEF can be snakes
   b. [CP Ledsammast, har [TP Ø v [VP v [VP varit e] [CP att han aldrig har ställt upp ]]]]
   saddest has been that he never has stood up

If we compare the structures in (55) with the ones proposed for tough constructions in (50) and the det initial constructions with finite complements in (51), we see that they differ in the position of the empty category that is linked to the constituent in Spec,CP. In (50b), the initial det is linked to an empty object in an infinitival clause and in (51) there is an empty object in a finite complement clause. In both cases the identification of the initial constituent must involve some non-local mechanism. The structures in (55) also involve an empty argument, though not an object but a locative or a predicative adjective phrase. This phrase acts as an argument of the main verb of the clause and consequently its semantic contribution can be established locally, within the matrix clause.

Summarizing the findings in sections 3 and 4, we have identified two types of clauses in Swedish where an expected expletive subject in Spec,TP is phonetically unrealized. In both
types, the conditioning factor appears to be the presence of a det in Spec,CP which has been fronted from an embedded clause, finite or non-finite. Before assessing the importance of this factor, we will first survey how the subject requirement has been accounted for in the chomskian tradition.

5. The subject requirement and the EPP

In much generative work in the 1980s and 1990s, the fact that a clause needs a subject was captured by the so called Extended Projection Principle (EPP) which still plays a role in the Minimalist Program.\textsuperscript{15} The EPP presumably applies universally but languages differ in whether the subject has to be overtly realized or not. In current minimalist analyses, where the syntactic derivation is driven by syntactic features, it is common to assume the existence of an EPP feature which serves to ensure that a subject is overtly realized in the syntactic structure. In his minimalist analysis of Swedish, Platzack (2011) assumes that T, the functional projection where subject agreement is checked, has an unvalued $\Phi$-feature which is marked EPP (2011:78f., 136–145). This feature must be eliminated before Spell-out by merging a DP in the Spec position, see e.g. (2a). In Icelandic impersonal constructions, where overt expletive subjects in Spec,TP are ungrammatical (see (3a)), Platzack assumes that there is no EPP feature in T and consequently no overt subject is required. Platzack also assumes that Swedish, being a V2-language, has an EPP feature connected to an unvalued $\text{Fin}$ feature in C which forces the finite verb to move to C in matrix clauses (2011:82). In addition he assumes, following Chomsky (2008), that C carries an edge feature which has to be eliminated by the merger of a constituent in Spec,CP (2011:93ff., 104ff.). The structure of the subject initial declarative clauses in (1b) is outlined in (56), where double strike through is used for elements that have moved.\textsuperscript{16}

\begin{equation}
\begin{aligned}
\text{CP} & \quad \text{Eva ringde} \quad \text{[TP Eva ringde [VP ringde till doktorn]]} \\
Eva & \quad \text{called} \quad \text{to doctor.DEF}
\end{aligned}
\end{equation}

\textsuperscript{15} See Svenonius (2002:9ff.) for an overview of the development of the EPP. The term was first used by Chomsky (1982:10).

\textsuperscript{16} For details see Platzack (2011). The theoretical status of EPP features in the Minimalist Program remains unclear.
The verb *ringde* is first merged in V, then moved to v and then to C in order to satisfy its Fin\textsuperscript{\text{EPP}} feature. The subject *Eva* is first merged in Spec,vP, then moved (internally merged) to Spec,TP in order to satisfy the unvalued Φ-feature in T, and then moved to Spec,CP in order to eliminate the edge-feature of C.

The analysis in (56) retains an important feature of den Besten’s (1977) original proposal: a declarative subject initial clause involves a chain between the A-bar position Spec,CP and the A-position Spec,TP. More recently this type of ‘mixed’ chain formation has been questioned. Chomsky (2008) proposes to replace it by so called parallel movement (see also Hicks 2009, Platzack 2009). In (56) the movement of *Eva* from Spec,vP to Spec,TP and Spec,C would take place in parallel, which means that the derivation involves one A-chain (Spec,TP–Spec,vP) and one A-bar chain (Spec,CP–Spec,vP), as shown in (57), but no chain linking Spec,CP and Spec,TP.

![Diagram of chain formation]

(57) Clearly only one of the chain heads can be pronounced, but exactly what in the system determines that it has to be the instance in Spec,CP remains unclear. Platzack (to appear b) states that a subject in Spec,TP can be deleted (left unpronounced) if there is parallel movement to Spec,CP, without further motivation (to appear b:XX).\(^17\)

5.1 Platzack’s “Spurious Topic Drop”

Platzack (to appear b:XX) argues that Chomsky’s parallel movement can be used to account for the missing expletive subjects which are the topic of this article.\(^18\) As shown above, a subject moves in parallel from Spec,vP to Spec,TP and Spec,CP, but only the subject in

\(^{17}\) It seems to me that parallel chains introduce a very powerful mechanism into the grammar. It is not clear what the limitations on parallel chains are, nor on what computation is required in order to establish, for a given element, whether there is a parallel chain whose head is pronounced.

