

---

# BEYOND SUBJECT DOUBLING: EXPLETIVE CONSTRUCTIONS IN EUROPEAN PORTUGUESE DIALECTS

ERNESTINA CARRILHO □ UNIVERSITY OF LISBON

---

## 1 □ INTRODUCTION

This paper examines a seeming instance of subject doubling: multiple subject expletive constructions as they occur in European Portuguese (henceforth EP) dialects.<sup>1</sup>

Given the primordial link between expletives and subjects, the co-occurrence of an expletive and an argumental subject gives rise to a particular kind of doubling construction involving sentential subjects. Such constructions displaying more than a single grammatical subject are usually referred to as multiple-subject constructions (MSCs). Well-documented in some Germanic languages, MSCs have been pivotal for some new proposals on the structure of sentences, especially with respect to the manifestation of subjects (Bobaljik and Jonas 1996, Chomsky 1995, Boeckx 2001, Vangsnes 2002, a.o.). In some sense, such a kind of doubling has permitted to open an additional window into the span of the sentence structure where subjects appear.

EP dialects provide evidence on what could be seen as a case of MSC (see Boeckx 2001, Silva-Villar 1998): in the same sentence, the expletive-like element *ele*, which appears in a higher position, co-occurs with a lower argumental subject which stays in a position outside VP:

- (1) *Ele eu gosto de socorrer as pessoas!* (COV23)  
*EXPL I like of help.INF the people*  
'I like to help people!'

In this paper, it will be argued however that subject doubling is only apparent in such constructions: discussion on the status of the expletive-like element *ele* will lead us to posit this expletive as a category different from canonical subjects. As a consequence, "subject doubling" must in this case dissolve into something else. The proposal put forth is that the expletive lexicalizes the left-peripheral projection of ForceP (along the lines proposed by Rizzi 1997), independently of the type of element appearing on the subject position. The alleged doubling construction found in EP dialects will accordingly shed some new light on the span of the sentential structure known as the left periphery.

The organization of the paper is as follows. First, I will discuss the status of the expletive *ele*, on the basis of: (i) its syntactic distribution (considered in section 2); and (ii) the discourse effects to which it correlates (shown in section 3). Then, in section 4, I will sketch a proposal for the place of *ele* in the sentential architecture, focusing on selected aspects of the structure

---

<sup>1</sup> Most data presented here come from the Syntax-Oriented Corpus of Portuguese Dialects CORDIAL-SIN (available at [http://www.clul.ul.pt/english/sectores/cordialsin/projecto\\_cordialsin.html](http://www.clul.ul.pt/english/sectores/cordialsin/projecto_cordialsin.html)). Given the characterization of this corpus, the examples are drawn from selected excerpts of spontaneous or semi-directed speech produced by non-instructed, old and rural speakers during dialectal interviews for traditional linguistic atlases. Throughout the paper, CORDIAL-SIN examples are identified by a code (corresponding to the location initials plus the number of the source file, e.g. AAL01).

of the left periphery. Section 5 briefly points out to some possible connections with other special expletives. Finally, section 6 concludes this paper.

## 2 ▣ EXPLETIVE CONSTRUCTIONS ARE NOT MSCS IN EP DIALECTS: EVIDENCE FROM THE DISTRIBUTION OF EXPLETIVE *ELE*

### 2.1 ▣ PRELIMINARIES

Overt expletives appear as a fairly unexpected element in a null subject language (henceforth NSL) like EP. In fact, the standard variety of EP usually conforms to the well-established empirical generalization stating the lack of overt expletives in NSLs (Rizzi 1982, 1986, Burzio 1986, Jaeggli and Safir 1989, a.o.). Thus, alongside the possibility of dropping out an argumental subject in a finite clause like (2), EP standardly has non-overt non-argumental subjects<sup>2</sup> (see examples in (3)).

- (2) (O carteiro/ele) tocou a campainha.  
*the postman/he rang the bell*
- (3) a. (\*Ele) choveu.  
*EXPL rained*
- b. (\*Ele) está um desconhecido à porta.  
*EXPL is a stranger at.the door*
- c. (\*Ele) é óbvio que estás atrasado.  
*EXPL is obvious that are.2SG late*

Nevertheless, non-standard EP allows for constructions displaying an element *ele* which looks very much like an expletive subject (examples from Mateus et al. 2003: 283, fn. 5):<sup>3</sup>

- (4) a. Ele choveu toda a noite.  
*EXPL rained all thenight*
- b. Ele há cada uma!  
*EXPL has such one*  
 ‘There are such things!’
- c. Tudo está mais caro: ele é o leite, ele é a fruta, ele é o peixe.  
*everything is more expensive EXPL is themilk EXPL is thefruit EXPL is thefish*  
 ‘Everything is getting more expensive: milk, fruit, fish.’

In fact, just like expletives in other languages, *ele* has a pronoun-like shape, actually homophonous to the masculine third person singular subject pronoun. It is thus not surprising that grammarians and dialectologists who notice this non-standard phenomenon most often compare such *ele* to the sort of obligatory expletive subject appearing in non-null subject languages like English – such observations usually occur as sporadic and marginal remarks about impersonal constructions (a.o., Leite de Vasconcellos 1901, Dias 1918, Cunha and Cintra 1984, Mateus et al. 2003). Just like *ele*, the neuter demonstrative pronouns *isto* ‘this’, *isso*, and *aquilo* ‘that’ may also be taken as expletive subjects in impersonal constructions, as in examples (5):

<sup>2</sup> For reasons of space, I will systematically ignore the distinction between non-argumental and quasi-argumental subjects, which in fact is irrelevant for the purpose of this paper.

