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This is a pre print version of the following article:

Original Citation:

Availability:
This version is available http://hdl.handle.net/2318/1918470 since 2023-07-06T09:58:41Z

Publisher:
John Benjamins

Published version:
DOI:10.1075/hcp.76.04gae

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(Article begins on next page)
Existential Constructions across Languages
Forms, meanings and functions

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CHAPTER 4

Pure existentials vs. pure presentationals
Finding an existence out(side) of place

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Existential constructions are usually defined as sentences in which an entity is associated with some location. In the paper, a semasiological approach is adopted, which is essentially constructional in nature and assumes that existential constructions result from the grammaticalization of other (more basic) source constructions. This allows us to show that in spite of the basic nature of the spatial dimension, other source constructions are possible which are not directly based on space. They can be contrasted with pure presentationals which in a way represent their conceptual counterpart in the sense that the existence of the entity involved is presupposed only with regard to the specific utterance and is not independently established in the spatial dimension.

Keywords: grammaticalization, semasiological approach, spatial dimension

1. Introduction

Existential constructions (= ECs) normally describe some entity as (introduced into and) associated with a certain speech situation. In Gaeta (2013a) a semasiological approach to ECs was suggested, radically departing from the onomasiological approach commonly assumed – more or less explicitly – in the literature. In the latter, which is paradigmatically exemplified by Freeze’s (2001) basic onomasiological format called ‘the locative paradigm’, three abstract objects are laid down, the location (= LOC), the predicate BE, and the ENTITY, which are taken to underlie any EC. In such an approach, existence results by inference: if an entity occupies a certain space, then it exists. Given these premises, the onomasiological format yearns for universalism on the assumption that the spatial dimension is universally taken as basic and manifests itself in a universal morphosyntactic pattern underlying ECs. By doing this, however, universalism also brings along reductionism insofar as possible deviations from the basic onomasiological format are
either reduced to it or disregarded as exceptional (cf. Gaeta 2013a for discussion). Furthermore, it manifests an anti-empiricist attitude: the cognitive salience of the spatial dimension is postulated a priori and cannot be empirically tested.

In contrast with this, the semasiological approach, which is essentially constructional in nature, assumes that ECs result from the grammaticalization of other (more basic) source constructions. Given the basic nature of the spatial dimension, it does not come out as a surprise that many ECs may reflect this phylogeny (see Creissels, this volume, for a general reconstruction). However, other source constructions are possible which are not directly related to the spatial dimension, even though the latter are possibly less common than the former. The advantage of the semasiological approach consists in non-reductionism (cf. Gaeta 2013a; McNally 2016), insofar as non-spatial source constructions are not considered as “exceptional” in any sense and therefore need not to be reduced to a basic spatial onomasiological format. Furthermore, it adopts a general empiricist attitude: in this regard, hypotheses on the soundness of cognitive models postulating the salience of the spatial construction can be empirically tested, as we will see in § 2.1 below. Moreover, new perspectives can be opened with respect to the possible meanings and uses covered by such grammaticalized constructions, as we will see below.

The paper is articulated as follows. In § 2 the semasiological approach will briefly be sketched basically elaborating on Gaeta (2013a). In § 3 ECs which are independent of any locative source will be discussed and accordingly defined as pure existentials. In § 4 the parallel issue of pure presentationals will be focused on with especial regard to the Italian construction containing *eccò* and to its French correspondent *voilà*. The final § 5 briefly draws the conclusion.

2. A semasiological approach for ECs

The main advantage of the semasiological approach consists in a neat distinction between the two levels of a linguistic sign. In this vein, we can construct what can be labeled the semasiological format of an EC, i.e. the sign-oriented set of its possible components. This has to be kept distinct from the onomasiological content, which points to the semantic domain to which the involved signs actually refer. This distinction is based on Geeraerts’ (2010: 23) classical formulation (see also Glynn 2015 for further discussion):

\[
\text{[S]emasiology takes its starting point in the word as a form, and charts the meanings that the word can occur with; onomasiology takes its starting point in a concept, and investigates by which different expressions the concept can be desig-}
\]


nated, or named. Between the two, there is a difference of perspective: semasiology starts from the expression and looks at its meanings, onomasiology starts from the meaning and looks at the different expressions. (Geeraerts 2010: 23)

In Gaeta (2013a, 2021) this basic distinction, traditionally applied to lexical entries, is extended to semasiological formats which are distinct from the onomasiological contents connected with them.

2.1 The semasiological view

The semasiological format is not based on the postulation of a common semantic value – i.e., an onomasiological format defined a priori – but it rather generalizes over single formal components of a construction, in our case involving an existential value. The latter constitutes a specific situation type for which “the morphosyntactic construction(s) or strategies used to encode” (Croft 2003: 14) are investigated cross-linguistically:

Although categories (and constructions) are language-specific as morphosyntactic structures, categories and constructions may be compared across languages according to their function ... The formulation of cross-linguistic universals is in fact dependent on identifying categories and constructions across languages in terms of shared function. (Croft 2001: 51)

Thus, the semasiological approach takes advantage of Croft’s radical constructional procedure which allows us to concretely identify language-specific constructions which cross-linguistically display a shared function. On the other hand, “the semasiological approach aims to provide a typology of the source constructions which give rise to ECs. This typology allows us to reconstruct those cognitive processes of meaning extension and generalization which are at the heart of the genesis of grammar” (Gaeta 2013a: 478–479). In this perspective, the typology opens a diachronic window on the possible sources of the morphemes recruited in the language-specific constructions via common processes of grammaticalization.