\(^{18}\) Platzack also discusses the construction with initial locatives, shown here in (11), split topicalization and relative clauses, but I will limit myself to discussing his alternative proposal for the missing expletive subjects.
SpecCP is pronounced. Platzack makes a further assumption concerning the CP domain in Swedish. In order to account for the common type of example illustrated in (58), he argues that we need to assume that there are two Spec,CPs in Swedish main clauses.

(58)  a. ‘Cykeln, _den ställde han i köket. (cf Platzack to appear b:(8))

   bike.DEF it put he in kitchen.DEF

   ‘The bike, he put it in the kitchen.’

b. Sedan _så kommer min syster.

   then so comes my sister

   ‘Then my sister comes.’

c. Johan, _han är bra komisk ibland. (SAG 4:438)

   John he is well funny sometimes

   ‘Johan, he is quite funny sometimes.’

The initial constituent is normally accented whereas the second (_den, så, han_) is unaccented, as shown in (58). Examples like (58a) with a definite NP and a coreferent pronoun are quite common. Andersson (1982:34f.) treats them as left dislocation structures followed by what he calls topic movement of the pronominal copy. The reference grammar SAG assumes a förfält (‘prefield’), preceding the initial position, for dislocated constituents which are more loosely connected to the clause (SAG 4:6ff.). Platzack assumes that both positions are specifiers of C; “the high/first specifier contains a first merged usually stressed element, and the low/second specifier is a position for an internally merged unstressed element” (to appear b:XX, see also Platzack to appear a). He then proposes that the unstressed element in the low Spec,CP may be dropped when the higher Spec,CP is pronounced and introduces the term spurious topic drop for this. A consequence of this spurious topic drop is that we may get examples without overt subjects. Platzack’s analysis of such an example is given in (59) (= Platzack’s (15)).

(59)

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19 Eide (2011) uses the term Copy Left Dislocation (CLD) for these constructions. Her CLD-Topic position presumably corresponds to Platzack’s high Spec,CP and her CLD-copy position to Platzack’s low Spec,CP.
In this analysis, the initial *det* is first merged (i.e. directly generated) in the high Spec,CP position. An expletive *det* is first merged in Spec,vP and then moved in parallel to Spec,TP and the low Spec,CP. *det* in Spec,TP is deleted because there is parallel movement (see above). Since *det* in the low Spec,CP is a weak, unstressed element, it can also be dropped, “giving the impression of a null subject” (Platzack to appear b:XX). I think there are several problems with this analysis. First, it does not account for the object gap, which is present in all the examples with missing expletive subjects discussed in sections 3 and 4. Note that the relation between the initial *det* in the high Spec,CP and the unrealized object of *sa* (‘said’), indicated by a double-headed non-dashed arrow in (59), is a semantic relation, not a syntactic one (Platzack to appear b:note 7). Since the initial *det* is directly generated (first merged) in the high Spec,CP position, there cannot be any syntactic dependency and the absence of the downstairs object is left unexplained. In suggesting that the relation between an initial constituent and a gap inside the clause is semantic and not syntactic, Platzack parts company with most of the generative tradition which has seen *wh*-movement as one of the clearest examples of a syntactic dependency. In (58a), there is a syntactic dependency between the a fronted element in the low Spec,CP position, *det* and a gap in the VP, but this is not the case in (59). Since there is no syntactic dependency between the high Spec,CP and either the low Spec,CP or the gap, we would also expect examples like (60a) to be grammatical, contrary to
fact. Following Platzack, the analysis should be as in (61).

(60)  a.  * Min cykel jag ställde e i köket  
      \( \text{my bike} \quad \text{I put} \quad \text{in kitchen.DEF} \)

b.  Min cykel, jag ställde den i köket.  
      \( \text{my bike} \quad \text{I put} \quad \text{it in kitchen.DEF} \)

‘My bike, I put it in the kitchen.’

A second problem with Platzack’s proposal is the existence of examples like (62a).

(62)  a.  Vinho verde, det var längesen jag drack e.  (man 50 years, 2002)
‘Vinho verde, it is a long time since I drank it.’

b. \[
\text{Vinho verde} \left[ \text{det} \text{ var} \left[ \text{det var längesen jag drack det} \right] \right]\]

At first glance, (62a) seems to fit very well with the double Spec,CP analysis proposed by Platzack. The accented lexical phrase *vinho verde* is first merged in the high Spec,CP and the unstressed pronoun *det* is moved to the low Spec,CP. But for spurious topic drop to take place, there has to be yet another Spec,CP, acting as the landing site for parallel movement, as shown in (62b).

A third problem with Platzack’s proposal is that it is unclear how it would extend to examples like (44b), repeated here as (63), where both the initial *det*, the copula and the expletive subject are missing.

\[
\text{Klart att du ska göra e.}
\]

‘Of course you should do it.’

