

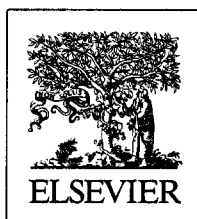
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Expletives and Dummies

R Sornicola, Università di Napoli Federico II,
Napoli, Italy

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Problems of Terminology

Preliminary Considerations

The term 'expletive' covers a wide range of disparate phenomena, whose treatment as one unified group still lacks theoretical basis. Studies in this area are often limited to descriptions and exemplifications of structures that are considered together under the more general label of sentence 'fillers' without clearly definable semantic value. Although in modern linguistics the term 'expletive' has been used since the 19th century in various fields (by the Neogrammarians, by Bréal and Saussure, and by idealist linguists), in contemporary linguistics it is most commonly used with the meaning assigned to it in generative grammar: a "place holder which stands for the subject of the predication when the latter is in postverbal position" (Moro, 1997: 4; cf. also Haegeman, 1991: 53). The role of this type of element is thus defined on a purely structural basis (see the below section 'Expletives and Dummies in Generative Grammar'). 'Pleonasm' and 'dummy' are synonymous terms, often used more or less interchangeably with 'expletive' in the literature of various theoretical and methodological approaches. The latter has a specific meaning in generative grammar (see below).

Two basic issues are of particular interest: (1) How to determine the function(s) fulfilled by expletive units; and (2) how to account for their distribution according to style and register, as in many languages they are characteristic of more informal and spontaneous styles of speech. Both problems have a descriptive and also theoretical dimension. With regard to function, once the types of expletive structure have been identified and their formal properties established, we must examine the specific nature of their meanings and consider whether we can really postulate linguistic forms whose meaning representation is empty. This question raises two important theoretical issues that cannot be avoided. One issue is the status of these structures with respect to the relationship between form and function and to that between function and meaning (see the following paragraphs). The question of stylistic distribution must be addressed by reconsidering traditional explanations based on redundancy and *abundantia*, which are held to be characteristic of spontaneous spoken discourse as opposed to planned written text. These two problems perhaps constitute distinct but complementary

aspects of the challenge that spoken discourse and spoken language phenomena pose for current theoretical models. Although expletive units occupy a marginal role in modern linguistic thought, they are of significant potential interest in the development of new models of language and speech, as well as for new linguistic models in general.

History of the Concepts and Problems in Their Definition

The definition of expletive/pleonasm as an empty filler element has its roots in classical rhetoric. The Greek term *πλεονασμός* is present in Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Apollonius Dyscolus with the meaning 'use of redundant words' and 'lengthening of clause,' 'repetition' (cf. Liddell and Scott, 1996: 1416). The Latin adjective *expletivus* appears in the works of Latin grammarians (Servius, Pomponius, Donatus, Priscianus, Charisius), particularly with reference to conjunctions, meaning a part of speech that without altering the sense, "explendi et ornandi causa quasi abundanter additur," 'is added almost abundantly to fill up and embellish' (*Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*, V, 2: 1721, 80ff.). Quintilian considers *πλεονασμός* to be a vice (*soloecismus*) of addition (*adiectionis vitium*) (Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 1, 5: 40), similar to others such as macrology, perissology, and tautology (cf. Lausberg, 1960, vol. 1: § 502) and distinct from the vice of subtraction (ellipsis) and from that of inversion (anastrophe) (cf. Lausberg, 1960, vol. 1: § 501). Pleonasm occurs when a phrase is overloaded with entirely superfluous words (Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 8, 3: 53; cf. also Lausberg, 1960, 1: § 502). The expression *ego oculis meis vidi* 'I saw it with my own eyes' shows in comparison to the alternative *vidi* '[I] saw [it]' (cf. Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 8, 3: 53) several elements that are unnecessary, in that they are already expressed explicitly or implicitly in the expression constituted solely by the verb form. The pronominal form *ego* could be considered a repetition of the inflectional bound morpheme *-i*, which in the perfect tense is a marker of the first person, and the phrase *oculis meis* expresses explicitly two components of the semantic content of the verb *video*. One is evident in the very definition of 'to perceive with one's eyes'; the other can be extracted through an inference, which is relevant to all verbs that are compatible with an Agent or Experiencer Subject: that the action or the perception expressed is realized through a part of the body of the Agent or Experiencer.

Pleonastic alterations were considered vices of 'diction' (*elocutio*) if they lacked intentional motivation,

but Quintilian notes that they can also be related to emphasis or assertion (*adfirmationis gratia*), as in Virgil's *Aeneid*, Book 4, line 359: *vocemque his auribus hausi* 'and [I] heard his voice with my [own] ears.' This testifies to a basic problem that has affected linguistic thought for centuries, namely, how to define the criteria on the basis of which certain elements of a structure must be considered excessive or redundant. In Quintilian's example, *Institutio Oratoria* 8, 3: 53 as cited above, the verb form *vidi* is considered a semantically compact and omnicomprehensive nucleus, with forms such as the personal pronouns or the peripheral phrase *oculis meis* mere repetitions. In fact, this analysis is only possible if a phrase/utterance is reduced to a minimal structure whose content is expressed by constituent parts necessarily and sufficiently with respect to the referential function. It implies a transformation that takes as its principle the ideal of *brevitas* ('brevity'), considered a stylistic virtue (cf. Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 8, 3: 82). There has been an implicit and straightforward assumption of this operation and the principles behind it in modern studies of phrase structure, in particular in studies of the relationship between the structure of the verb phrase and that of the subject noun phrase (see the below section 'Expletives and Syntax'), and more generally in the definition of a pleonastic/expletive unit. The procedure implies several relevant theoretical assumptions:

1. that for every utterance structure there exists a corresponding structure derived by minimal (i.e., most economical) paraphrase;
2. that this derived structure is the base on which the logicosemantic and syntactic relationships of all expanded paraphrases can be studied;
3. that the informative-referential function should be a priority for structural analysis;
4. that the relationship between function and form should be biunique (one and only form should correspond to each function).