The single ingredients may take different forms (e.g. affixes or analytic particles) encoding the same constructional roles. Thus, the semasiological format results from the (language-)specific constructions concretely instantiating a certain general pattern which can be taken to correspond cross-linguistically to the similar situation type encoded via grammatical means, in our case the ECs. The latter instantiate a “thetic” situation type in which some entity is introduced into or associated with a certain speech situation (cf. Lambrecht 1994: 179). The semasiological approach focuses on the signs entering the construction as well
as on their general role within the particular language. This amounts to say that the criteria for assessing the status of ECs are construction-specific. In this sense, they are not simply cases of “constructions with non-canonical morphosyntax” (Bentley et al. 2013:1, Bentley 2015). Much more, they generally are “formulaic constructions” (Gast and Haas 2011) provided with certain peculiar properties which makes them constructions in the general sense assumed in Construction Grammar, namely as a form-meaning pairing indexed to a specific interactive context and linguistic practice. A watertight example comes from the English EC, which is parasitically constructed on the basic locative construction:

(1)  a. There is a problem here / there.
    b. *Here is a problem there.

The locative particle there accompanying the verb in (1a) has acquired a completely formulaic status insofar as it can occur with its actual antonym as well as with itself, while this is clearly not true for the locative particle here in (1b). It has to be emphasized that the formulaic character involves both the particle there and the whole construction of which it is part. In more general terms, the English example in (1a) contains the basic semasiological ingredients of ECs, namely a particle (= PART), a predicate (= PRED), and an entity (= ENT) being introduced:

(2) (PART) (PRED) ENT

The advantage of such a semasiological format consists in its general construction-based and language-specific character. In other words, it does not represent a universal structure underlying ECs at the level of Universal Grammar as suggested for instance in Freeze’s (2001: 947) ‘locative paradigm’. Rather, it stands as a convenient formula summarizing the possible range of variation found cross-linguistically with regard to the formal elements contained in ECs.

The semasiological format is distinguished from the onomasiological content which points to the semantic domain to which the signs recruited in the construction actually pertain. The onomasiological domain can be generally framed in terms of basic event schemas which “relate to stereotyped contents describing situations that appear to be basic to human experience and communication and are encoded linguistically by means of predications typically involving one predicate and two participants” (Heine 1993: 30). For instance, the English EC in (1a) refers to the event schema of location in which the existence of the ENT is indirectly inferred by means of its spatial collocation provided by the PART. It is important to stress that the semasiological approach allows us to cope with Stolz’s (2013: 264) finding – based on a large-scale investigation of the comparative constructions in European languages – that “[t]he choice of event schema is
largely independent from that of the morpho-syntax of the construction type and vice versa”. In our typology we will flank the basic semasiological format with the range of onomasiological domains to which the concrete sign-components pertain. Thus, in accordance with the empiricist requirement discussed in §1 above, we will not postulate a universal onomasiological format pertaining to location from which ECs are held to come via language-specific derivational machineries. Rather, we will put to interest the general tenet that “[l]anguage is a historical product and must be explained first of all with reference to the forces that have shaped it” (Heine 1997: 4) and look for the possible onomasiological domains providing the source for the concrete morphemes filling the semasiological format in (2).

That some pieces of the semasiological format in (2) are put in brackets means that they are not universally found in ECs. For instance, in the example in (3) from Maori the EC only consists of the ENT accompanied by a definiteness marker (cf. Bauer 1997: 34):

\[(3)\] a. He taniwha.
   INDF taniwha
   ‘There are taniwhas.’

On the other hand, the formulaic character of the EC can be far less pronounced than in the English example, as shown by Finnish in which the occurrence of the EC directly depends on the lexical material contained in the expression marked by the adessive suffix which can drive the interpreter to an existential (4a) or to a possessive (4b) interpretation (examples from Freeze 2001: 943):

\[(4)\] a. Pöydä-llä on kyna.
   table-ADESS COP pencil
   ‘There is a pencil on the table.’
b. Liisa-lla on mies.
   Lisa-ADESS COP man
   ‘Lisa has a man.’
c. Talo-lla on oma kylpyhuone.
   house-ADESS COP own bathroom
   ‘The apartment has its own bathroom / There is an own bathroom in the apartment.’

Basically, it is the unavailability of the meaning *‘The table has a pencil’ in (4a) that triggers the existential interpretation of the specific sentence involved in the construction. In fact, when the sentence is ambiguous both the existential and the possessive interpretations are available as in (4c), where the occurrence of the EC depends on the informational “thetic” profile of the sentence, i.e. whether
it concretely introduces a new referent into the discourse (see further Huumo, this volume).

Finally, the basic ingredients constituting the EC have to be evaluated against other constructions as shown – besides the Finnish examples in (4) – by the contrast between the English EC *There is fog* which instantiates the pattern exemplified in (1a) above and the ascriptive construction *It is fog*, in which the PART is replaced by the personal pronoun and triggers a classificatory interpretation (cf. Lyons 1977: 437). Far from being obvious, these contrasts can be a source of ambiguity if the same expression can occur in several constructions.