According to Platzack, a weak element in low Spec,CP can be dropped by spurious topic drop provided that the element in the high Spec,CP is pronounced. But examples like (63) show that there is no need for an overt topic as long as there is an understood unrealized topicalized constituent (cf (46b)). I think that Platzack’s assumption that there need not be any syntactic dependency between an initial constituent and an empty position in the clause is on the wrong track. Instead I believe that it is precisely the fact that an initial constituent heads a non-local syntactic dependency that is crucial. Before turning to why this is so, I will make a few more comments on the EPP.

### 5.2 Where does the EPP apply?

The requirement for overt subjects has been assumed to apply to finite clauses given that infinitival clauses lack overt subjects in many languages, including the Scandinavian languages. However, the subject requirement in Swedish seems to be independent of finiteness, as shown by the examples in (64) which involve non-finite complements of perception verbs (cf. SAG 3:575f.) and where the
expletive subject is obligatory. English counterparts tend to involve finite clauses or avoid the expletive.

(64) a. Jag hörde *(det) regna förskräckligt i går.
   I heard it rain terribly yesterday.
   ‘I heard that it was raining terribly yesterday.’

   b. Vi såg *(det) komma någon på vägen.
   we saw it/there come someone on road.DEF
   ‘We saw someone come down the road.’

Just like in matrix clauses, the expletive *det in (64) cannot be stressed. Furthermore it cannot be fronted to initial position, as shown in (65), whereas fronting of a referential argument from the same position is fine (65c).

(65) a. *Detₐ hörde jag eᵢ regna förskräckligt i går.
   it heard I rain terribly yesterday

   b. *Detₐ såg vi eᵢ komma någon på vägen.
   it saw we come someone on road.DEF

   c. Eva/henneᵢ såg vi eᵢ komma på vägen.
   Eva/her.ACC saw we come on road.DEF
   ‘We saw Eva/her come down the road.’

The ungrammaticality of (65a,b) highlights a difference between local and non-local dependencies. Whereas fronting an expletive subject to its closest Spec,CP is unproblematic, as shown in section 1 and 2, fronting an expletive across clauses is impossible. In the next section we will look closer at the ways an initial *det may be interpreted.

6. The processing of *det-initial clauses

The examples we discussed in sections 3 and 4 all involve clauses beginning with *det (‘it’) and many of them start with *det är (‘it is’). According to Allwood (1999 Table 3:1) *det är is the most common two word collocation in both spoken and written Swedish, which is maybe not surprising

---

20 Platzack (to appear b) assumes that expletive *det is merged in Spec, vP, i.e. below TP. See e.g. his structures (12) and (15), shown as (59) in this article.
given that *det* has so many functions.$^{21}$ *Det* is the neuter personal pronoun, used to refer both to
neuter antecedents and to properties, propositions and events, like *it* in English. A few examples
where *det* functions as a continuing topic are given in (66)–(67). In (66b,c) *det* refers back to baking
bread, introduced in the question in (66a).

(66) a. Blir du inte trött på att baka bröd?

*become you not tired on to bake bread*

‘Don’t you et tired of baking bread?’

b. Nej, det är roligt.

*no it is fun*

‘No, it’s fun.’

c. Nej, det tycker jag *e* är roligt.

*no it think I is fun*

‘No, I think it’s fun.’

(67) a. Var är brevet?

*where is letter.DEF*

‘Where is the letter?’

b. Det ligger på byrån.

*it lies on dresser.DEF*

‘It’s on the dresser.’

c. Det lade jag *e* på byrån.

*it put I on dresser.DEF*

‘I put it on the dresser.’

d. Det minns jag inte var jag lade *e*.

*it remember I not where I put*

‘I don’t remember where I put it.’

The answers in (66) and (67) illustrate a common pattern in Swedish, viz. to start off a reply, or a
further comment, with an unaccented pronoun which refers back to a referent or event introduced in
the preceding utterance (see Vallduví & Engdahl 1996, Engdahl 1997, Erteschik-Shir 2007). The
grammatical function of the pronoun may be as a subject (66b), (67b), as a subject in an embedded
clause (66c), as an object in the matrix clause (67c) or as an object in an embedded clause (67d) etc.

$^{21}$ Eide (2011:181, Table 1) reports that 24.4% of the clauses in a spoken corpus had an initial
expletive subject, compared with 11% in a matched written corpus.
All of these examples are perfectly natural replies, including (67d) which involves fronting from an embedded question. In the given context, the reference of the initial *det* can be established quickly, but its contribution to the utterance itself cannot be determined until more of it as been processed and a gap has been detected.