Assumptions (3) and (4) seem particularly open to criticism. As far as (3) is concerned, the importance assigned to the informative-referential function, already questionable under a theory of language functioning, means that all deviations from the minimal structure taken as a standard of comparison may be considered 'emphatic.' It is clear that the logic of the whole theory does not take into account the characteristic properties of linguistic planning, particularly of spoken discourse planning. These may be relevant to understanding not just language functioning but also grammatical structures.

In modern linguistics we must take note of some attempts to replace the concept of expletive/pleonasm

with models of various types, the ultimate justification for which would have to be found in psychological phenomena. Paul (1920: § 121) considered pleonasm in negation and other syntactic phenomena involving apparent superfluity to be the effect of "contamination." Schwyzer (1941) suggested a wider model of "hypercharacterization" (*Hypercharakterisierung*), providing a rich range of possible applications for phenomena found in genetically and typologically different languages. According to Schwyzer, the hypercharacterization model should not be defined exclusively on the basis of stylistic phenomena, but should take account of grammatical, morphological, and syntactic factors of varying regularity, such as the structures with reduplication found in several Indo-European languages, or those with subject pronouns adjacent (and in some languages cliticized) to verb forms that are inflected for person. He maintains that the explanation should in general be attributed to the "feeling of insufficient characterization" on the part of the speakers, an idea that had previously been endorsed by Brugmann (cf. Schwyzer, 1941: 27 fn. 3). Although Schwyzer's attempt is certainly interesting, it still relies on the mere idea of repetition of form and/or function, the basis of which is somewhat unsatisfactory.

Types of Phenomena

The phenomena traditionally defined as 'expletive/pleonasm' constitute a wide and varied set. Their examination shows the hybrid nature of the range and the impossibility of identifying a single source factor. In many cases, the terms in question seem to be used simply for want of better descriptions. Heterogeneity already emerges at the simple descriptive level, and it is even more clearly evident if we look for reasons behind the phenomena investigated. A swift analysis of the main types of phenomena grouped together under this label is thus appropriate. These will be divided into three different groups on the basis of the nature of the process that determines them: Expletives/Pleonasm due to:

1. processes of desemanticization (bleaching) typical of grammaticalization paths. These are particularly evident in phenomena that involve constructions with modal or aspectual value;
2. factors more specifically connected to planning strategies characteristic of spoken discourse. These are particularly evident in phenomena of pronominal deixis and in their syntactic linearization;
3. metrical and prosodic factors.

This classification should not however be taken as absolute. Indeed, in some phenomena it is possible to

recognize an action connected to two or more causes. For example, the phenomenon of expletive subject pronouns could be considered a result of the grammaticalization of typical strategies of spoken discourse (see below discussion).

It is also possible to categorize different phenomena along the *langue/parole* axis or, to use a different model, according to the level of grammaticalization (see Grammaticalization). Some phenomena can typically be grouped together at the *parole* level and are thus not grammaticalized, but are of a stylistic nature, even if they conform to more or less frequently occurring schemata. Phrases that constitute etymological figures, such as the often-studied examples in Latin prose (cf. *pulchram pulchritudinem*, 'beautiful beauty,' *incipit initium* 'beginning begins,' *saepe solere* 'to be often accustomed to') (Leumann *et al.*, 1965–1977, 2: 792, 793, 797), are found in casual registers of various languages, whether spoken or written. Other phenomena have a more obviously grammatical dimension, such as the types described here in the following sections. Among the phenomena with a greater level of grammaticalization, one particular case is constituted by *expressions figées*: Think, for example, of pairs of synonyms such as Italian *sano e salvo*, English *safe and sound* (the adjectival pairing is attested in the Latin of Plautus) (cf. Leumann *et al.*, 1965–1977, 3: 786), often with alliteration or rhyme, where a possible original meaning with elative or intensifying value has eventually faded. Between the two extremes of stylistic singularity and grammaticalized constructions there exists a wide range of phenomena in the process of grammaticization. In many cases it can be difficult to establish whether these are stylistic or grammatical. We can consider forms typical of New Testament Greek with duplication of the verb 'to say' ἔφη λέγων, lit. 'he spoke, saying' and ἀπεκρίθη καὶ εἶπεν 'he replied and said' (cf. Blass and Debrunner, 1976: 349; Kieckers, 1912: 154; Kieckers, 1915: 34ff.), which are also found in medieval Greek and have been retained as calque-expression in Latin translations of the Bible (cf. *sic ait dicens, respondit et dixit ei*) and in various modern European languages. As with other verbal periphrases, the wide diffusion of these constructions poses difficulties in outlining their history, especially in identifying the factors that determined their development and spread (cf. 'Auxiliation and Expletivity' below; the coordinating type is present in many Romance dialects and colloquial varieties today). An uncertain level of grammaticalization also seems to be that of another type with wide areal distribution, where the verb 'to say' appears as a parenthesis before or within a reported speech (cf. Latin *inquit* (Petersmann, 1977: 48ff.), Italian *dice* 'she/he says,' dialectal German

segg ik 'I say' (Havers, 1931: 170); cf. also Schwyzer, 1929: 244). This type seems to be limited to spoken registers.