<sup>3</sup> The cited examples are, in fact, tolerated in near-standard varieties of EP – see section 3 below.

- (5) a. Isto é noite.  
*this.EXPL is night*  
 b. Aquilo houve uma grande confusão.  
*that.EXPL had a big confusion*

Beyond impersonal constructions, such expletive elements (*ele* and the neuter demonstrative pronouns) also appear in sentences where they co-occur with an argumental subject in preverbal position, as illustrated in (6):

- (6) a. Ele aqueles campos estão bem cultivados.  
*EXPL those lands are well farmed*  
 b. Ele eu gosto de socorrer as pessoas! (COV23) (=1)  
*EXPL I like of help.INF the people*  
 c. Aquilo o forno levava ali três ou quatro tabuleiros... (AAL18)  
*that.EXPL the oven took there three or four trays*

The co-occurrence of so-called expletive subjects and another instance of a subject necessarily leads to considerations on the existence of MSCs in EP dialects.<sup>4</sup> A different possibility, which will be explored below, is that the EP expletives substantially differ from subject expletives (as already suggested by Uriagereka 1992, 1995 and further developed in Carrilho 2005).

## 2.2 ■ MSCs WITHOUT RESTRICTIONS IN EP DIALECTS

The parallel between sentences (6) and MSCs of the type found in a language like Icelandic is in fact only remote. In common, both of them display the co-occurrence of an expletive-like element with a lower argumental subject which stays in a position outside VP (see Bobaljik and Jonas 1996). Differently from Germanic MSCs, however, EP examples show no restrictions on the type of subject co-occurring with the expletive, regardless of the verb class involved – the argumental subject may well be a non-specific indefinite (as in (7)), a generic DP (as in (8)), a definite description (example (9)) or an overt pronoun (as in example (6b) above):

- (7) Ele ninguém me era capaz de abrir a cabeça... (LVR23)  
*EXPL nobody me.DAT was able of open.INF the mind*  
 (8) Ele a folha do pinheiro é em bico. (ALC19)  
*EXPL the leaf of.the pine-tree is in point*  
 (9) Ele o nosso governo não protege nada a agricultura. (COV14)  
*EXPL the our government NEG protects nothing the agriculture*

Expletive *ele* is also possible in null subject constructions of different kinds:

- (10) Ele voltámos lá todos a ver. (COV32)  
*EXPL went.back.1PL there all to see.INF*

<sup>4</sup> In this paper, I leave aside a different type of construction where expletive *ele* may also co-occur with an argumental subject, as represented in (i):

(i) Eu tinha ele um irmão que trabalha de carpinteiro também (PFT17)

I had EXPL a brother who works as carpenter also

Elsewhere, I argue that such (postverbal) *ele* must be distinguished from the instances of expletive *ele* at stake here, so that the expletive in (i) may hardly be taken as a subject (Carrilho 2005; see also Haegeman this volume). Anyway, evidence for this type of expletives is very meager in the corpus observed, which of course calls for additional empirical support (for the universe of about 300 expletive sentences considered in Carrilho 2005, postverbal *ele* corresponds to no more than 7% of the total occurrences).

- (11) ... esses não morreram. Ele escaparam. (COV32)  
*those NEG died.3PL EXPL escaped.3PL*  
 ± ‘Those didn’t die. In fact, they escaped.’
- (12) ... cheguei, ele lá dormi, ... (COV27)  
*arrived.1SG EXPL there slept.1SG*
- (13) Ele dão-lhe outro nome. (AAL95) (arbitrary subject)  
*EXPL give.3PL-to.it other name*

Thus, there seems to be no special constraint regarding the type of subject with which the expletive co-occurs (namely, regarding its specificity and grammatical shape). Furthermore, such constructions show no restrictions on the type of verb entering the alleged MSC in EP, as illustrated in the above examples (where not only transitive but also intransitive and unaccusative verbs occur).

### 2.3 ■ EXPLETIVE *ele* OUT OF IP

Despite the nominative form of expletive *ele*, which of course makes it a suitable candidate for a subject position, there are reasons to discard such a hypothesis. In fact, case alone does not seem to tell us much about the true status of *ele*: although nominative is the case assumed by subjects, it is true that nominative may act as a sort of default case for detached elements (just like the *nominativus pendens* in Latin). See, for instance, the following example, where a nominative topic (first person) pronoun is detached from a comment sentence with a different (third person) subject (a null subject):

- (14) Eu parece-me que isto está certo.  
*I.NOM seems-me.DAT that this is right*

On the other hand, the distribution of expletive *ele* strongly suggests that this element occurs out of the IP-domain. Below, I will consider a collection of contexts which unequivocally put in evidence the left-peripheral status of expletive *ele*. More precisely, besides its position before a preverbal subject (as illustrated in examples (7)-(9) above), this expletive may equally precede several types of elements occurring in the left periphery of the sentence. In examples (15) and (16), for instance, the expletive appears before an adverb in initial position:

- (15) Ele agorajá ninguém costuma cozer. (OUT32)  
*EXPL now already nobody uses bake.bread.INF*  
 ± ‘Now nobody uses to bake bread anymore.’
- (16) Ele aqui nem se diz “nublado”. (AAL69)  
*EXPL here not.even SE says “nublado”*  
 ± ‘We do not even call it “nublado” [=cloudy] here.’