### 2.2 Contrasting languages in the semasiological approach

A paramount case of ambiguity is provided by Dutch, in which the same particle *er* is used as unstressed deictic locative adverb meaning ‘there’ (5a), as PART in a true EC (5b), and as a personal pronoun either in the partitive (5c), or in the oblique form (5d) (see Bech 1968 and Donaldson 2008: Chapter 15):

(5) a. *Zij heeft er tien jaar gewoond.*
   3f.sg has there ten year live.pst.ptcp
   ‘She lived there for ten years.’

b. *Er zit een muis in de hoek.*
   there sits indf mouse in def corner
   ‘There is a mouse in the corner.’

c. *Hij heeft er genoeg.*
   3m.sg has there enough
   ‘He has enough (of them/it).’

d. *Ik kijk er vaak naar.*
   1sg look.1sg there often after
   ‘I often look at it/them.’

Note that the *er* displaying the PART value found in the EC can co-occur with *daar*, the stressed counterpart of the locative *er*, but not with the unstressed *er* (6a); it can co-occur with the partitive (6b), but not with the oblique pronominal value (6c), while the maximal number of *er* occurring in the same clause cannot exceed two to the effect that the oblique pronominal form is dropped (6d):

(6) a. *Er ligt daar / *er een brief.*
   there lies there / *there indf letter
   ‘There is a letter there.’

---

1. Here and the in the rest of this section the Dutch examples come from Bech (1968) and Donaldson (2008: Chapter 15).
b. *Hoeveel bomen staan er in die straat? Er staan* there stand.3PL in DEF street how: much tree.PL stand.3PL there there stand.3PL er hundred.

‘How many trees are there in that street? There are a hundred (of them).’

c. *Er keken (*er) veel mensen naar.* there look.PST.3PL there much people after

‘There were a lot of people looking at it/them.’

d. *Er keken er (*er) drie naar.* there look.PST.3PL there (*there) three after

‘There were three (of them) watching it.’

These restrictions on the co-occurrence of *er* in its value as PART observed in (6) show its construction-sensitivity when it is part of the EC. But the range of usage of the particle *er* goes well beyond the locative and the personal pronoun value. It also appears in first sentence position in concomitance either with a postponed indefinite subject in a transitive clause (7a) or with a passive clause (7b), and as the oblique form of a correlative pronoun referring to a finite subordinate clause (7c):

(7) a. *Er bracht een juffrouw koffie rond.* there bring.PST.3SG INDF girl coffee around

‘A girl brought coffee around.’

b. *Er wordt gezegd dat ze er niet is.* there becomes said that 3F.SG there not is

‘It’s said that she’s not there.’

c. *Ben je er zeker van dat we op de goede weg zitten?* are 2SG there sure of that 1PL up DEF good way sit.1PL

‘Are you sure that we are on the right road?’

It is interesting to compare Dutch with its close cognate German, in which a division of labor is observed between the locative particle *da* ‘there’ and the personal pronoun *es* ‘it’:

(8) a. *Sie hat da zehn Jahre gewohnt.* 3F.SG has there ten year live.PST.PTCP

‘She lived there for ten years.’

b. *Es gibt eine Maus in der Ecke.* 3N.SG gives INDF mouse in DEF corner

‘There is a mouse in the corner.’

c. *Da ist eine Maus in der Ecke.* there is INDF mouse in DEF corner

‘There is a mouse in the corner.’
d. *Es ist eine Maus in der Ecke.*

3N.SG is INDF mouse in DEF corner
‘There / It is a mouse in the corner’

The locative value can only be expressed in German by *da* (8a), while the EC is expressed by means of the formulaic construction in (8b) in which the PART *es* is found (see §2.2.2 below). In (8c) *da* has a locative interpretation and co-referes to the following locative PP, while the alternative use of *es* in (8d) is ambiguous between a “place-holder” reading in which it resembles the value of *er* in first sentence position in (7a) above and an ascriptive reading in which *es* refers to an antecedent previously introduced in the discourse as shown by the translation ‘It is a mouse’. Notice that in this ascriptive meaning Dutch can also make use of the personal pronoun *het* ‘it’ or of the demonstrative *dat* ‘this’ (9a):

(9) a. *Het / Dat is een muis in de hoek.*

3N.SG / DEM is INDF mouse in DEF corner
‘It is a mouse in the corner.’

b. *Het / *Er waait.*

3N.SG / there blows
‘It blows.’

c. *Er / *Het waait een koude Oostenwind.*

there / 3N.SG blows INDF cold east.wind
‘There blows a cold east wind.’

Moreover, *het* is also possible as holder of the first sentence position but only when it serves as a true subject expletive (9b) and no new referent is later introduced in the discourse in neat contrast to the PART *er* found in the EC (9c).

On the other hand, in German *da* can appear in first sentence position as an alternative to *es* (10), where – besides its primary locative meaning – *da* may also acquire a textual function insofar as it ingenerates a stronger effect of text cohesion connecting the new sentence to the preceding context while *es* only serves as place-holder (Eisenberg 2013: 221):


how many tree.pl are.3PL in DEM street there / 3N.SG are.3PL hundred.pl thereof
‘How many trees are there in that street? There are a hundred (of them).’

b. *Da / Es schauten viele Menschen danach.*

there / 3N.SG look.pst.3PL many people thereafter
‘There were a lot of people watching it/Them.’
c.  *Da / Es brachte ein Mädchen Kaffee herum.*
   there / 3N.SG bring.pst.3SG INDEF girl coffee around
   ‘A girl brought coffee around.’

d.  *Da / Es wird gesagt, dass sie nicht da ist.*
   there / 3N.SG becomes say.pst.ptcp that 3F.SG NEG there is
   ‘It’s said that she’s not there.’