Sometimes also defined as expletives/pleonasmes are constituents whose function is of doubtful theoretical status, such as the so-called 'personal dative' pronouns. In this construction, a personal pronoun coreferential with the subject noun phrase appears often adjacent or cliticized to the verb, that expresses the meaning 'in the interest of, to the advantage of' or the involvement of the subject in a given action/state: cf. regional Italian of Southern areas *che mi mangio oggi?* 'what do [I] eat for myself today?' (instead of *che mangio oggi?*). This construction is present in a number of Indo-European languages (cf. Havers, 1931: 134), at different levels of grammaticalization. In Slavic languages and in a few Romance varieties, such as colloquial Spanish (cf. Schuchardt, [1884] 1971: 127ff.), the southern dialects of Italy, and Italian spoken in the south (cf. Sornicola, 1997a), this is an entirely regular construction, especially with certain classes of verbs. This type was frequent in spoken Latin (cf. Petersmann, 1977: 83–85 for the language of the *Satyricon*), and in a few epigraphic texts from the Imperial Age it shows a state of incipient crystallization with the 3rd-person reflexive pronoun (cf. Cennamo, 1991). It is also found in some dialectal varieties of American English, such as the Appalachian dialects (cf. *we had us a cabin, built us a log cabin back over there*) (Christian, 1991). The theoretical representation of this type is problematic. Although this form does have some affinities with the indirect object, it cannot be represented with this type of function, since it exhibits specific grammatical properties (for English, cf. Matthews, 1981: 130; Christian, 1991). Furthermore, it is not clear whether or not it can be considered an argument of the verb. It is possible that structures of this kind are considered expletives simply because in linguistic theories there are no models that can be used for their classification.

Effects of Grammaticalization Processes

A considerable number of processes traditionally defined as expletivization can be attributed to processes of grammaticalization. But grammaticalization raises other problems. The first involves the nature of the relationship between expletivization and grammaticalization, and in the end, the very definition of expletive. The simple passage of an element from a semantic to a grammatical function does not necessarily have to involve a process of expletivization, as a function of the unit is in any case preserved. On the other hand, it is doubtful whether elements can be

bleached of meaning to such an extent that they have not functions. Yet in studies of grammaticalization the use of the term 'expletive' or 'expletivization' is not uncommon with reference to developments of a main verb into an auxiliary or 'converb.'

The second problem regards the extreme delicacy of the semantic analyses that are necessary to determine desemanticization and the extent to which it is present. We will discuss these issues in the following sections.

Interjections and Modal Particles

Where modality is concerned, we can observe many phenomena whose properties are the result of processes of desemanticization or other changes in semantic value. In such cases the original etymological meaning has been obscured and the element is close to becoming an expletive/pleonasm. This is typical of modal particles, some of which are developments from early interjections. The resulting structural unit often combines with others of similar meaning, giving rise to an aggregate form in which each of the components conveys an illocutive potential (see *Speech Acts*) reinforced by the other, without it being possible to determine which is the specific value of each of the two parts. One example of this phenomenon is offered by the Latin *pol* (< Pollux, Polluces), *edepol* (cf. Ernout and Meillet, 1959–1960: 190b), whose original exclamative value 'by Pollux!' has weakened and become a generic asseverative expression 'indeed! truly!' that often occurs straight after an adverb of equal modal value, such as *certe* 'certainly,' or *sane* 'indeed, by all means': *certe pol* (*edepol*), *sane pol* 'indeed, truly.' A similar process is that of the type *Hercle* 'by Hercules!,' which has passed to a purely assertive value and is also found in combination with the modal adverb *vero* 'indeed, truly.' These types of developments are also present in modern European languages. The Italian curse *Diavolo!* 'by the devil!,' may also be found in conjunction with the affirmative adverb *sì*, as a reinforcing form with the value 'certainly yes,' and even alone as an affirmative response: *Sei contento?* 'Are you happy?' *Diavolo!* 'Yes, of course.' A curse may be inserted in a larger enunciative structure as an inert constituent. For example, Italian *Che diavolo vuoi?* and English *What the devil (the hell) do you want?* display a *Wh*-question with a phrase juxtaposed to that of the complementizer, whose semantic value consists purely of an illocutive force of irritation or annoyance.

Auxiliation and Expletivity

Processes of desemanticization that lead to loss of lexical value and in some cases also grammatical function of the constituent involved are characteristic

of periphrastic constructions with verbs of movement, verbs in the semantic fields of 'to take' and 'to do.' They are found in many languages of different families (cf. Havers, 1927), in some appearing typically in substandard or dialectal spoken registers (cf. Coseriu, 1966: 16–26). Cross-linguistic comparison presents opportunities for interesting analyses but also poses the risk of grouping certain phenomena together that in fact require different classifications. So, for example, as regards periphrases with verbs of movement, the paratactic type:

I go/come and X

(where X is a variable denoting a verb form that assumes the same inflectional person and tense markers of the verb of movement)

is present in various European languages, but with different characteristics with regard to the type of syntactic and semantic relationship between the verb of movement and X. The spectrum of variation includes at one extreme constructions in which each of the two verbs retains a certain level of syntactic and semantic independence with respect to the other (cf. English *I went and said*, Italian *andai e (gli) dissi*). At the other extreme are constructions in which the verb of movement is downgraded to the status of a quasiauxiliary. Such a quasiauxiliary has lost its full capacity not only of semantic but also of syntactic functioning (it cannot undertake any grammatical relation, e.g., it cannot assume an object) and is restricted to expressing an illocutive force of shock, marvel, and/or regret. The phenomenon shows notable similarities with that of converbs. This is exemplified by types such as spoken Spanish *fué y lo hizo*, lit. '[s/he] went/ came and did it,' *va y me dice*, lit. '[s/he] goes and tells me' (cf. Keniston, 1936, particularly 166; Coseriu, 1966: 30), dialectal Italian *vado a ffaccio*, lit. '[I] go and do' (cf. Sornicola, 1976, particularly 71), modern Greek *έρχουμι κι κάσουμι* (= *έρχομαι και κάθομαι*), lit. '[I] come and sit' (Thumb, 1910: 10.2; Seiler, 1952: 159; Coseriu, 1966: 23).