We saw in section 2 that *det* is also used as an expletive with meteorological predicates and in presentational sentences and as a clause-anticipating expletive in extraposition constructions. Whether an initial *det* is used anaphorically or as an expletive is determined by the syntactic construction. Very often this can not be determined until most or all of the sentence has been processed. Consider the examples in (68). On the right I have indicated the function of *det*, using *det* for an anaphorically used referential *det* and *det* for *det* used as an anticipating expletive.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{(68) a. } \text{Det är svårt.} & \quad \rightarrow \text{det}_i \\
\text{it is hard} & \\
\text{b. } \text{Det är svårt att leva.} & \quad \rightarrow \text{det}_x \\
\text{it is hard to live} & \\
\text{c. } \text{Det är svårt att säga e.} & \quad \rightarrow \text{det}_i \\
\text{it is hard to say} & \\
\text{d. } \text{Det är svårt att säga sanningen.} & \quad \rightarrow \text{det}_x \\
\text{it is hard to say truth.} & 
\end{align*}
\]

In (68a), *det* must be interpreted as a referential *det*, but in (68b) the added infinitival clause *att leva* forces an interpretation of *det* as an anticipating expletive. If the infinitival clause contains a gap, as in (68c), the initial *det* must be interpreted as referential and as providing the referent for the missing complement of *säga* (‘say’). Whether or not the infinitival clause contains a gap can of course not be determined until the whole clause has been processed. In (68d), there is no object gap and the initial *det* consequently must be resolved as an anticipating expletive. The examples with finite complement clauses display the same underdetermination when it comes to the function of the initial *det*.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{(69) a. } \text{Det var dumt att du kom.} & \quad \rightarrow \text{det}_x \\
\text{it was stupid that you came} & \\
\text{b. } \text{Det var dumt att du sa e.} & \quad \rightarrow \text{det}_i \\
\text{it was stupid that you said} & 
\end{align*}
\]
c. Det är ju så många som gör det. \(\rightarrow\) det,

\[\text{it is PRT so many that do it}\]

d. Det är ju så många som gör e. \(\rightarrow\) det,

\[\text{it is PRT so many that do}\]

In (69a), where the complement \textit{att du kom} (‘that you came’) is a complete clause, the initial \textit{det} must be interpreted as an anticipating expletive, but in (69b), where the object of \textit{sa} (‘said’) is missing, the initial \textit{det} can only be interpreted as referential and as providing the antecedent for the object gap. The initial \textit{det} in (69c) must be understood as an expletive, introducing a presentational construction, but in (69d), the object of \textit{gör} (‘do’) is missing in the relative clause and must be linked to the fronted referential \textit{det}.

The examples in (68) and (69) illustrate how the function of \textit{det} is determined as the sentence is processed. The examples are here presented out of context, but in actual use there are presumably clues in the context and in the delivery which help the listener/reader get the intended interpretation of an initial \textit{det}, i.e. as referential or expletive. As we know, sentence interpretation takes place rapidly and incrementally and starts as soon as the first word is perceived (Marslen-Wilson 1973, 1975). Starting off with an assumption that an initial \textit{det} is an expletive is probably a good strategy given the frequency of impersonal constructions in the language,\footnote{A spot check on the 436 examples of \textit{det är svårt att} … (‘it is hard to’) in the PAROLE corpus in \textit{Språkbanken} showed that less than 10\% of the examples involved an initial referential \textit{det}. Further frequency studies, especially from spoken language, are required in order to say something more definitive about the distribution of referential and expletive \textit{det}.} but in many cases this interpretation will have to be changed during the processing, as shown in (68a,c) and (69b,d).\footnote{Hammarberg (2000, 2008) points out that it is sometimes difficult to say which use of \textit{det} is involved and discusses some examples where the interpretation switches back and forth between an anaphoric, backward-looking use of \textit{det} and a cataphoric, clause-anticipating use.} It would be very interesting to use on-line methods to investigate whether this temporary ambiguity concerning the function of \textit{det} influences listeners’ and readers’ processing of the utterance/sentence, and, equally interesting, whether this may shed some light on the sentence planning involved in speaking/writing. One possibility would be to undertake ERP-studies of examples like the ones in (68) and (69) (cf Roll 2009). If subjects interpret an initial \textit{det} in (68c) and
(69b,d) as an anticipating expletive, we might expect some reanalysis effect when they reach the object gap in the embedded clause.

6.1 Examples in context

One authentic example illustrating how this incremental processing might evolve is provided in (70). This is a transcription of an excerpt from an interview on Swedish radio. (.) marks a short pause.

(70) A reporter (R) interviews a former heroin addict (B) (SR P1-morgon, 21/1 2011)

R: de kanske e svårare att lågga av ifall att man gör de ännu mer
   it maybe is harder to lay off if that one makes it even more
tillgängligt med >narkotiska preparat<.
   accessible with narcotic substances
   ‘Maybe it’s harder to quit if narcotic substances become even more accessible.’