Finally, *da* also has a pronominal value similar to the Dutch *er* (and to its stressed counterpart *daar*) when it is combined with a preposition, for instance as partitive (11a), as oblique (11b) and as correlative (11c):

(11)  a.  *Er hat genug davon.*
   3M.SG has enough thereof
   ‘He has enough (of it).’

   b.  *Ich schaue oft danach.*
   1SG look.1SG often thereafter
   ‘I often look at it.’

   c.  *Bist du davon sicher, dass wir auf dem richtigen Weg sind?*
   are.2SG 2SG thereof sure that 1PL up def right way are.1PL
   ‘Are you sure that we are on the right road?’

The following table summarizes the complex picture offered by Dutch and German with regard to the particles occurring in the different values, where the neat division of labor between *es* and *da* in German clearly contrasts the overwhelming presence of *er* in Dutch:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Dutch</th>
<th>German</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ascriptive</td>
<td><em>het</em></td>
<td><em>es</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>expletive</td>
<td><em>er</em></td>
<td><em>es</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PART</td>
<td><em>er</em></td>
<td><em>es</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>locative</td>
<td><em>er</em></td>
<td><em>da</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oblique/partitive</td>
<td><em>er</em></td>
<td><em>da</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 2.2.1 PARTs as semasiological components

This discussion of the Dutch and the German examples, besides illustrating the difficulties of distinguishing among different constructions in which the same ingredients occur, also shows the two main basins from which PARTs are usually recruited for ECs. In this regard, PARTs are generally deictic expressions in the specific sense that they “[include] some reference to a grounded element within
its scope of predication” (Langacker 1987:126). From the point of view of their onomasiological content, the most common source is given by spatial, ostensive particles coming from the onomasiological domain of space like English there and Dutch er in which the source morpheme goes back to pure spatial deixis. The other common source consists of discourse-based, textual particles coming from the onomasiological domain of phoricity, like the German es found in (8b) above or the French il in (12a) and the Icelandic það in (12b) in which the source morpheme goes back to a (personal or demonstrative) pronoun that is only indirectly (i.e. on a phoric base) recruited to serve (spatial) deixis in the EC (see Czinglar 2002:97):

(12) a. Il y a beaucoup de gens dans l’hôtel.
    3M.SG there has much of people in DEF=hotel
    ‘There are many people in the hotel.’

b. Það eru hestar í Kanada.
    DEM.N Singular.PL horse.PL in Canada
    ‘There are horses in Canada.’

This kind of PART is typically found in Obligatory-Subject Languages (= OblSubj-languages), in which the subject role has to be overtly filled by means of an expletive. From this viewpoint, the occurrence of the PART is likely to be seen as a parasitic extension of a morphosyntactic property peculiar for this group of languages. Notice in the French example the combined occurrence in the same EC of PARTs going back to the two different morpheme sources, namely the space-based y and the phoricity-based il in (12a). On the other hand, an OblSubj-language does not necessarily recruit a PART from the basin of phoricity-based particles, as shown by Dutch in which the particle er going back to the domain of spatial reference is found (see § 2.2 above).

2.2.2 PREDs as semasiological objects

The second ingredient of the ECs is the predicate (= PRED) which usually is also deictic, or at least offers the possibility of collocating the referents spatially, in a direct or indirect (i.e. inferentially) way. Depending on their general actional value, PREDs come from two different sets of source lexemes, namely stative or dynamic verbs. Most frequent are stative PREDs which are intrinsically deictic and typically recruit stative verbs like be, stand, stay or exist like in the following example from Romanian (Gast and Haas 2011:140):

(13) Există bărbați care să înțeleg femeile.
    exist men REL SBJ understand women
    ‘There are men who understand women.’
In addition, ECs can also recruit stative PREDs coming from other stative constructions such as for instance possessive constructions, instantiating the onomasiological domain of possession. As observed with regard to the Finnish examples in (2b–c) above, possession can be expressed by means of location (see Heine 1997:92) while also the opposite holds true as shown by the following examples coming respectively from Modern Greek (14a), Old Italian (14b), Spanish (14c) and Alemannic German (14d) in which the EC is based on the have-predicate typically instantiated by the possessive construction:2

(14) a. Éxi polí kósma sto kédro.
    has much people in.DEF center
    ‘There are a lot of people in the city center.’

b. al Po avea laide novelle
    at.DEF Puy have.3SG.bad news.PL
    ‘There were bad news at the court of Puy.’

c. Había muchos soldados.
    have.3SG many soldier.PL
    ‘There were many soldiers.’

d. Es hot an Öpflbom i minam Garta.
    3N.SG has INDEF apple.tree in my garden
    ‘There is an apple tree in my garden.’

In contrast to the others, Alemannic German, as is typical in OblSubj-languages, also displays the phoricity-based PART es serving as a dummy subject (see Czinglar 2002:88).