It is doubtful whether the verb reduced to auxiliary or quasiauxiliary status can really be considered an expletive. Of this opinion is Wagner (1956), while Keniston (1936: 166) sees in the first verbal element of the Spanish construction "an intensive used in popular speech, originally with affective values of surprise or irritation." There are good reasons for maintaining that in contemporary Romance and Modern Greek varieties the process of expletivization is by no means complete. This conclusion seems plausible, particularly since within the same variety one specific periphrastic type may, depending on the context, assume different values, some

of which preserve to varying extents traces of the meaning of movement of the quasiauxiliary verb. An interpretation in terms of inchoative/ingressive aspectual value has been proposed by Rohlf's (1949–1954, vol. 3: § 740) and Wagner (1956) (analysis criticized by Coseriu, 1966: 43; Sornicola, 1976: 71), while Keniston (1936: 167) maintains that a possible original inchoative value has been lost and that the verb now has a solely intensifying function.

Similar considerations are relevant to paratactic periphrases with verbs of the lexical class of 'to take' (cf. Coseriu, 1966), exemplified in constructions such as English *she took and died*, Spanish *tomo y me voy*, Italian *prendo/piglio e me ne vado*, lit. '[I] take and go away' (Coseriu, 1966: 17, 21, 23), Modern Greek *πιάνει και χτίζει ένα σπίτι*, lit. '[he] takes and builds a house' (cf. Seiler, 1952: 159; Coseriu, 1966: 23). The desemanticized verb is restricted to expressing the idea of "sudden resolve, schneller Vollzug," or an aspect of "plötzliche oder unerwartete Handlung" (Coseriu, 1966: 42). These functions fade into one another and are difficult to define. Furthermore, it is not clear whether verbs that have lost their lexical value may be defined as quasiexpletives. Such a conclusion seems plausible, however, when the verb has reached complete desemanticization, with loss of inflection and fossilization, such as the construction in Italian dialect of Otranto *sta bbegnu*, lit. 'be.PRES. [I] come,' = 'I come.' In this type an invariable form of 'to be' (*stare*) precedes all conjugated forms of the full verb, and the whole construction alternates with the simple full verb with no difference in meaning (cf. Meyer-Lübke, [1890–1906] 1974, vol. 3: 591–592).

A development toward the fossilization of the verb 'to do' in a periphrasis:

to do + X

(where X is a variable that denotes a infinitival verb form)

into a simple grammatical marker can be found in English in the diachronic development of *do* (cf. Traugott, 1972: 138–142; Stein, 1990; Nurmi, 1999; and the extensive bibliographies cited in these works). Such a grammatical marker is present today in interrogative, negative, and contrastive-emphatic declarative structures (cf. Quirk *et al.*, 1985: 2.49–51, 3.36–37; the development is already outlined in early Modern English: cf. Traugott, 1972: 138; Stein, 1990: 11–13).

Examination of these developments over a long period offers interesting points for consideration. Two functions of *do* – the causative function and that which is "periphrastic and devoid of meaning" (the terminology is from Traugott, 1972: 199) – seem to have coexisted in Middle English (cf. Denison, 1985: 46–48; Stein, 1990: 11ff.; Nurmi, 1999: 22).

According to Traugott, values of *do* that can be expressed as 'truly, indeed' and the optional tense marking' function belong in this category. But problems arise from this description. Stein (1990: 11) maintains that functions devoid of meaning should not be hypothesized here, and proposes that the periphrases of Middle English should be interpreted with a semantic value similar or close to a causative. The difficulties in determining exact function are largely outlined in the bibliography (cf. Ellegård, 1953: 29; Denison, 1985: 46; Engblom, 1938; Stein, 1990: 11ff.; Nurmi, 1999: 18). No less significant problems emerge in ascertaining emphatic value (cf. Tieken, 1987: 118; Stein, 1990: 272), which can be identified with reasonable level of certainty only from early Modern English onwards (cf. Traugott, 1972: 199; Stein, 1990: 273).

The occurrence of this type in many languages, particularly in substandard and/or dialectal registers and in periods in history when the rules of the written language were still weakly codified, leads us to believe once again that this may be a natural syntactic change, typical of spoken registers. The type is present in other Germanic languages; German *tun* + infinitive appears at the substandard and dialectal level and in noncontemporary literary texts (cf. Behaghel, 1923–1924, vol. 2: § 746; Russ, 1999: 116, 495) and is also attested in non-Indo-European languages (cf. Havers, 1927). However, while there exists a broad consensus on the origin of periphrastic *do* in spoken registers (cf. Rissanen, 1991: 321; Stein, 1990: 91), it is not clear how the natural syntactic character of these constructions has interacted with other structural and social factors in grammaticalization/grammaticization of modern forms (cf. Stein, 1990: 316–318, 324–328).

Particularly interesting in this respect is the problem of the relationship between the periphrases of Middle English, with semantically weakened *do*, the contrastive-emphatic types of early Modern English, and the modern forms with grammaticalization/grammaticization of *do* in interrogative, negative, and emphatic-contrastive structures. One factor of natural development could have been the affinity or contiguity of emphatic, interrogative, or negative function, which can be seen in the paths of grammaticalization in many languages (cf. Stein, 1990: 275–276; Nurmi, 1999: 29). The association of these functions would therefore have followed the well-known path of demarking of emphasis or contrastivity, leaving *do* behind as a mere 'dummy.' It would, however, be preferable to consider such an element as a hypercharacterization of those functions.