B: jaa men de där me att lågga av, (.)
   yeah but that there with ta lay off
   de e ju alltid nån å- nån annan som vill (.)
   it is PRT always some some else that wants
   att man ska göra. (.)
   that one shall do
   själva individen kanske inte alls (.)
   self.DEF individual.DEF maybe not at all wants
   ‘Yeah, but this thing about quitting, there is always someone else who wants you to (do it). The person himself maybe doesn’t want to (do it) at all.’

After the reporter’s suggestion that increased accessibility to drugs might make it harder to give them up, B picks up on the topic of quitting, de där me att lågga av (‘this thing about quitting’) and adds a comment starting with de e ju (‘it is’). In his rather long utterance, there are two potential gap locations which I have marked and indexed in (71).

(71)

B: de e ju alltid nån å- nån annan som vill e₁ (.)
   it is PRT always some some else that wants
   att man ska göra e₂. (.)
   that one shall do

B’s comment starts off as a presentational construction introducing an indefinite NP, which is interrupted, nån å-, and resumed by nån annan (‘someone else’). The relative clause som vill (‘that wants’) is incomplete; instead of an expressed complement to vill (‘wants’) there is a
short pause during which the missing complement $e_1$ may be identified as the initial $de$. After
the short pause, B continues and produces a that-clause which then provides the missing
complement of vill. At the end of the finite clause, there is another pause after the verb
göra, which in Swedish requires a complement as we have seen above. Again, the missing
complement $e_2$ must be linked to the initial $de$. During the interpretation of this utterance, a
possible initial interpretation of $de$ as an expletive must be revised around $e_1$, where it is
reinterpreted as a referential det. This interpretation must be rejected when B continues
talking and then resumed again when the second gap $e_2$ is identified. Despite this repeated
reinterpretation of det, B’s comment is not hard to process. There is no indication in this
example, or in the previous ones, that the discovery of an object gap causes problems for the
language user.

In this respect, the examples discussed here resemble certain parasitic gap constructions, as
in (72) (cf the discussion in Engdahl 1983).

(72) Köttfärs måste man steka $e$ väl innan man äter $e_{pg}$.
    mince must one fry well before one eats
    ‘You have to fry mince properly before you eat it.’

Although the initial constituent köttfärs (‘mince’) has been interpreted as the direct object of
steka (‘fry’), it is still accessible and can be used to resolve the missing object of äter (‘eat’)
in the adverbial clause. This suggests that the activation of a filler in an unbounded
dependency remains after the gap has been located.

In addition to the examples in (68)–(69), we also find examples like (73a) where there is
no subject gap in the matrix clause but where there are two embedded clauses, the first with a
subject gap and the second with an object gap.\(^{24}\)

(73) a. Det tycker jag var trevligt att du sa.
    it think I was nice that you said
    ‘I think it was nice that you said that.’

\(^{24}\) This example was produced during a conversation at a rehabilitation clinic (Lundgren
2009:185) and was discussed by Per Linell at a seminar entitled ”On-line syntax: Språkandets
dynamiska grammatik” [On-line syntax: The dynamic grammar of languaging] at the
Department of Linguistics, University of Gothenburg, March 13, 2011.
When processing (73a), the listener presumably rapidly realizes that *det* is not a plausible subject of *tycker* (‘think’) but may consider it as a potential object, see *e₁* in (73b). However, the recognition of another finite verb *var* (‘was’) forces the listener to postulate an empty subject (*e₂*), and possibly to identify it with the initial *det*. This assignment has to be revised when the following *that*-clause is recognized. Finally when the empty object (*e₃*) is recognized, it can be linked to the initial *det* and the whole utterance interpreted, as indicated in the English paraphrase. But what about the missing subject in *e₂*? This turns out to be an instance of the type of empty expletive subjects (*Ø*) which we have encountered before. This expletive subject may be overtly realized, as shown in (74a), where it functions as an anticipating expletive for the extraposed clause. If there is no long-distance dependency, i.e. if there is no gap in the most deeply embedded clause, the expletive subject cannot be left out, see (74b). The only way to interpret this example would be with *det* as linked to the empty subject position *e₂*, which must be an anticipating expletive subject, given the final extraposed clause *att du sa det* (‘that you said it’). But as we saw above in 5.2, expletive subjects cannot be fronted, cf (65a,b).

(74)  

a.  
\[
\text{Det, tycker jag det}_x \text{ var trevligt [}_x\text{att du } \text{ sa } e_i\text{]}_x
\]
\[
it \; \text{think} \; \text{I} \; \text{it} \; \text{was nice} \; \text{that you said}
\]
‘I think it was nice that you said that.’

b.  
\[
* \text{Det tycker jag } \text{Ø}_x \text{ var trevligt att } \text{ du } \text{ sa } \text{det}.
\]
\[
it \; \text{think} \; \text{I} \; \text{was nice} \; \text{that you said it}
\]

‘I think that was nice. That you said it, I mean.’

c.  
\[
\text{Det, tycker jag } e_i \text{ var trevligt. (.) Att } \text{ du } \text{ sa det, vill säga.}
\]
\[
it \; \text{think} \; \text{I} \; \text{was nice} \; \text{that you said it} \; \text{will say}
\]

‘I think that was nice. That you said it, I mean.’

