

Unergative verbs in Norwegian Intransitive Expletive Constructions.

Intransitive expletive constructions (IECs) in Norwegian occur with both unaccusative and unergative verbs:

unaccusative: (1) Det har forsvunnet en skatt (i havet).
there has disappeared a treasure in the.ocean
'A treasure disappeared in the ocean.'

unergative: (2) Det har jobbet en mann *(i skogen).
there has worked a man in the.forest
'There is a man working in the forest.'

Accounting for unaccusative IECs is straightforward; the object of the unaccusative has simply remained in its base-position. The unergative IECs are far more problematic, with the thematic subject appearing *below* SpecvP where it is commonly assumed to be base-generated.

Previous accounts have assumed that unaccusative and unergative IECs are structurally identical, and thus treated the postverbal DP in unergative IECs as a marked realization of the agentive argument (e.g. Lødrup 1999, Mikkelsen 2001). In this paper I argue that there is good empirical evidence that unaccusative and unergative IECs are *different* constructions, and that this calls for a revised analysis of unergative IECs.

Unlike the unaccusative IEC, the unergative IECs *require* a locative PP (cf. (2)). Crucially, nothing can intervene between the thematic subject and this PP. In the unaccusative IECs, a locative PP (if present) behaves like a regular adjunct. Furthermore, the constructions differ with respect to constituency. Whereas the verb and the post-verbal DP form a constituent in the unaccusative IECs, no such relation is indicated for the corresponding verb-DP relation in the unergative IECs:

unaccusative: (3) Det har [visnet en blomst] og [dødd et tre] (i hagen).
there has withered a flower and died a tree (in the garden)
'A flower has withered and a tree has died in the garden'

unergative: (4) *Det har [løpt en rev] og [hoppet en kanin] over jordet.
there has ran a fox and jumped a rabbit over the.field

Taking these observations in conjunction with the conceptual problems of assuming that an agent is realized as a syntactic object, it becomes evident that a unified account of unergative and unaccusative IECs is not feasible. I argue that the most promising way to analyze unergative IECs is along the lines of locative existential constructions (like 'There's a man in the garden'), drawing on insights from Hazout's 2004 analysis of existentials. The gist of my analysis is that Norwegian allow for the inclusion of unergative verbs in locative existential constructions. The obligatoriness of a locative PP and the constituency facts seen in (3) and (4) is shown to follow directly from this account. Finally, I provide a semantic account for why unaccusative verbs cannot appear in locative existentials. My explanation is based on the atelic/telic distinction between unergatives and unaccusatives (cf. van Hout 2004); the telic nature of the unaccusatives is shown to be incompatible with the semantics of locative existentials.

Selected references:

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- van Hout, Angeliek (2004). Unaccusativity as Telicity Checking. In Alexiadou et al., *The Unaccusativity Puzzle*, Oxford; Oxford University Press
- Hazout, Ilan (2004). The Syntax of Existential Constructions. *Linguistic Inquiry*, Vol. 35, 3, 393-430