The more controversial issue, however, is the relationship between the early periphrases, with apparently

meaningless *do*, and the more modern declarative types, emphatic or otherwise. Stein (1990: 11) maintains that "although there appears to be an unbroken syntactic continuity, there is semantically a watershed between the earlier 'meaningless periphrastic' and the later use in declarative sentences in Standard English." In this respect analytical difficulties are presented by the modern situation, which is far from uniform, just as they are by earlier phases in the development of the language. In present-day spoken language the emphatic value occurs four times more frequently than it does in the written language (cf. Nevalainen and Rissanen, 1985). The use of *do* in constructions in religious or legal contexts (such as *I do solemnly declare*, or *we, the undersigned, being of sound mind, do this day hereby bequeath*: cf. Quirk *et al.*, 1985: 3.37) is an archaism, which may be attributed to an obvious process of freezing of emphasis as a result of ritualization (cf. Stein, 1990: 272). The periphrastic value "equivalent to the simple tense" (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 1989, vol. 4: 905c) appears only at the substandard and dialectal level (in dialects of southwest England): cf. Ihalainen (1991). This situation is reminiscent of the well-known continuous diachronic development, whereby a stigmatized construction has disappeared from the written language but remains in spoken registers. However, as with periphrastic constructions with verbs of movement and of the semantic area of 'taking,' it is doubtful whether *do* can today be considered a dummy. Although the dialectal forms have been described as interchangeable with the simple verb forms, more accurate analyses indicate that we do not in fact find free variation. These forms instead express habitual or 'generic' aspect (cf. Ihalainen, 1991: 154, 156–159), with similar or contiguous aspectual values to those found in periphrases with *tun* in some German dialects (cf. Stein, 1990: 138; Russ, 1999: 116).

Negation

A different range of grammaticalization processes that are the source of units considered expletives can be found in negation and its determinants. Double negation (reinforced negation) is a phenomenon of natural syntax (cf. Horn, 1989), with typical broad diffusion across genetically and typologically different languages (for Bantu languages, cf. Nurse and Philippson, 2003; for Semitic languages, cf. Brockelmann, 1908–1913, vol. 2; Leslau, 1995). As with periphrastic forms, in languages that are sensitive to difference between spoken and written norms, double negation surfaces especially in spoken substandard and dialectal registers, and tends to be stigmatized in written ones: cf. substandard English *I don't see nothing* 'I do not see anything,' colloquial and dialectal German *Er tut niemand nichts* 'he does not make anything for

anybody' (cf. Jespersen, 1917; Milroy and Milroy, 1993; Behaghel, 1923–1924, vol. 2; Wackernagel, 1920–1924, vol. 2). In Italian, as in other Romance languages, double negation is a regular construction in standard spoken registers: cf. *non vedo niente* 'I do not see anything,' while the types without double negation, such as *non vedo alcunché/alcuna cosa*, are typical of the written language.

The diffusion of this phenomenon also in older diachronic phases of modern and classical languages (cf. Plautus: Men. 1027: *nec meus servus numquam tale fecit*) is further evidence of it being the reflex of a very general factor. Yet the nature of this factor needs further elucidation. Whether it is related to the greater difficulty in understanding the more marked negative constructions (cf. Horn, 1989: 154–203) or to a process of emphasis freezing is not clear. Jespersen (1917: 71) maintains that "double negation arises because under influence of a strong feeling the two tendencies . . . one to attract the negative to the verb as a nexal negative, and the other to prefix it to some other word capable of receiving this element, may be both gratified in the same sentence." As to the latter hypothesis, however, it can be observed that the tendency towards syntagmatic expansion for operators of negation is not necessarily connected to emphatic processes. Wackernagel (1920–1924, vol. 2: 299) attributes the doubling of negation to the "need of spreading negation over the whole sentence" (cf. also Jespersen, 1917: 71), a description that suggests automatic structural mechanisms in speakers, but seems weakened by an element of circularity.

Some phenomena pose interesting semantic problems of relationship between negation and certain lexical verb classes. In ancient and modern Indo-European languages, the use of an expletive operator of negation is indeed widespread in complex sentences whose main clause exhibits a verb such as 'to fear' 'to prohibit,' 'to deny.' A well-known example is the Latin type *timeo ne veniat* 'I fear that [s/he] comes,' grammaticalized in the classical period (cf. Leumann *et al.*, 1965–1977, vol. 2: 534). The negative feature inherent in the complementizer *ne* is obviously at odds with the affirmative meaning of the subordinate construction it introduces. The traditional explanation is that this is due to contamination and integration into one sentence of two structures originally linked by parataxis, such as *timeo* '[I] fear' and *ne veniat!* 'may [s/he] not come!' This implies a reanalysis of the negating particle *ne* from a constituent belonging to the clause with the optative modality into a complementizer governed by the main verb. In the same way, the later type *timeo ne non veniat!* 'I fear that [s/he] does not come,' with an apparent overabundance of negating constituents, would be

due to the integration of two structures, the grammaticalized *timeo ne* 'I fear that' and *non veniat* 'I wish [s/he] does not come' (cf. Wackernagel, 1923–1924: 277ff.; Schwyzer, 1941: 11). The presence of similar phenomena with the same classes of verbs in other modern European languages could be due to Latin influence in learned registers: cf. French *je crains que tu ne sois malade* 'I fear that you are ill' (lit. 'that you are not ill'). Although such construction is not common in German, a few examples can be found, probably due to a calque: *ich fürchte, dass nicht . . . eure Sinne verrückt werden* 'I fear that . . . your senses go mad,' lit. 'that your senses do not go mad' (Luther 2, Cor. 11: 3; cf. Wackernagel, 1923–1924, vol. 2: 278). For negation with verbs of prohibition or impediment (cf. Behaghel, 1923–1924, vol. 2: 87–88).