A second source of PREDs involves stative verbs which can be termed “inferentially deictic”. In these cases, the existence is inferred on the basis of the presentational value of the construction as in the following example from Medieval Chinese containing a predicate pertaining to the onomasiological domain of see (cf. Tao 2007):

(15) a. dishang jian jinguang yi dao fenming ren shí yì ge xiao
    ground.up see golden.light one CLF clear recognize COP one CLF small
    she’er snake
    ‘There was a bright golden ray of light on the ground, which was a small
    snake inches long.’

b. The end of 1997 could see at least one vendor reaching 5GB of capacity.

2. It must be left open for future research whether the parasitic occurrence of the have-predicate in ECs is an areal feature characterizing the languages belonging to the Standard Average European type insofar as they display a have-predicate for the possessive construction (cf. Haspelmath 2001:1495 and references therein and Creissels, this volume, for a typological assessment).
c. *veez me là* (*Le Mort le Roi Artu*, XIV c.)
   see.2pl.1sg.obj there
   ‘Here I am.’

The meaning shift leading to the EC observed in (15a) can be paralleled by English constructions like (15b) in which the non-canonical subject invites an inference whereby the predicate for *see* is used to introduce the focalized discourse referent. Notice that these PREDs can also occur in combination with a locative PART as in Old French (15c). We will come back to this issue when discussing the presentational predicate *voilà* in § 4.2 below.

Although less frequently, dynamic verbs can also be the source of PREDs in ECs, especially when they are intrinsically deictic. Their recruitment in ECs generally results from the conventionalization of a middle-passive or of a reflexive-anticausative construction containing change-of-place verbs (especially achievements), as witnessed respectively by the Modern Greek (16a–b) (Katerina Stathi, p.c.) and by the Swedish (16c–d) verbs pertaining to the onomasiological domain of *find*:

(16) a. *O John vrísk-i to vivlío sto ráfi.*
   DEF John find-prs.3sg DEF book on.DEF shelf
   ‘John finds the book on the shelf.’

b. *Sto pánó ráfi vrísk-ete éna mavro vivlío.*
   on.DEF upper shelf find-pass.prss.3sg one black book
   ‘On the upper shelf there is a black book.’

c. *Fred finn-er en bok på hyllan.*
   Fred find-prs INDF book on shelf.DEF
   ‘Fred finds a book on the shelf.’

   d. *Det finn-s en bok på hyllan.*
      3n.sg find-pass INDF book on shelf.DEF
      ‘There is a book on the shelf.’

The last case in this brief taxonomy relates to a PRED coming from a dynamic verb which is not intrinsically deictic in the sense that it does not provide any direct information about the spatial collocation of the ENT. Rather, its deictic value results by inference, namely via a process of context-sensitive conventionalization. A good example of such a PRED is the Standard German EC involving a verb pertaining to the onomasiological domain of *give*:

(17) a. *Es gibt viele Kinder zu Hause*
   3n.sg gives many children to home
   ‘There are many children at home.’
   def weather is very favorable dem.n.sg / 3n.sg gives good harvest
   ‘The weather is very favorable: this / it gives good harvest.’

As already pointed out by Grimm (1837: 266), the verb for give is recruited in the EC starting from its causative meaning extension (17b): the (concrete or abstract) agent is taken to bring about a new entity into the discourse, in Grimm’s example the “harvest”. Subsequently, the agent is obscured and finally dropped leaving only the formulaic PART es behind, as is typical in OblSubj-languages (cf. Newman 1998; Gaeta 2005).

2.2.3 ENTs as semasiological objects

Finally, the only really indispensable ingredient of an EC (see the Maori example in (3) above), namely the ENT, is usually conceived as newly associated with the speech setting (Lambrecht 1994: 39) and accordingly is typically a novel, indefinite NP (cf. Koch 2003, 2012; Gast and Haas 2011; Bentley 2013). In the relevant literature, a number of semanto-pragmatic and syntactic properties have been associated with the ENT (cf. Lambrecht 1994; Francez 2007; McNally 2016) inasmuch as it

– expresses a rhematic content typically in a thetic sentence;
– carries sentence stress (the so-called sentence focus);
– normally is the only argument of the sentence;
– often reproduces the syntactic schema of mono-argumental constructions;
– often comes late in the sentence;
– often displays a propositional content insofar as it typically embeds relative clauses, etc.

As is well-known, thetic sentences are characterized by the rhematic status of their whole structure (all-new sentences) to the extent that they are entirely asserted as newly introduced into the discourse (cf. Sasse 2006 for a survey of thetic sentences). In such a thetic environment, the ENT is profiled as the constituent carrying the main information focus, typically marked by sentence stress (in this regard, Lambrecht 1994 speaks of “sentence focus”) and placed in a later sentence position. However, it has been claimed that the indefiniteness of the ENT is necessary only for those ECs which typically involve existence inferred from location. In fact, in these cases it is possible to focus on the location which is introduced as a modifier (also called coda, cf. Francez 2007; McNally 2016) of the ENT while the latter is actually taken for granted and therefore marked for definiteness (cf. Hengeveld 1992: 118, Koch 2012; Gaeta 2013a; McNally 2016), as for instance in:
The sentence (18a) clearly contains a warning against the unexpected presence of the ENT \textit{the dog} in the relevant space, \textit{in the garden}, although a generic interpretation of the NP can also be licensed because of the general custom of having watchdogs in gardens. In other words, this sentence can be interpreted as focusing on the generic referent \textit{the dog in the garden} “in a situation in which the argument term refers to the first item in a list of e.g. problems to be solved when entering a particular house” (Hengeveld 1992:120), without predicking the existence of \textit{the dog} in a certain space, namely \textit{in the garden}. The same is true when the referents are presented by proper nouns which by definition cannot be interpreted as indefinite, as in the Italian example in (18b), where they require a definite article as a signal of their intrinsic definiteness.

