

Jutta M. Hartmann

Expletives in Existentials

English *there* and German *da*

This thesis refutes the generally accepted claim within Generative Grammar that English *there* is an expletive (meaningless element) that is only present to satisfy a syntactic requirement. Instead it is argued that *there* is a proform that picks up a situation (or location) from the context. *There* is a part of the predication structure in existential sentences, which state about the situation that it contains an individual (or amount of a property) specified by the postverbal noun phrase.

New data that are relevant for the definiteness effect are presented and it is demonstrated that we need to distinguish between two types of *there*-sentences: the results of a Magnitude Estimation Experiment for example show that these so-called *there*-BE and *there*-V sentences behave differently with respect to *wh*-movement (among other differences). Therefore, the two construction types are analysed differently: in *there*-BE sentences, *there* is proposed to function as the subject of predication, whereas it functions as the predicate in *there*-V sentences (just like in the locative inversion construction). The thesis concludes with applying the result of the investigation of English *there* to German *da*, and shows that also *da* is a proform that can pick up locations, times and complex situations in the context.

The study offers new insights into the analysis of existential sentences and has implications for the analysis of potential subject positions, the EPP, and the classification of expletives in the Germanic languages. It is therefore interesting for scholars working in these fields and syntax in general.

—
: LOT
—
Netherlands
Graduate
School of
Linguistics

ISBN 978-90-78328-55-1

—
: LOT
—
181
—

Jutta M. Hartmann

Expletives in Existentials

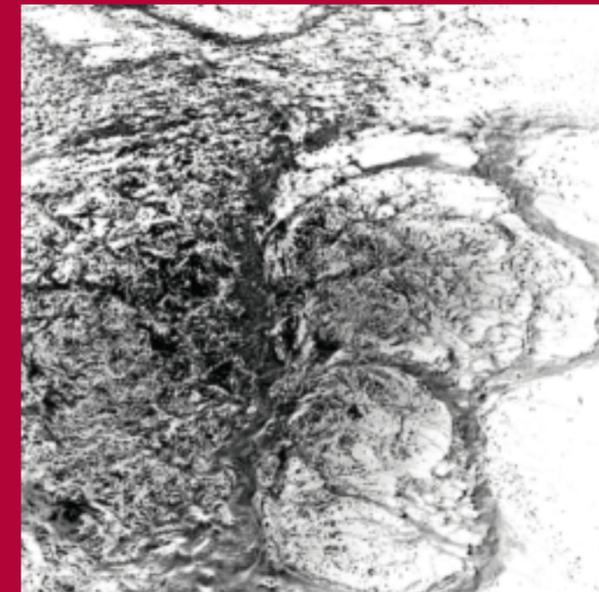
CLS

CLS

Jutta M. Hartmann

Expletives in Existentials

English *there* and German *da*



—
: LOT
—
Netherlands
Graduate
School of
Linguistics

Landelijke Onderzoekschool Taalwetenschap