Topics, which typically occur in the left periphery, may also be preceded by the expletive *ele*. In example (17), *eu* ‘I’ is a sort of hanging topic, with no place in the comment sentence, but referentially connected to the different case form *mim* (inside a PP):

- (17) E ele [eu], o homem leu aquilo diante de [*mim*]<sub>i</sub>! (COV18)  
*and EXPL I.NOM the man read that before of me*  
 ± ‘And, as for me... the man read<sub>3SG</sub> that before me!’

Example (18) illustrates a case of straight object topicalization in an impersonal construction with the existential verb *haver* (etymologically ‘to have’):

- (18) Ele [a fome]; não havia [-];! (VPA06)  
*EXPL thehunger not had.3SG*  
 ± ‘Hunger didn’t exist!’

Arguably, the topicalized phrase has moved out from the comment sentence, which includes an argumental gap.<sup>5</sup> Notice that in impersonal constructions with the verb involved in example (18) the argument which usually occurs in postverbal position behaves much like an object – standardly (and in the kind of dialectal data inspected here), it does not agree with the third person singular verb and it pronominalizes as accusative:<sup>6</sup>

- (19) {Havia, \*Haviam} muitos caminhos.  
*had.3SG had.3PL many ways*

- (20) Havia-os.  
*had.3SG-them.ACC*

Another case where the overt expletive is peripheral to other peripheral constituents corresponds to *wh*-movement contexts. Consider, for instance, the following example, where the expletive precedes a *wh*-word combined with the focalizing expression *é que* in a rhetoric question:

- (21) Não sendo no Natal, ele quem é que os come?! Ninguém.  
*NEG be.GER in.the Christmas EXPL who is that them eat nobody*  
 ‘If it is not by Christmas, who will eat them?! Nobody.’ (OUT50)

Finally, contexts involving a dislocated affective phrase (in the sense of Raposo 1995, after Klima 1964) may also include a peripheral expletive:

- (22) Que ele até com um pau se malha. (MST37)  
*QUE EXPL even with a stick SE threshs*  
 ± ‘Actually we thresh even with a stick!’

Such evidence thus points out to the peripheral status of the expletive in EP dialects, which in fact is well documented in the data here considered. It is worth saying that, in the universe of expletive constructions inspected in Carrilho 2005, peripheral *ele* corresponds to almost 55% of the 300 occurrences of the overt expletive.

At this point, we may even speculate on extending such a peripheral characterization to other instances of expletive *ele*. In fact, it is reasonable to think that even impersonal constructions with no evident peripheral signs host an expletive in the left periphery. More concretely, this would imply that examples such as (4b) at the beginning of the paper, repeated here as (23), would in fact correspond to an instance of a peripheral expletive combined with a null expletive subject (as already proposed by Uriagereka 2004):

- (23) Ele [-] há cada uma!  
*EXPL has such one*

<sup>5</sup> For an exhaustive analysis of topicalization in EP, see Duarte 1987.

<sup>6</sup> In some varieties of non-standard EP, agreement may be established between the postverbal argument and the verb. However, this appears to be a rather cultivated urban phenomenon, not unusual in high-educated speakers (found in informal, uncontrolled speech situations).

In a sense, such expletive sentences would thus compare to the alleged MSCs in EP, with the difference that these examples involve a null (expletive) subject (compare to expletive sentences involving a null argumental subject, as in (24), repeated from (10) above).

- (24) Ele voltámos lá todos a ver. (COV32)  
*EXPL went.back.1PL there all to see.INF*

At the end of this section, we must then conclude that it is very hard to maintain that expletive *ele* is an expletive subject in EP, given its syntactic distribution. As a corollary, no subject doubling would be involved in the alleged MSCs which underlie this paper.

### 3 □ *ELE* IS NOT TRULY EXPLETIVE

It is generally accepted that true expletives are totally devoid of meaning. In this section, I will argue that *ele* also differs from such expletives in its (non-absence of) meaning.

A first observation is now in order. In EP, sentences including the expletive *ele* do not strictly correspond to their non-expletive counterparts. This is clearly so in some marginal but tolerated cases of overt expletive in standard EP, where the presence of *ele* corresponds to a more expressive way of saying things. In fact, although so-called MSCs are not known in standard EP, it is not uncommon to find expletive *ele* in some impersonal constructions, in spoken and even in written (and literary) EP by cultivated speakers, always corresponding to an expressive usage. This is the case of an example such as (23) above. Such a sentence could hardly be considered the strict equivalent of its non-expletive counterpart (*Há cada uma!*): the expletive strengthens the expressive value of the exclamative sentence. In a sense, thus, the overt expletive does not correspond to a strictly optional device featured by some EP varieties.

There exists however something in common in expletive *ele* and in expletive subjects: both of them make no contribution to the propositional content of the sentence. In fact, *ele* seems to operate essentially on the non-propositional part of sentence meaning, which rather relates it to the discourse level. As such, thus, this EP expletive would very much compare to a sort of pragmatic marker (in the sense of Fraser 1996). In what follows, I will try to elucidate the discourse effects correlated to the presence of expletive *ele* in EP dialects.

Before proceeding, however, it is perhaps tempting to invoke here the case of another expletive relating to discourse conditions rather than to the visibility of the subject position. This is the case of the expletive *sitä* in Finnish, a topic-prominent NSL. Holmberg & Nikanne (2002) relate the presence of the overt expletive in Finnish to a (quasi-)generalized requirement for the topic position to be visible – when no argument in a sentence qualifies as presupposed (carrying a [-Foc] feature, in their terms), merging of the overt expletive saves a derivation and fulfills the requirement for a Spec in the presupposition domain to be filled up. Accordingly, “*sitä* is not an expletive subject but an expletive topic” (Holmberg & Nikanne 2002: 96).