The centrality of the ENT is clearly enhanced by its being the only argument of the sentence, often reproducing in this regard the syntactic schema of mono-argumental constructions. In this regard, it can also provide the anchor or the pivot for additional pieces of information which take the form of (sentential) codas, and especially relative clauses as in the example (18b). Because of its peculiar mono-argumentality, the un- or underdetermined status of the ENT as the ‘actant H’ typically found in presentational constructions has been repeatedly pointed out in the literature (cf. Lazard 1994; Koch 2003; Gast and Haas 2011). Such indeterminacy can be made responsible for the occurrence of language changes reshaping the morphosyntactic structure of the EC by increasing the subject or the object properties of the ‘actant H’ which is pushed towards the extreme poles of “the continuum between prototypical subject actants and prototypical object actants” (Koch 2003:159). Accordingly, H can be recategorized as subject (H > S), for instance by developing verb-agreement as in the following cases drawn from substandard varieties of German (19a) in contrast to (17b) above and from Mexican Spanish compared to European Spanish (19b) vs. (14c) (examples from Koch 2003), or by introducing nominative marking as in Serbo-Croat in which the PRED is a \textit{have}-predicate and is accordingly expected to govern an accusative object (19c) (see Hartmann 2008:226):

(19) a. \textit{Es} geben (/ sind) \textit{diesen Jahr nicht viele Äpfel.}
\hspace{1cm} 3N.SG give.3PL / are.3PL DEM year NEG many apple.PL
\hspace{1cm} ‘There are not many apples this year.’
b.  *Habían* (/ eran) *muchos soldados.*
   had.3PL / were.3PL many soldier.PL
   ‘There were many soldiers.’

c.  *Ima lijepa*  *djevojka u ovoj kući.*
   has pretty.NOM girl.NOM in DEM house
   ‘There is a pretty girl in this house.’

On the other hand, H can be recategorized as an object (H > O), as witnessed by the lack of verb-agreement in substandard varieties of English (20a) or Italian (20b) with regard to the standard form (20c), or by explicit object-marking whenever it is possible (20d) (cf. Koch 2003: 158 for details):

(20)  a.  *There’s lions in Africa.*
   b.  *qui c’era de’ soldi.*
   here there=was INDF money.PL
   ‘here there was some money.’

   c.  *qui c’erano de’ soldi.*
   here there=were INDF money.PL
   ‘here there was some money.’

   d.  *Hey, there’s me / *I still looking for a better accommodation!*

The rationale underlying these changes has been explained by making reference to different forces at play. In particular, a principle of Transparency has been suggested which is responsible for the change H > S and basically favors a consistent alignment of the subject role in monotransitive and bitransitive verbs (see Koch 2003: 162 for details), while the opposite change H > O can be understood as Detopicalization – or better as a subject/object neutralization (cf. Lambrecht 2000) – in which “the structural position occupied by the expletive … attracts subject properties” (Gast and Haas 2011: 163).

2.3 Interim conclusion

Independently of the correct interpretation of the changes relating to the encoding of the ENT (for which see a more detailed discussion in Gast and Haas 2011 and Gaeta 2013a), the picture of the ECs emerging from the semasiological approach adopted here is briefly summarized in Table 2, in which the semasiological format (= SemForm) of ECs is represented in its semasiological elements (= SemElem) and in the corresponding onomasiological contents (= OnomCont).

Table 2 shows that the onomasiological content of location and of spatial deixis does not necessarily provide the etymological source of the morphemes occurring in the ECs. To be sure, location and spatial deixis are important source domains insofar as many languages recruit the semasiological elements of
Table 2. The typology of ECs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SemElem</th>
<th>OnomCont</th>
<th>Languages / Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PART</td>
<td>SPACE</td>
<td>English (1a); Dutch (5b); French (12a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PHORICITY</td>
<td>German (8b); French (12a); Icelandic (12b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRED</td>
<td>(i) stative</td>
<td>Alemannic (14d); Dutch (5b), (6a); (6b); English (1a); Greek (14a); Icelandic (12b); Old Italian (14b); Romanian (13); Serbo-Croat (19c); Spanish (19b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. intrinsically deictic: BE, STAND, LIE, EXIST, POSSESS</td>
<td>Greek (16b); Swedish (16d)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. inferentially deictic: SEE</td>
<td>Chinese (15a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(ii) dynamic</td>
<td>German (8b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. intrinsically deictic: FIND</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. inferentially deictic: GIVE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ECs from there, as shown by the large number of examples found with PARTs and PREDs pertaining to \textit{space} and \textit{intrinsic deixis}. However, this does not exhaust the picture and also other onomasiological domains can be the source for semasiological elements which are not related to \textit{location}, such as phoric particles like personal pronouns or demonstratives and verbs of perception or transfer.