If there is a pause before the *that*-clause, then a version without an object gap is possible as shown in (74c), but the *that*-clause *att du sa det* (‘that you said it’) is then interpreted as an afterthought and not as a syntactically integrated complement. The initial *det* is then interpreted as referential, as shown.

Examples like (74a) show that expletive subjects can be left unrealized also in embedded clauses provided that there is a dependency between an initial *det* and a gap in the embedded
clause. If there is no such dependency, as in (74b), the expletive subject cannot be left out. In all the examples discussed so far, there has been such a dependency between an initial det and a gap located in an embedded clause, finite or non-finite. I believe that this is the crucial condition for when expletive subject det may be left out.25

6.2 Other initial constituents

So far all the examples discussed have been introduced either by an overt det or by an unexpressed det (see 4.2) and these are by far the most common type. In the southern region Skåne, where the expletive used in presentational constructions is där ('there’), as in Danish and English, examples like (75b) can be heard.

(75) a. Finns där många som shoppar på Mobilia?
   are there many that shop in Mobilia
   ‘Are there many who shop at Mobilia?’

   b. Där, finns Ø många som shoppar e₁.
   there are many that shop
   ‘There are many who shop there.’

I have also come across a few examples where the dependency is introduced by phrases which cannot be anaysed as expletives, see the examples in (76).

(76) a. Dom, var längesen jag såg e₁.
   3p.pl was long I saw

25 In this respect the det-initial examples discussed in sections 3 and 4 differ from the locative initial example in (11a), where the locative is interpreted as an argument in the VP, as shown in (12). There are, however, examples where an expletive subject is optional when there is a gap is inside a DP in the matrix clause as in (i), brought to my attention by Lars-Olof Delsing 2008. This presumably has the structure in (ii).

(i) Det finns (det) exempel på e₁.
   it exist (it) examples on
   ‘There are examples of that’.

(ii) \[ CP \text{Det} \text{i finns } [\text{vp } \emptyset \text{ v } [\text{vp v } [\text{vp exempel på e₁}]\text{]]}]
‘It was a long time since I saw them.’

b. Tandborsten, är bra om du tar med 

\textit{tooth brush.DEF is good if you take with}

‘It’s good if you bring your toothbrush.’

c. Detta, är bra om man kan gå på 

\textit{this is good if one can go on (e-mail 2/3 2010)}

‘It’s good if you can attend this.’

(76a) was uttered by a woman on discovering a pair of trousers at the bottom of the laundry basket. The spoken Swedish form \textit{dom} is used for both subject and object pronouns. The predicative adjective \textit{bra} (‘good’) in (76b,c) is invariant and shows neither number nor gender agreement. (76c) is one of relatively few written attested examples and is taken from an e-mail message from my head of department. \textit{Detta} is the nominative or accusative demonstrative neuter singular pronoun. The examples in (76) have in common that there is no formal feature of the initial constituent which signals whether it is to be interpreted as a subject or not. Furthermore, the predicative adjective used \textit{bra} (‘good’), or the temporal adverbial \textit{längesen} (‘long ago’) don’t show any agreement which might resolve whether the initial constituent is a subject or not. If we change the examples slightly so that there is overt agreement between the initial constituent and a predicative adjective, the result is clearly ungrammatical, as shown in (77).

(77) a. * Dom, var roliga att jag såg 

\textit{3P.PL was funny.PL that I saw}

b. * Tandborstar, är lämpliga om du tar med 

\textit{tooth brush.PL are suitable.PL if you bring}

If we replace the invariant \textit{bra} (‘good’) in (76c) with an adjective that shows agreement, using the neuter form as in (78a), the result is not as clearly ungrammatical as in (77) or as in (78b) with plural agreement. This is not surprising as many researchers have found that the neuter form often seems to indicate lack of agreement (cf Josefsson 2006, 2009). I have, however, not noticed any examples like (78a).

(78) a. ? Detta, är värdefult om man kan gå på 

\textit{this is valuable.NEUT.SG if one can go on}

‘It’s valuable if you can attend this.’
b. * Dessa är värdefulla om man kan gå på e.<i>

   * these are valuable.PL if one can go on

Turning the declaratives in (76) into yes/no questions, thereby forcing the initial constituent to appear in the Spec,TP subject position, also leads to ungrammaticality, cf the ungrammatical examples in (53).

(79) * Var dom, längesen du såg e?  

   were they long ago you saw

To conclude this section on processing considerations, we have found that expletive subjects may be left out in utterances where there is an initial *det which can be interpreted as expletive, although this interpretation has to be revised as more of the sentence is processed. We have also seen that this only happens when the initial constituent heads an unbounded dependency and is linked to a gap inside an embedded clause.<sup>26</sup>

7. A Scandinavian comparison

Examples with missing expletive subjects are also attested in spoken Norwegian, see (80).