Yet, the discourse effects displayed by EP expletive *ele* significantly differ from the discourse function of expletive *sitä*. In fact, a sharp contrast arises if we try to extend Holmberg & Nikanne’s proposal to the sort of EP data presented in the previous sections of this paper. Consider, for instance, example (25) below:

- (25) Ele o tear do pardo era muito largo. (OUT21)  
*EXPL theloom of.the dun[cloth] was very wide*  
 ± ‘The loom for dun cloth was indeed very wide.’

The expletive construction here involves a preverbal subject, just like many other examples of so-called MSCs. In the non-expletive counterpart of this sentence, such a preverbal subject would normally correspond to a (non-marked) topic reading in EP (Duarte 1987, Martins 1994, Costa 1998). In other words, the phrase *o tear do pardo* would establish the entity for which the comment *era muito largo* is relevant, which would result in a categorical judgement (Kuroda 1972) corresponding to the topic-comment articulation. At first glance, one might speculate that the expletive has the effect of creating a sort of ‘detopicalizing’ effect on the preverbal subject. That is, just like the Finnish expletive, *ele* would become itself a kind of topic, while the remaining sequence would correspond to a sort ofthetic judgement. This is not however the case: the context where the mentioned example occurs provides evidence for discarding such a speculation. In fact, the expletive construction occurs as an answer to the following question: *Mas o tear era igual ou era mais largo?* ‘But did the loom have the same width or was it wider?’. In the answer, the expletive does not seem to affect the regular distribution of information: *o tear do pardo* has a topic reading (mentioned as *o tear* ‘the loom’ in the question – in a wider context, the loom is actually the topic of the conversation at that moment of the interview); *era muito largo* actually acts as the piece of new information which answers the question. Thus, the analysis proposed by Holmberg and Nikanne (2002) does not seem to fit the EP expletive facts: in an example like (25), there is actually a part of the sentence which is [+focus] (namely, *era muito largo*) and, accordingly, there is already some [-focus] element (namely, *o tear do pardo*). Consequently, there would be no point in inserting expletive *ele*, if this expletive was to be related to the sort of [-focus] checking proposed for Finnish.

In addition, expletive *ele* may co-occur with topics – namely with marked topics differing from the subject of the sentence, as in examples (17) and (18) above (see section 2.3.). Hence, it goes without saying that the discourse effects of the overt expletive of EP dialects do not relate to information distribution patterns where notions such as topic and focus pertain.

How is expletive *ele* operative at the discourse level, then? From the inspected data, a common discourse effect seems to emerge: the different occurrences of *ele* all appear to correlate with an emphatic value (in both quasi-standard and dialectal examples; in both impersonal and in so-called MSCs examples). In other words, expletive *ele* has the effect of reinforcing *something* in the sentence in which it occurs. In order to determine more precisely the nature of such a vague *something*, let us now consider a couple more of EP expletive examples.

As mentioned above, expletive *ele* has the effect of making more expressive an already expressive sentence. This is the case of exclamative sentences including the overt expletive, as in example (23) above – this example in fact illustrates a use which is even tolerated in the standard variety, as an expressive means in impersonal constructions. But besides such impersonal examples, other EP dialects equally show the expletive as an element which reinforces the expressive value of exclamatives in MSCs (see also example (1)):

- (26) Ele ele disse que era (...) de São João da Madeira, homem! (COV21)  
*EXPL he said that was from São João da Madeira man.INTJ*  
 ‘Actually, he said that he was from São João da Madeira, man!’

- (27) Ele nunca me olhava a nada, nunca tinha medo  
*EXPL never me ±was.frightened.ISG to nothing never had.ISG fear*  
 nenhum!  
*none*  
 ±‘I was never frightened by anything, I was never afraid of anything!’

Thus, we may conclude that in exclamative sentences in general the effect of expletive *ele* is that of adding some emphasis on the exclamative’s expressive value.

If we now turn to interrogative sentences, we find an interesting correlation. Expletive *ele* does not seem to appear in genuine information questions. Expletive questions always display an expressive reading. Example (21), repeated as (28), corresponds to a rhetorical question.

- (28) Não sendo no Natal, ele quem é que os come?! Ninguém.  
*NEG be.GER in.the Christmas EXPL who is that them eat nobody*

In fact, any question involving the expletive *ele* turns out to be a ‘special interrogative’ (in the sense of Obenauer 2006). In other words, such a question ceases to be interpreted as a request for information; instead, any type of special question may be obtained: besides rhetorical ones, also “surprise-disapproval questions”, and “Can’t-find-the-value-of-x questions” (Obenauer 2004).

Such an effect of the expletive becomes fairly clear if we consider for a while questions including “aggressively non-D-linked” *wh*-phrases (Pesetsky 1987), like *que raio/que diabo* in EP. In simple root questions, this type of *wh*-phrase allows for both (i) the true genuine information request interpretation (as confirmed by answer A in example (29)); and (ii) a special question interpretation (in Obenauer’s terms) – as a rhetorical question implying answer B:

- (29) - Que raio de gente come estes bolos?  
*what “the hell” people eat these cakes*  
 ‘Who the hell eats these cakes?’  
 A: - As crianças.  
*the children*  
 ‘Children do.’  
 B: - Ninguém.  
*nobody*  
 ‘Nobody does.’

However, if we add an expletive at the beginning of this “*wh*-the-hell” question, we obtain the following contrast: the rhetorical question interpretation continues to be possible, while the genuine information request interpretation is no longer available (see answer A vs. B in example (30)).

- (30) - Ele que raio de gente come estes bolos?  
 A: # - As crianças.  
 B: <sup>ok</sup> - Ninguém.