3. Existential or presentational?

As constructions introducing some entity into a certain discourse situation ECs are normally said to be a type of presentational constructions (= PCs, cf. Lambrecht 1994:177; Koch 2012; Bentley 2015 among others). On the other hand, the term ‘presentational’ also identifies a type of utterance (Gast and Haas 2011:128) and is in this sense distinguished from the existential value of the ECs which is rather a semantic property of a given construction. This distinction copes well with the fact that “[m]ere assertion of the existence of some entity is a rather special kind of speech act which is of limited use in everyday communication”, and therefore ECs are preferably interpreted as conveying “the function ... of presenting or introducing a referent into the “place” or “scene” of the discourse ... rather than of
asserting its mere existence” (Lambrecht 1994:179). In other words, existentials and presentationalshave to be conceptually distinguished, even though the former happen to be used for referring to presentational focus.

In the same vein, since it has been shown in §2.3 above that the semasiological approach does not make any a priori assumption about the connection between the onomasiological domain of location and the source of the semasiological elements recruited in the ECs, we can also consider the ECs as conveying “pure” existential value without any implicit reference to location. In other words, the semasiological perspective does not force us to pass through an alleged universal conceptualization referring to a spatial dimension and relies on the idiosyncratic properties of the single language-specific constructions as well as on their source morphemes whose basic meanings persist in the constructions. In a parallel way, on the basis of the conceptual independence of existential and presentational interpretations we can also predict the occurrence of “pure” presentationalslacking any reference to the existential interpretation. After a quick discussion of pure existentials in §3.1, we will move on to pure presentationalsin §3.2, on which the rest of the paper will focus.

3.1 Pure existentials

The case of pure existentials is very clearly exemplified by the German geben-construction illustrated above, and in particular with the help of Dieter Bonhoeffer’s (1988:112) famous sentence:

    INDF God REL 3N.SG gives gives 3N.SG NEG
    ‘There is no God who exists.’

Besides any metaphysical nuances, the sentence clearly points out that God’s existence has to be interpreted beyond and apart from any possible location in a (fictive or concrete) space. This is further confirmed by the contrast between the pure existential value of the EC observed in (22a), where the locative value is odd (22b), and the be-predication which strictly refers to location in space while the EC is not possible (22c) (see Czinglar 2002: 95):

(22) a. Es gibt viele Pferde in Kanada.
    3N.SG gives many horse.PL in Canada
    ‘There are many horses in Canada.’

  b. *Es gibt viele Pferde vor dem Haus.
    3N.SG gives many horse.PL before DEF house
    ‘There are many horses in front of the house.’
c. Maria, schau! Da ist / *gibt es ein Pferd in unserem Kartoffelbeet!
   Maria look there is / gives 3N.SG INDF horse in our potato.bed
   ‘Mary, look! There is a horse in our potato bed.’

As Czinglar (2002:94) puts it:

The location attributed to the object does not just hold for one individual situation. It seems that the property depicted by the locative cannot be interpreted as an accidental property of the object, es gibt forces a kind of habitual interpretation. For existence at a large location this often results in a “habitat” reading.

A similar opposition is found with the Norwegian EC containing the achievement verb finne ‘find’ (Czinglar 2002:97):

(23) a. Det fins mange hester i Canada.
   3N.SG find.PASS many horse.PL in Canada
   ‘There are many horses in Canada.’

   b. ”Det fins mange hester foran huset.
   3N.SG find.PASS many horse.PL before house.DEF
   ‘There are many horses in front of the house.’

Czinglar interprets this distinction as reflecting Carlson’s (1977) classical opposition between Individual-Level (= IL) and Stage-Level (= SL) predicates found for instance in the two predicative sentences in Neapolitan, the city dialect of Naples, which select respectively a BE- (24a) and a STAND-predicate (24b):

(24) a. Peppe è / *sta ggruosse / bbelle / fthurbe.
   Peppe is / stand.3SG tall / beautiful / smart
   ‘Peppe is tall / beautiful / smart’.

   b. Peppe *è / sta malate / stanche / ntussecate.
   Peppe is / stand.3SG sick / tired / angry
   ‘Peppe is sick / tired / angry’.

IL-predicates refer to inherent properties of the referent while SL-predicates express transient conditions. Pure existentials resemble IL-predicates insofar as they normally predicate the pure existence of a referent, disregarding its concrete location in space. In fact, IL-predicates and pure existentials behave similarly in German as well in Norwegian insofar as they do not allow any temporal modification (see respectively gerade in (25a–b) and i dag in (25c)) nor the usage in a progressive context (25d) (cf. Czinglar 2002:101 and Gécseg and Sarda, this volume, for a further discussion):

   Hans is currently intelligent
   int.: ‘Hans is currently intelligent.’
b. *In unserem Haus gibt's gerade einen Verrückten.
in our house gives=3N.SG currently INDF madman.'
int.: ‘In our house there's currently a madman.’
c. *I Stuttgart fins det mange dansker i dag, på grunn av
in Stuttgart find.PASS 3N.SG many Dane.PL in day on ground of
football.kampen.
int.: ‘In Stuttgart there are many Danes today, because of the football
match.’
d. *Es gibt zwei Verrückte in unserem Haus beim Kartenspielen.
3N.SG gives two madmen in our house at.DEF card.play.INF
int.: ‘There are two madmen in our house at playing cards.’