(80) a. men det er Ø mange som ikke gjør e    (NoTa 058)

   but it is many that not do

   ‘but there are many who don’t do it’

b. Det er Ø ikke noen vits at han gjør e.    (2007)

   it is not any point that he does

   ‘There is no point in his doing that.’

c. Det er ikke bra å bare holde dataene sine    (2008)

   it is not good to only keep data.DEF.PL REFL.POSS

   for seg selv for det er så innmari mange som gjør e.

   for REFL.self because it is so very many that do

<sup>26</sup> I have not come across any examples involving *wh-questions as in (i). To my ear they are clearly better than (79).

(i) ? Vad, var dumt att du sa e.

   what was stupid that you said
'It isn’t good only to keep one’s data for oneself, there are so many people who do that.'

(80a) comes from the Oslo corpus of spoken Norwegian NoTa compiled in 2005. (80b) was produced by a 25-year old Norwegian woman and shows that the gap may occur inside a noun complement clause. (80c) was uttered by Janne Bondi Johannesen in a discussion about corpus data. The construction is also found in spoken Finland-Swedish, see the exchange in (81) which Mona Forsskåhl has noted and passed on to me.\(^\text{27}\)

(81) Conversation between Mona Forsskåhl and a student at Hanken (a School of Commerce in Helsinki), personal communication 2010.

Stud: kan du skicka den ti mig per e-post

\textit{can you send it to me via e-mail}

`Can you send it to me by e-mail?'

Mona: jaa bara jag kommer ihåg de fortfarande

\textit{yees only I remember it still}

när jag kommer till min dator

\textit{when I come to my computer}

`Yes, if only I remember when I get to my computer.'

Stud: de sku vaa jättesnällt om du sku kunna göra e.

\textit{it would be giant-kind if you should can do}

`It would be really kind if you could do that.'

Note that this construction must be distinguished from another type of \textit{det}-omission, which Saaristo (2008) discusses. He has noted that Swedish speakers in Helsinki often leave out \textit{det} in contexts as shown in (82).\(^\text{28}\)

\begin{verbatim}
(82) Blev han polis? – Ja, han blev e. (Saaristo 2008:28)
became he police yes he became
`Did he become a policeman? – Yes, he did.'
\end{verbatim}

Note that the missing word after \textit{blev} (`became’) is not an expletive but a referential \textit{det},

\(^{27}\) In her extensive corpus study of \textit{de e} (`it is’), Forsskåhl (2009) did not note any examples like this.

\(^{28}\) Saaristo suspects that this is due to influence from Finnish.
which refers back to the property of being a policeman. In Sweden such a referential *det* cannot be left out, see (83)

(83) a. Blev han polis?
   became he police

b. – Ja, han blev *(det).
   yes he became it

c. – Ja, det, blev han *e,*
   yes it became he

‘Did he become a policeman? – Yes, he did.’

(83b), with a realized anaphoric *det* following the verb is a possible answer in Sweden, but a more common way to answer such a question is as in (83c) where the predicative anaphor *det* has been fronted to initial position.

Given that the construction is found in both Norwegian and Swedish, one might expect it to be possible in other V2 languages with expletive subjects, but this is not the case. The construction is not found in German or Icelandic.\(^{29}\) It is also not used in Danish, which is maybe more surprising, given its closeness to Norwegian and Swedish. Although impersonal constructions with expletive subjects are frequent in spoken and written Danish\(^{30}\), no spontaneous examples corresponding to e.g. (34a) have been attested and Danish informants judge Danish translations of the Norwegian and Swedish examples as ungrammatical. This shows that it is not sufficient that the structural and lexical conditions are fulfilled, i.e. being a V2 language with an expletive subject which is homophonous with a referential pronoun. In addition it seems that the construction as a whole must be available to the language user. In Swedish, I suspect that the similarities between tough constructions with infinitival clauses and constructions like *det är klart att* (‘it is clear that’) with

\(^{29}\) Although *es* (‘it’) in German is used both as an expletive and as a referential neuter pronoun, an initial *es* can not be interpreted as a fronted object, as noted in Travis (1984). Instead the demonstrative *das* is used. See van Craenenbroeck & Haegeman (2007) and Meinunger (2007) for discussion. The Icelandic expletive *það* is only used in clause initial position (Spec,CP) and never in Spec,TP, as discussed in section 2. Sigurðsson 2010:174 phrases the restriction in Icelandic in a way which highlights the similarities with the Swedish construction discussed in this article: “*það* must not be spelled out when some other element takes the first position of the clause” (italics in the original). This is clearly an area where more comparative research would be fruitful.

\(^{30}\) Like English, Danish has two forms, *det* (‘it’) and *der* (‘there’). See Vikner (1995:228ff.) for an overview.
finite clauses have played a role in introducing the construction, maybe through some form of analogical extension.