Hence, the presence of the overt expletive does not seem to be allowed in genuine interrogatives. Actually, expletive *ele* appears only in those questions that share with exclamatives some expressive value – the case of rhetorical questions (see Benincà 1995: 129 and Mateus et al. 2002: 481) and, possibly, of all other types of special questions.



Expletive *ele* is not confined to expressive sentences, however. In fact, it also occurs in imperative and in declarative sentences. In the inspected data, there exists only a pair of imperative sentences including the expletive:

- (31) Ó senhora Gabriela, ele desculpe de lhe eu dizer.  
*INTJ Ms Gabriela EXPL forgive.PRES.SUBJ.3SG of to-youI say.INF*  
 ± ‘Ms Gabriela, forgive me that I say it to you.’ (COV35)
- (32) - Quer passar por lá para ver?  
 ‘Do you want to go there to see it?’  
 - Ele vamos embora! (FIG27)  
*EXPL goPRES.SUBJ.1PL away*  
 ± ‘Let’s go [right now]!’

What is remarkable about these examples is the fact that expletive *ele* again relates to some emphasis on the pragmatic value of the sentence. In this case, it is the directive force of the imperative that is amplified. To this respect, it is worth mentioning that the expletive might well co-occur with other words that strengthen this value of the imperative (like *já*, *mesmo* or *lá*, in example (33)):

- (33) Ele vamos {*já*, *lá*, *mesmo*} embora!

On the contrary, the result is non-felicitous when we try to combine expletive *ele* with an expression which mitigates the directive force of the imperative, as in example (34):

- (34) # Ele vamos embora, {*se não se importam*, *por favor*}!  
 ‘if you don’t mind, please.’

Thus, the mentioned cases of an overt expletive in an imperative sentence appear to involve a discourse effect analogous to that found in exclamatives and in rhetorical questions: *ele* reinforces the pragmatic value of the sentence (expressive in exclamatives and imperatives, directive in imperatives).

It remains now to be seen whether a similar effect may be found in declarative sentences. In sections 2.2 and 2.3 above, several examples were presented which correspond to expletive declarative sentences. Indeed, in all those examples, the expletive straightforwardly correlates with the emphatic reading obtained in such sentences. More precisely, expletive *ele* appears there to reinforce the assertive value of such declarative sentences. Remember, for instance, example (9), here repeated as (35), for ease of reference:

- (35) Ele o nosso governo não protege nada a agricultura.  
*EXPL the our government NEG protects nothing the agriculture*

Such an example could easily be paraphrased by a sentence involving some sort of emphatic expression, such as *é verdade que...* ‘it is true that...’, *realmente* ‘indeed’, *de facto* ‘in fact’.

- (36) {De facto, realmente, é verdade que} o nosso governo não protege nada a agricultura

In other words, the main effect of the overt expletive corresponds, in such declarative cases, to a general reinforcement of the assertive value of the utterance. To the extent that such reinforcement indicates how much the speaker stands for the truth of the statement that he is making, the expletive seems to compare, in such sentences, to a sort of (strong) evidentiality marker, as suggested in Uriagereka 2004.

Summarizing thus far, then, we have seen in this section that: (i) to the extent that expletive sentences differ from their non-expletive counterparts, expletive *ele* is not strictly meaningless; (ii) just like subject expletives, however, this expletive does not contribute to the propositional part of sentence meaning; (iii) the contribution of expletive *ele* is to be understood on the discourse plan; (iv) the discourse effect of the EP expletive operates at the level of the illocutionary force assumed by sentences in use – more precisely, expletive *ele* acts as a general reinforcer of the pragmatic value that different sentence types may assume: its presence correlates with an emphatic effect on the expressive, command or assertive values respectively assumed by exclamatives and special questions, by imperatives or by declarative sentences.

#### 4 ▣ A PERIPHERAL POSITION FOR EXPLETIVE *ELE*

The fact that expletive *ele* displays some discourse-related import (as argued in section 3) straightforwardly accommodates to the expletive's distributional behavior shown in section 2: in fact, discourse notions often appear related to the left periphery of the sentence. Accordingly, the proposal put forth in this section states that the overt expletive in EP occupies a structural position in the left periphery which is relevant to the sort of discourse effect that *ele* displays. Such a proposal gives additional substance to the idea that overt expletives in a language such as EP are special (i.e., different from subject expletives) and must be related to the space above IP (Uriagereka 1992, 1995).

In order to find the precise place of expletive *ele* in the left-peripheral span of the sentence structure, I will first recall the interplay of this expletive with different constructions involving peripheral positions in EP. A first observation on which to count is the fact that expletive *ele* occupies a high position when it appears in a somewhat “crowded” left-periphery. Remember from section 2.3 that expletive *ele* may actually precede different types of marked topics, dislocated affective phrases and dislocated *wh*-phrases. That such elements are peripheral to IP is a fairly consensual matter.

In some cases, the peripheral positions involved are arguably located in the high space of the left periphery. This may be the case of topic constructions of the kind illustrated in (37) (repeated from (17) above):

- (37) E ele [eu], o homem leu aquilo diante de [mim];!  
*and EXPL I.NOM the man read that before of me*  
 ± ‘And, as for me... the man read.3SG that before me!’

Such a topic construction does in fact involve no strong syntactic connection between the topic *eu* and the element to which it is linked inside the comment (*de mim*), which makes this example similar to hanging topic constructions – notice that, in such an example, both elements appear loosely connected by the same first singular person pronoun, which however appears under different phrases (inside a PP in the comment). Arguably, hanging topics correspond to a high position in the left periphery, higher than other types of marked topics (a.o., Benincà and Poletto 2001).