Comparative structures also often feature negations that have been considered expletives, in both spoken and written registers: cf. German. *ich bin kränker, als du nicht denkst* 'I am more ill than you think,' lit. 'than you do not think' (cf. Behaghel, 1923–1924, Vol. 2: 89), Italian *ti vuole più bene di quanto tu non creda* '[s/he] loves you more than you think,' lit. 'more than you do not think,' French *il est plus riche qu'il ne semble* 'he is richer than he seems,' lit. 'than he does not seem' (cf. Lerch, 1925, vol. 1: 77). Cf. further Havers (1931: 134). Wackernagel (1923–1924, vol. 2: 307) maintains that "to negate what has been backgrounded with a comparative clause is a spontaneous process which recurs at various times." A similar justification could be extended to negation in affirmative temporal subordinates, such as Italian *bisogna aspettare finché non viene* 'one needs to wait until [s/he] comes,' lit. 'until [s/he] does not come' (Rohlf, 1949–1954, vol. 3: § 970) and in German (cf. Behaghel, 1923–1924, vol. 2: 89–92). But the general factor at work here seems to require further clarification.

An interesting case is that whereby originally reinforcing elements, which in various languages have eventually become grammaticalized as constituents of the negation phrase, lose their etymological value. These are often discontinuous constituents with respect to negation proper, as in Romance examples such as French *je ne mange pas* 'I do not eat,' *il ne vient mie* 'he does not come,' Italian *non costa mica tanto* 'it does not cost so much,' (Tuscan) *non dubito punto* 'I do not doubt a bit' (cf. Meyer-Lübke, [1890–1906] 1974, vol. 3: 774–775; Grevisse, 1975: 946–947; Gadet, 1992: 77–79) or English examples as *I don't like it a bit*. Such constructions show the development of a noun phrase, which originally had the function of an internal object or of a circumstantial element expressing a quantity, into

hypercharacterizing negative expressions. These then often fossilize as the normal determiners of negation. The nominal elements involved in this development all share the semantic property of denoting a small quantity. This path is most evident when we look at the Latin origins of the Romance types: French *mie*, Italian *mica* < Latin *MICA*, 'crumb' (Italian *brisa*, often found as a negative intensifier in Northern Italian dialects, has the same meaning), French *pas* < Latin *PASSUS* 'a step,' or more specifically 'a measure of length, consisting of five Roman feet,' Italian *punto* < Latin *PUNCTUM*, 'a point, a small spot' or more specifically 'a small part of any thing divided or measured off; a small weight, a small liquid measure; a small portion of time, an instant, a moment' (Lewis and Short, 1987: 1491–1492). These developments can be seen as the reanalysis of objects or measure adverbials; from being arguments or circumstantials in verb phrases, they become mere determiners of negation inside negation phrases. Sometimes, as in French or in northern Italian dialects, they undergo further developments whereby they can be analyzed as the head of the negation phrase. This change is concomitant with the disappearance of negation itself, as in spoken French *je mange pas*, spoken northern Italian *mangio mica* 'I do not eat.' For a crosslinguistic study of the problem, see Bernini and Ramat (1996).

Expletives and Syntax

Expletives and Dummies in Generative Grammar

In the last 20 years, particular attention has been paid to the syntactic dimension of expletivity, particularly in generative grammar. In this field, the issues of main concern have been the positions occupied by elements considered dummies (i.e., "semantically empty" and "mere slot fillers" (Haegeman, 1991: 53)) in certain syntactic configurations, their relationship with the INFL phrase and its head, their argumental and functional status (for recent perspectives, see the papers in Svenonius, 2002). Particularly under examination have been:

- pronouns in structures with extra-posed sentences (such as English *it is appropriate that he goes*);
- pronouns that precede the verb phrase as substitutes for the subject noun phrase in postverbal position (such as French *il sont venus trois garçons*);
- pronouns in existential-locative structures (such as French *il y a trois garçons*);
- subject pronouns in constructions with meteorological verbs (such as English *it's raining*, French *il pleut*, German *es regnet*).

These pronouns, entirely devoid of referential features, are considered nonarguments, as they behave as substitutes for a constituent endowed with grammatical function, which should be found in that position and therefore simply occupy space in the sentence structure. One should note that the dummy substitute of a subject NP does not necessarily have to be a nominal proform. In existential–locative constructions in English (*there are two cats in the garden*) or Italian (*ci sono tre gatti nel giardino*), the substitute is an adverbial pro-form defined as a subject (cf. Haegemann, 1991: 54–55; Svenonius, 2002: 5).

In generative theory expletive subjects are considered characteristic of non–prodrop languages (such as English, German, and other Germanic languages) in which the position of the preverbal subject must obligatorily be occupied by a constituent, while in prodrop languages (such as Italian and Spanish), it does not necessarily have to be filled (cf. Chomsky, 1981; Cardinaletti, 1994). The dichotomy between prodrop and non–prodrop has been widely employed in typology, in correlation with other parameters (for example the absence or presence of morphologically realized verbal inflection for person). But this purely taxonomic model cannot account for the synchronic and diachronic dynamics whereby some languages reach the state of grammaticalizing/grammaticizing subject pronouns while others do not (cf. Sornicola, 1997b).