8. Concluding remarks

In this article we have seen that expletive subjects in present-day Swedish are optional, sometimes even dispreferred, when there is an instance of a homphonous det in initial position, in Spec,CP. This happens in tough-constructions like (31), repeated here as (84a), which was shown to be structurally ambiguous. The initial det is either a real subject of the predicative adjective (84b) or it is the fronted object from the infinitival clause, in which case the expected expletive subject det is left out (84c).

\((84)\)

a. Det är svårt att säga.
   
   \(\text{it is hard to say}\)
   
   ‘It is hard to say.’

b. \(\left[_{\text{vp}}^{4}\text{Det} \right]_{\text{TP}} e_i v \left[_{\text{vp}}^{4}\text{svårt} \right]^{4}\left[_{\text{Op}}^{k}\text{att säga } e_i \right]_{\text{i}}]_{\text{]]}}\)
   
   \(\text{it is hard to say}\)

   \(\text{‘It is hard to say.}\)

   c. \(\left[_{\text{vp}}^{4}\text{Det} \right]_{\text{TP}} \right. \left[_{\text{vp}}^{4}\text{Ø} \right]_{\text{vp}} v \left[_{\text{vp}}^{4}\text{svårt} \right]_{_{\text{vp}}} \left[_{\text{Op}}^{k}\text{att säga } e_i \right]_{\text{i}}]\]
   
   \(\text{it is hard to say}\)

   \(\text{‘It is hard to say.}\)

The pattern with unrealized expletive subjects also extends to sentences with finite complement clauses as in (34a), repeated here as (85a). In this case there is no evidence that the initial det acts as a subject of the matrix clause, hence there is only one possible structure, shown in (85b).

\((85)\)

a. Det var dumt att du sa \(e_i\).

\(\text{it was stupid that you said}\)

‘It was stupid that you said it/that.’

b. \(\left[_{\text{cp}}^{4}\text{Det} \right]_{\text{TP}} \left[_{\text{vp}}^{0}\text{Ø} \right]_{\text{vp}} v \left[_{\text{vp}}^{4}\text{dumt} \right]_{_{\text{vp}}} \left[_{\text{cp}}^{4}\text{att du sa } e_i \right]_{\text{i}}]\]

\(\text{it was stupid that you said}\)

In (84) and (85) an expletive subject in the matrix clause is not pronounced. Expletive subjects in embedded clauses can also be unrealized, provided that there is an unbounded dependency headed by det as in (73a), repeated here as (86a).
a. Det tycker jag var trevligt att du sa.

it think I was nice that you said

‘I think it was nice that you said that.’

b. [CP Det tycker [TP jag v [VP Ø, var trevligt [CP att du sa e]]]]

it think I was nice that you said

The presence of examples like (84)–(86) does not mean that the subject requirement – the need for an overtly realized subject in finite clauses – is no longer applicable in Modern Swedish. In sentences without an initial fronted det, the expletive subject det cannot be left out, as shown e.g. in (2a) and (7b).

The constructions in (84)–(86) are particularly interesting since they may shed some light on the relation between grammar and processing. As discussed in section 6, the processor must be able to keep several interpretive options for an initial det available during the processing of the sentence. The construction with finite complements seems to be gaining ground in Swedish and is now found also in written texts. The lack of corpora of spoken Swedish from earlier periods makes it hard to investigate the extent to which it has been used earlier. As shown in section 7, it is used productively in Swedish and Norwegian, but not in Danish or Icelandic. It thus provides an interesting area for comparative research as well as for investigating how a novel syntactic pattern spreads in a speech community. Whether or not the pattern will extend to other initial constituents besides det is also interesting to follow. If it does, we may expect this to trigger a more drastic reanalysis of Swedish clause structure.

31 There are indications that it was used in colloquial Swedish much earlier. Ida Larsson found the example in (i) in a novel by Vilhelm Moberg in 1956 about the life of Swedish immigrants in the US in the late 19th century. Moberg’s characters speak smålandska, the dialect spoken in the province of Småland in the south of Sweden.

(i) – Jag gissade ju att han hade bröstsoten, sade Kristina.

I guessed PRT that he had consumption said Kristina

‘I thought that he had consumption, said Kristina.

– Dä ä troligt att han hade.

it is probable that he had

‘It is probable that he had that.’ (Nybyggarna p 441)
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I have presented parts of this paper at ….

APPENDIX

Transcription symbols

(.) micro pause
> < talk inside faster than surrounding talk
ngj underline indicates stressed syllable or word
a- interrupted word
. falling terminal intonation
, continuing intonation
? rising intonation

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**CORPORA**

Gothenburg Spoken Language Corpus

<http://www.ling.gu.se/projekt/tal/index.cgi?PAGE=3>

NoTa: Corpus of spoken Norwegian in Oslo

<http://www.tekstlab.uio.no/nota/english/index.html>