Another case to consider is that of expletives in rhetorical questions. In such sentences, the expletive precedes *wh*-phrases (as seen in section 2.3), which again could imply that *ele* occupies a high peripheral position. To the extent that special questions may be argued to activate a portion of the left periphery higher than that activated by standard questions (see in

particular Obenauer 2006), then EP expletive *ele* straightforwardly relates to such a high portion of sentential structure.<sup>7</sup>

Because the corpus of inspected data cannot provide any negative evidence, we may at this point appeal also to some intuitive data, which in fact confirm the idea that expletive *ele* must appear as the leftmost peripheral element. Indeed, a sentence where the expletive occurs below the sort of hanging topic seen above be very weird:

(38) # E [eu], ele o homem leu aquilo diante de [mim<sub>i</sub>]!

In view of all this, it seems reasonable to anticipate that expletive *ele* appears in a remarkably high position within the left periphery.

Now, let us briefly consider the nature of the left peripheral space w.r.t. to the discourse notions involved in EP expletive constructions. In recent proposals, the C-domain above IP has been decomposed into several functionally specialized projections, mediating a privileged codification of particular discourse properties (Rizzi 1997, Ambar 1997, 1999, Benincà & Poletto 2001, a.o.). Under Rizzi's initial proposal, these consist of two basic systems: (i) one which provides the upper and lower bounds for the C-domain, encoding relationships between CP and the higher structure or the articulation of discourse, on the one hand, and between CP and the "inside", i.e. the IP embedded under it, on the other; (ii) a second system relating to the informational articulation of topic-comment and of focus-presupposition. The crucial heads to the former system are Force and Finiteness, encoding respectively the specification of force or clausal type of a sentence and the relationship to certain properties of the verbal system of the clause. Such Force-Finiteness system is taken as the essential (and ubiquitous) part of the C-domain, while the second system, including the Topic and Focus heads, is assumed to be present in a structure only if needed. When activated, such Topic-Focus system appears "sandwiched" in between Force and Finiteness. Subsequently, several extensions of this proposal have further expanded different fields within the C-domain, leading to a collection of projections which may appear subsumed under the "topic field" and the "focus field" (Benincà and Poletto 2001), and under what one might call the "force field" (e.g. elaboration on the force of interrogatives in Poletto and Pollock 2000, Obenauer 2004; or the expansion of ForceP on the basis of the internal structure of adverbial clauses in Haegeman 2002). Thus, a fairly inflated structure of the left-periphery has come to closely encode specific pragmatic features, resulting in an extremely detailed mapping between syntax and discourse. Besides focus/presupposition and topic/comment articulations, other pragmatic notions have gained a space within the left periphery, such as several aspects relating to speech act systems, like those involved in different types of questions (Obenauer 2004).

It is thus fairly intuitive to find a place for expletive *ele* in such a left periphery. Remember that the main discourse effects of the presence of the overt expletive relate to aspects having to do with the illocutionary force of sentences (namely, the emphasis on the pragmatic value obtained by exclamatives and interrogatives, imperatives and declaratives in specific speech acts). The fact that the left periphery includes a space dedicated to the encoding of aspects relating to the force/clausal type of a sentence (ForceP in Rizzi 1997 and subsequent works)

---

<sup>7</sup> Space limitations prevent me from developing here some speculation on the role of the expletive in such rhetoric questions: a plausible idea seems to be that expletive insertion would in those cases prevent *wh*-movement to a position higher than that occupied by *wh*-phrases in regular questions.

eases the way to place the EP expletive within such a space. Notice that such an idea is not necessarily incompatible with the view that the *sentential force* (the one relevant for cause typing), following Chierchia and McConnell-Ginert 1990, must be distinguished from the *illocutionary force* resulting from the use of a sentence as a speech act (Searle 1965). We may well take ForceP to correlate with the illocutionary force without assuming that such illocutionary force has to be directly encoded. We need not even assume that ForceP is present in any sentence. The proposal here suggested specifically concerns emphatic sentences resulting from the use of the expletive *ele*. It is for such constructions that I am proposing that a projection headed by Force must be present and that the expletive occupies its Spec position.

When we consider so-called MSCs (see section 2) under such a proposal, the involved syntactic structure appears fairly straightforward: there is a projection ForceP (whose spec is filled by the expletive) occurring in the left periphery of an unmarked preverbal subject sentence (which we may assume to correspond to IP):

- (39) [<sub>FORCEP</sub> [<sub>EXPL</sub> Ele] [<sub>FORCE<sup>0</sup></sub> [<sub>LIP</sub> o nosso governo não protege nada a agricultura]]].  
*EXPL the our government NEG protects nothing the agriculture*

In exclamative, interrogative and imperative sentences, the expletive would involve the same sort of visibility for the ForceP projection, without affecting the internal structure of the remaining sentence. Such an analysis could of course be compatible with the idea that Force may correspond to the different types of sentential force, independently from our assumptions about the way this is codified in syntactic structure (either by means of positing different Force<sup>0</sup> features for the different sentential types, e.g. [+excl], [+int], [+imp], or by assuming that different configurations in the remaining structure yield the different sentence types). We may then speculate that what the expletive does with respect to the discourse value of the sentences where it appears is to limit the spectrum of possible illocutionary forces that may be assumed by a given clause type. To clarify: it is well known that each clause type may assume different values of illocutionary force, given the appropriate context. For instance, a declarative sentence does not necessarily correlate to an assertion: *I want you to do this job today* would normally correspond to a command, an illocutionary force typically associated to imperatives. What I am suggesting is that the expletive in [spec, ForceP] in fact forces a special illocutionary force for each clause type. Accordingly, declarative sentences including an expletive may not assume the sort of command value illustrated above – instead, the obtained reading is always that of an emphatic assertion. In the case of interrogatives, the effect of the expletive would be that of forcing the expressive reading corresponding to a special question (and blocking the standard information request reading). We could thus conjecture that the expletive in [spec, ForceP] induces the following correspondences: declarative sentence-assertion; exclamative-expressive act; interrogative-expressive act; imperative-command. The result of such a “selection” among the potential illocutionary forces assumed by a sentence is somewhat emphatic for the selected assertive/expressive/command value in question.