Subject Pronouns, Spoken Discourse Strategies, and Processes of Grammaticalization

The spoken registers of languages that are traditionally considered prodrop are rich in various types of constructions with subject pronouns (henceforward SP). This is also true in languages, such as the Romance and Slavonic ones, that have a rich inflectional morphology (a factor often believed associated to optionality of SPs). Constructions of the type SPs + verb with morphological inflection (cf. It. *io dico* ‘I say,’ *tu dici* ‘you say’) are highly frequent in the spoken language, under various structural and textual conditions (for Italian and Spanish cf. Sornicola, 1996; for Russian, cf. Fougeron, 2003). In particular, 1st- and 2nd-person SPs have the highest recurrence. Although these forms have been variously described as emphatic or related to switch reference strategies (cf. Hofmann, 1951: § 95, Pinkster, 1987 for Latin), such accounts can represent only a part of the cases that appear in text corpora. In many tokens the SPs may be considered units on the way to becoming grammaticalized, since they have neither emphatic nor switch-reference function (cf. Sornicola, 1994 for Italian; Sornicola, 2002 for Latin and late Latin).

Clearly, however, they cannot be represented as grammatical inflection markers, as in French.

Like other phenomena of so-called expletivity, these cases are not easily accommodated in traditional frames, in which all doublings of a given category are considered pleonasms, since they repeat information already contained in that category. But how is the main category chosen? The general frame has a long history behind it, since it was already present in classical rhetoric (see the previous discussion) and taken up again in various forms by the comparative linguistics of the 19th century (cf. Delbrück 1893–1900, vol. 3: 461), by structuralism (cf. Bally, 1932: 153–156), and ultimately by generative grammar, where the relationship between SP, verb phrase and INFL phrase has given rise to wide debate (cf. Safir, 1985; Cardinaletti, 1994; Svenonius, 2002). In these discussions it has been assumed that there is only one head that carries INFL and that possible coreferential units are in various ways treatable as bound elements of an anaphoric chain (cf. Safir, 1985). But the extent to which these models could satisfactorily represent the wide range of structures with SPs is debatable. For example, it is not clear what dependency relationships should be postulated between verbal inflection and pronouns in the Romance and Slavic constructions described above. A more general problem concerns the condition of unique assignment of θ -roles (see Haegeman, 1991 *passim* for an overview and 52–53 in particular for its application to expletive subjects). Whatever its theoretical elegance and even necessity, it is not certain whether it could be stretched to cover the whole area of existing pronominal structures.

Some of these structures, in fact, can be attributed to the general tendency in the spoken registers of various languages towards referential hyperdetermination, which presents itself in the form of propagation of deictic features (cf. Sornicola, 1996). Although needing theoretical refinement, the notion of hypercharacterization (see discussion above) could be perhaps a point of departure for the analysis of the structures under discussion.

Phenomena Due to Prosodic Factors

Also defined as expletives/pleonasms are a few phenomena whose nature is clearly prosodic. These are total or partial reduplications of stems, or insertions of paragogic elements. Such cases presumably have an ultimate phonostylistic origin. Indeed, they often appear as allomorphs or lexical forms that are stylistically and/or sociolinguistically marked. However, they often give rise to fully grammaticalized structures. Although different processes may be at work behind the various phenomena of this range, they

can be considered effects of a general and integrated tendency toward the expansion of word structure, in connection with lexical prosodic (in particular accentual and metrical) factors, and/or syntactic and prosodic environmental conditions. Monosyllabic words such as pronominal forms and conjunctions, or oxytonic words, are often involved. Furthermore, in many languages the final position of intonational block and, to an even greater extent, that of the utterance constitute typical contexts for the phenomena under examination. The accentual conditions are also crucial: In some contexts, among which are those already mentioned, the accent-bearing syllables tend to acquire 'volume' or weight via reduplication or coalescence of another element, like particles desemanticized to a greater or lesser extent.

Latin has a few pronominal forms with stem reduplication, which have been associated with emphasis: cf. *tute* 'you' < *tu* + *te* (Hofmann, 1951: § 95), *mēmē* 'me' < *me*, *tētē* 'you.OBL' < *te*, *sēsē* 'himself' < *se* (cf. *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*, V, 256: 1721, 75ff. s.v. *ego*; Leumann *et al.*, 1965–1977, vol. 1: 464, vol. 2: 174). The tendency for monosyllabic elements to accumulate in pronominal forms can also be observed in forms such as *egomet*, *nosmet*, *illemet*, characteristic of early comedies and of texts where vulgarisms and colloquialisms are frequent, such as the *Satyricon* (Stefenelli, 1962: 123) (on the whole issue, cf. Wackernagel, 1953; Havers, 1931: 179). The predilection for longer pronominal forms (reduplicated or with the addition of a paragogic element) is found, for example, in many varieties of old and modern Romance languages, especially dialectal. Here are a few examples from the Italian area: Apulian *jojə* 'I' < *jo* 'I' + *je*; the forms of central and southern Italian dialects *mene* 'I.OBL' (< *me* + *ne*), *tene* 'you.OBL' (< *te* + *ne*); the old Italian and now dialectal form *ene* 'is' (< *è* 'is' + *ne*); monosyllabic forms of adverbial particles of affirmation and negation, like *sine* (sì, 'yes' + *ne*), *none* (*no* + *ne*); infinitives like *amano*, 'amare,' *aveno*, 'avere,' with the coalescence of a particle onto originally oxytonic forms (*amà*, *avé*); the interrogative adverb *pəkkənə* 'because/why,' derived from truncated forms *pəkké* + *nə* (cf. Rohlfs, 1949–1954, vol. 3: § 336).