In structural terms, such an analysis would correctly predict the sort of interactions that the expletive displays in the left periphery: namely, it would accurately account for the fact that

expletive *ele* appears as the leftmost peripheral element when combined with other peripheral material, such as topics, dislocated *wh*-phrases or dislocated affective phrases (see section 2.3).

## 5 □ POSSIBLE EXTENSIONS

The proposal put forth for the EP expletive could, in principle, be extended to overt expletives found in other Romance NSLs, such as Galician (Álvarez 1981, 2001, Uriagereka 1995), some varieties of American Spanish (Henríquez Ureña 1939, Fernández Soriano 1999) and some varieties of Catalan (Spitzer 1945, Solà et al. 2002). Although space limitations prevent me from developing this issue here, a couple of empirical facts are still in order.

In fact, Galician, which is very close to EP, seems to largely conform to the EP pattern, with the expletive being connected to illocutionary values relating to expressivity in exclamative (see example (40)) and interrogative clause types, but also (strong) assertion in declarative clause type (see Álvarez 2001).

- (40) El tamém son ben caras! [as sardiñas]  
*EXPL even are very expensive the sardines*  
'They [the sardines] are so expensive!'

A looser connection could in principle be established with the expletive *ell* in some Balear Catalan varieties, which is currently understood as an "exclamatory particle" (Solà et al. 2002).

- (41) Ell aixó no acaba mai!  
*EXPL this NEG ends up never*  
'This does not end up!'

In this case, such an expletive would only correlate with the expressive value of an exclamative ForceP.

## 6 □ CONCLUSION

In this paper I have examined subject doubling from the angle of so-called MSCs in EP dialects. I have argued that the overt expletive appearing in such constructions must be distinguished from a regular expletive subject. On the basis of this expletive's distribution and of the effects it displays on the discourse level, I have proposed that *ele* lexicalizes the ForceP projection in the C-domain, which is assumed to mediate the mapping between the sentential force and the illocutionary force that a sentence may have as a speech act. As a consequence, the alleged subject doubling involved in such expletive constructions turns out to vanish into a discourse relevant device, thus providing new clues about the fine structure of the left periphery of the sentence and widening the limits within which the interface discourse-syntax must be discussed.

## REFERENCES

- Álvarez, Rosario (1981). *O Pronome Persoal en Galego*. Doctoral dissertation. Univ. Santiago de Compostela.  
— (2001). El Vai Ben Así: Pervivencia e Construccions de el Invariable. *Cadernos de Lingua* (23. 5-33).  
Ambar, Manuela (1997). Towards a definition of CP – Evidence from TopicFocusP and EvaluativeP. Talk presented at *Going Romance*. Groningen, December 1997.

- — (1999). Aspects of the Syntax of Focus in Portuguese. In Georges Rebuschi and Laurice Tuller (eds.) *The Grammar of Focus*. Amsterdam / Philadelphia: John Benjamins (23-53).
- Benincà, Paola (1995). Il Tipo Esclamativo. In Lorenzo Renzi, Giampaolo Salvi and Anna Cardinaletti (orgs.) *Grande Grammatica Italiana di Consultazione*. Vol. III. Tipi di Frase, Deissi, Formazione delle Parole. Bologna: Il Mulino.127-152.
- Benincà, Paola and Cecilia Poletto (2001). Topic, Focus and V2: Defining the CP Sublayers. Ms. University of Padova.
- Bobaljik, Jonathan David and Diane Jonas (1996). Subject Positions and the Roles of TP. *Linguistic Inquiry* 27.
- Boeckx, Cedric (2001). On the co-occurrence of expletives and definite subjects in Germanic. In W. Abraham and C. J.-W. Zwart (eds.) *Issues in Formal German(ic) Typology*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins. 45-63.
- Burzio, Luigi (1986). *Italian Syntax. A Government-Binding Approach*. Dordrecht: Kluwer.
- Carrilho, Ernestina (2005). *EXPLetive ele in European Portuguese Dialects*. Doctoral dissertation. Universidade de Lisboa.
- Chierchia, Gennaro and Sally McConnell-Ginet (1990). *Meaning and Grammar: An Introduction to Semantics*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
- Chomsky, Noam (1995). *The Minimalist Program*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.
- Costa, João (1998). *Word Order and Constraint Interaction: A Constraint-Based Approach*. Doctoral dissertation. HIL Leiden University.
- Cunha, Celso and L. F. Lindley Cintra (1984). *Nova Gramática do Português Contemporâneo*. Lisboa: João Sá da Costa.
- Dias, A. Epiphany da Silva (1918). *Syntaxe Histórica Portuguesa*. Lisboa: Livraria Clássica Editora 2nd edition, 1933.
- Duarte, Inês (1987). *A Construção de Topicalização na Gramática do Português: Regência, Ligação e Condições sobre Movimento*. Doctoral dissertation. Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Lisboa.
- Fernández Soriano, Olga (1999). El Pronombre Personal. Formas y Distribuciones. Pronombres Átonos y Tónicos. In Ignacio Bosque and Violeta Demonte (coord.) *Gramática Descriptiva de la Lengua Española*. Madrid: Espasa 1209-1273.
- Fraser, Bruce (1996). Pragmatic Markers. *Pragmatics*. 6:2. 167-190.
- Haegeman, Liliane (2002). Anchoring to Speaker, Adverbial Clauses and the Structure of CP. In Simon Mauck and Jenny Mittelstaedt (eds.) *Georgetown University Working Papers in Theoretical Linguistics* 2 117-180.
- — (this volume) Pleonastic *tet* in West Flemish and the cartography of subject positions.
- Henríquez Ureña, Pedro (1939). Ello. *Revista de Filología Hispánica* 1: 3. 209-229.
- Holmberg, Anders and Urpo Nikanne (2002). Expletives, Subjects, and Topics in Finnish. In Peter Svenonius (ed.) *Subjects, EXPLetives, and the EPP*. Oxford: OUP. 71-105.
- Jaeggli, Osvaldo and Kenneth Safir (eds.) (1989). *The Null Subject Parameter*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Klima, E (1964). Negation in English. In J. Fodor and J. Katz (eds.) *The Structure of Language: Readings in the Philosophy of Language*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs. 246-323.
- Kuroda, S.-Y (1972). The Categorical and the Thetic Judgement. Evidence from Japanese Syntax. *Foundations of Language*. 9. 153-185.