It is possible to consider these phenomena similar to vocalic or consonantal lengthening in a stressed environment. Like the latter, these can be explained by the interaction of prosodic and segmental structures: Both the geminate and the agglutinated elements can be considered expansions determined by the prosodic skeleton of the word (cf. Kager *et al.*, 1999).

A specific issue concerns the utterance (or sentence) initial position. In various languages this tends to

be reinforced by the combination (and in some cases agglutination) of conjunctions or particles to a pronominal element, even when the conjunction does not seem semantically required, as in late Latin types *atque ego*, *et ego* (cf. Havers, 1931: 9). Other structures that at least in part may be determined by the prosodic and syntactic environment are main declarative clauses with a complementiser in 1st position, as in Romance types with initial *che*, *que*: cf. Abruzzese *ca mo ve* 'now [s/he] comes,' lit. 'that [s/he] now comes' (Rohlfs, 1949–1954, vol. 3: § 794), Gascon *qu'a yelāt* 'it's freezing,' lit. 'that [it] has frozen,' *que-t dechàm soul* '[we] leave you alone,' lit. 'that [we] leave you alone' (cf. Rohlfs, 1970: 205). In Standard Italian, *che* appears after adverbs of affirmation or negation, as in *sì che l'ho visto*, *no, che non l'ho visto*, with a reinforcing value (cf. Rohlfs, 1949–1954, vol. 3: 794).

Presumably multiple factors cause conjunctions to accumulate at the beginning of utterances, a phenomenon that can be observed in many languages. The need to fill the first position with constituents with prosodic weight may be in part responsible for various syntagmatic combinations of light adverbs or particles, as in the Latin types *nam et*, *sed et*. It may also cause conjunctions to be strengthened by coalescing with other particles (cf. Meillet, 1921–1928, vol. 1: 164–165, 171). On the other hand, semantic factors such as intensive redetermination can also play a role. This often leads to the joint use of two adverbs with the same meaning, such as in the (non-classical) Latin types *sed autem*, Italian (substandard) *ma invece* 'but.'

Conclusions

This examination of structures traditionally considered expletive/pleonastic may have demonstrated the extent to which phenomena with different properties and explanations have been grouped together under this label. Behind the apparently unitary tendency toward structural hypercharacterization (i.e., multiple determination of form and function), we have tried to discern heterogeneous processes. Their scrutiny brings to light different properties with respect to the time factor. Some in fact have a dimension that is principally panchronic (that is, they are connected to factors that act independently in many periods and many places), others diachronic, still others synchronic. In the first group we may place the spread of negation in the utterance, subject pronouns with verbs inflected for person, and the increase in the prosodic weight of a word. In the second group, we may place the bleaching of meaning typical of grammaticalization (as in auxiliaries in periphrasis) and, more generally, the survival of archaisms or fossilized

relics in constructions to which speakers are no longer able to assign meaning, and that are sometimes re-determined (such as in Spanish *conmigo* 'with me,' *contigo* 'with you,' etymologically related to late Latin types CUM MECUM, CUM TECUM). Other factors that may lead to phenomena considered expletives have a clearly synchronic origin in processes of contamination and more generally in associative processes (cf. Havers, 1931: 174; Paul, 1920: § 121).

The existence of several structural and historical reasons for phenomena considered expletives allows us to abandon the traditional perspective according to which they are no more than 'illogical' manifestations (thus Wackernagel, 1920–1924, vol. 2: 306). One obvious property of form appears in all structural cases discussed in the third through fifth sections above. It is the expansion or propagation of form within a given phrase and even beyond, in the sentence/utterance. This constitutes a link across different types of phenomena. Yet the implications for theories of sentence/utterance structure are not as obvious.

A few problems of a theoretical nature seem particularly interesting that are related to the concept of function and to the very legitimacy of the notion of expletive/pleonasm. With regard to the first problem, two conclusions may be suggested:

1. It is appropriate to distinguish between semantic function and functioning in discourse. Units exist that do not have semantic function but that do have a functioning power in the utterance, such as those determined by prosodic factors (cf. "Phenomena Due to Prosodic Factors," above). Other units may have both functioning power and semantic function, such as subject pronouns with verbs inflected for person, or the constituents of double negation in nongrammaticalized types. These may be properly defined as hypercharacterized structures.
2. The relationship between function and form on the syntagmatic level must be conceived as plurivocal (more than one form can correspond to each function). This may run contrary to principles or conditions long established in theories, but seems an option that cannot be ruled out.

Some conclusions may also be drawn regarding the legitimacy of the concept of expletive/pleonasm. As we have observed, hypercharacterization is simply the effect of synchronic (or panchronic) processes typical of discourse structuring, which can become grammaticalized or otherwise, or it may be the result of diachronic processes of desemanticization, fossilization, often (although not exclusively) connected to the previous ones. Fossilization with total loss of

meaning is difficult to ascertain in many cases. One therefore can have good reasons to think that the concept of expletive has a weak empirical and theoretical basis. A more radical and perhaps paradoxical conclusion would be that expletives (empty elements, or as they have sometimes been called, 'junks') exist neither at the discourse level nor at the *langue* level. But the phenomena that the term has traditionally come to define are notable both at the empirical and the theoretical level.

One final problem concerns the sociolinguistic dimension. It has been widely noted in the literature of various orientations that expletives and pleonasm are typical of the language or style of less educated people. This empirical observation still lacks articulate and stringent justification, but for the moment it is sufficient to maintain that speakers with minimal or no education provide evidence of dynamics of functioning in discourse that cannot be neglected by general linguistic theories.

See also: Grammaticalization; Lexicon, Generative; Mood and Modality in Grammar; Negation; Phonology: Optimality Theory; Pronouns; Prosodic Morphology; Speech Acts.

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