- Leite de Vasconcellos, José (1901). *Esquisse d'une Dialectologie Portugaise*. Lisboa: Centro de Linguística da Universidade de Lisboa/Instituto Nacional de Investigação Científica. 3rd edition, 1987.
- Martins, Ana Maria (1994). *Clíticos na História do Português*. Doctoral dissertation. Universidade de Lisboa.
- Mateus, Maria Helena Mira, Ana Maria Brito, Inês Duarte, Isabel Hub Faria and Sónia Frota, Gabriela Matos, Fátima Oliveira, Marina Vigário and Alina Villalva (2003). *Gramática da Língua Portuguesa*. Lisboa: Caminho.
- Obenauer, Hans-Georg (2004). Nonstandard wh-questions and alternative checkers in Pagotto. In H. Lohnstein and S. Trissler (eds.) *Syntax and Semantics of the Left Periphery, Interface EXPLorations 9*. Berlin & New York: Mouton de Gruyter. 343-384.
- (2006). Special Interrogatives – left periphery, wh-doubling, and (apparently) optional elements. In J. Doetjes and P. González (eds.) *Romance Languages and Linguistic Theory 2004. Selected papers from 'Going Romance', Leiden, 9-11 December 2004*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. 247-273.
- Pesetsky, David (1987). Wh-in-situ: Movement and Unselective Binding. In Eric Reuland and Alice G. B. ter Meulen (eds.) *The Representation of (In)definiteness*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press. 98-130.
- Poletto, Cecilia and Jean-Yves Pollock (2000). On the Left Periphery of Some Wh-Questions. Ms. Università di Padova and Université de Picardie à Amiens. [Published in: Luigi Rizzi (ed.) (2004). *The Structure of CP and IP. The Cartography of Syntactic Structures*. Vol 2. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press. 251-296.]
- Raposo, Eduardo Paiva (1995). Próclise, Ênclise e a Posição do Verbo em Português Europeu. In João Camilo dos Santos and Frederick G. Williams (eds.) *O Amor das Letras e das Gentes. In Honor of Maria de Lourdes Belchior Pontes*. Santa Barbara: Center for Portuguese Studies. University of California at Santa Barbara.
- Rizzi, Luigi (1982). *Issues in Italian Syntax*. Dordrecht: Foris.
- (1986). Null Objects in Italian and the Theory of pro. *Linguistic Inquiry* 17. 501-557.
- (1997). The Fine Structure of the Left Periphery. In Liliane Haegeman (ed.) *Elements of Grammar. Handbook in Generative Syntax*. Dordrecht: Kluwer. 281-337.
- Searle, John (1965). What is a speech act? In Max Black (ed.) *Philosophy in America*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. 221-239.
- Silva-Villar, Luis (1998). Subject Positions and the Roles of CP. In A. Schwegler, B. Tranel and M. Uribe-Etxebarria (eds) *Romance Linguistics. Theoretical Perspectives*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins. 247-270.
- Solà, Jan, Maria-Rosa Lloret, Joan Mascarò and Manuel Pérez Saldanya (dir.) (2002). *Gramática del Català Contemporani*. Barcelona: Empúries.
- Spitzer, Leo (1941). Paralelos Catalanes y Portugueses de ello. *Revista de Filología Hispánica*. 3. 272.
- Uriagereka, Juan (1988). *On Government*. Doctoral dissertation. University of Connecticut.
- (1992). A Focus Position in Western Romance. Talk presented at GLOW 15. Lisbon, 1992.
- (1995). An F Position in Western Romance. In K. É. Kiss (ed.) *Discourse Configurational Languages*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 153-175.
- (2004). A Peripheral Pleonastic in Western Iberian. Hand-out of talk presented at *EXPLetive Subjects in Romance and Germanic Languages*. Konstanz, Germany, November 2004.

Vangsnes, Øystein (2002). Icelandic Expletive Constructions and the Distribution of Subject Types. In Peter Svenonius (ed.) *Subjects, EXPLEtives, and the EPP*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 43-70.