As expected, locative constructions in German and Norwegian behave like SL-
predicates, allowing temporal modification (respectively (26a)–(b) and (26c), cf.
Czinglar 2002: 102):

(26)

a. Hans ist gerade krank.
Hans is currently sick
‘Hans is currently sick.’
b. In unserem Haus ist gerade ein Verrückter.
in our house is currently INDF madman’
‘In our house there's currently a madman.’
c. Etter fotballkampen var / (³fantes) det mange dansker ute på
after football.match.DEF was / find.pst.PASS 3N.SG many Dane.PL out on
gata.
street.DEF
‘After the football match, there were many Danes out on the street.’

In the perspective adopted here, this parallel behavior is straightforwardly ex-
plained by the fact that pure existentials come from source verbs (GIVE, FIND) which
are not inherently connected with locative constructions. This can be seen as the
persistence of a trait of the source construction in the grammaticalized construction
(cf. Hopper and Traugott 2003: 121). At the same time, this raises the question
whether pure existentials contrasting locative constructions are found in a language
only if a distinction between IL- and SL-predicates is also overtly made. Although
more research on this issue is needed, one can tentatively provide a positive answer
relying on Neapolitan which – as we have seen above – overtly distinguishes be-
tween the two types of predicates. In modern Neapolitan, the EC, which is clearly
based on a locative source construction, selects as PRED the same auxiliary used for
SL-predicates (27a), also in the pure existential reading (27b):
(27) a. Fore o bbalcone mo (n)ce stanno / *songhe e panne.
outside DEF balcony now there stand.3PL / are.3PL DEF clothes
‘On the balcony there are now the clothes.’
b. A Surriente (n)ce stanne / *songhe e limone.
at Sorrento there stand.3PL / are.3PL DEF lemon.PL
‘In Sorrento there are lemons.’

The actual state of affairs results from the specialization of the locative construction containing STAND in the EC which replaced older cases where the verb BE could still be used for IL-predicates. In the following example from the 17th century both BE and STAND are found in the same text where the former stands in combination with an IL-predicate and the latter with a SL-predicate (cf. Ledgeway 2009:650):

(28) nc’era na porta che sempe sbatteva, e nce stevano tanta
there=was indef door REL always slam.pst.3sg and there stand.pst.3pl many
uommmene muorte
men dead.PL
‘There was a door slamming continuously and there were many dead men.’

In this example, the event of slamming is depicted as an inherent property of the door because of by the frequency adverb sempe triggering a habitual reading and accordingly profiles an IL-predicate which in turn selects BE while the other event clearly profiles a SL-predicate selecting STAND. Thus, one might hypothesize that the PRED-selection in Neapolitan used to be related to the existential value of the EC when BE was selected, while the selection of STAND rather profiles a presentational value. Be that as it may, the occurrence of pure existentials and their contrast with true locatives is clearly related to the type of PRED involved in the EC. Again, one might tentatively suggest that the opposite is not expected to happen, namely that an EC going back to a clearly locative construction might develop a purely presentational value in neat contrast to the locative value of other ECs occurring within one and the same language. This reflects – in harmony with a constructionist and semasiological view – the relevance of the source constructions for the shaping of the functional space as it is manifested by the occurring constructions. This suggestion must be left open for future research, while we move on to the case of pure presentational.
3.2 Pure presentationals

In a strict sense, a representative utterance is characterized by the specific purpose of drawing the addressee’s attention towards a speech situation or of introducing a participant into it. This presupposes the existence of the entity brought to the attention or introduced into the speech situation and is therefore intrinsically deictic. In the previous section, we have distinguished constructions conveying a (deictic-)existential value (29a) and a (deictic-)locative value (29b), to which we can add constructions conveying a deictic value where the default is the current physical context (29c):

(29) a. (Deictic-)Existential

There are many horses in Canada.

G Es gibt viele Pferde in Kanada.

3N.SG gives many horse.PL in Canada

I Ci sono molti cavalli in Canada.

there are.3PL many horse.PL in Canada

F Il y a beaucoup de chevaux au Canada.

3M.SG there has much of horse.PL at.DEF Canada

b. (Deictic-)Locative

There are many horses in front of our house.

G Da sind viele Pferde vor unserem Haus.

there are.3PL many horse.PL before our house

I Ci sono molti cavalli davanti a casa nostra.

there are.3PL many horse.PL before at house our

F Il y a beaucoup de chevaux devant notre maison.

3M.SG there has much of horse.PL before our house

c. Deictic

There are many horses!

G Da sind viele Pferde!

I Ci sono molti cavalli!

F Il y a beaucoup de chevaux!

The examples (adapted from Czinglar 2002) contrast English, German, Italian and French showing that German stands alone in the distinction between a clearly existential construction containing a predicate for give and the other clearly deictic cases containing BE, while the other three languages consistently employ the EC.

In contrast to this, PCs are exclusively associated with a deictic usage which is not only related to the current physical location, but also portrays the speaker as able to directly point at the referent:
There's / Here's the horses!
G Da / Hier sind die Pferde!
I Ecco i cavalli!
F Voilà les chevaux!

For this situation type, it is convenient to adopt an Idealized Cognitive Model in Lakoff’s (1987: 68) sense which centers on gestural [POINTING] and is crucially anchored at the utterance time (cf. Bergen and Plauché 2005). Notice that in contrast to English and German in which the PCs make use of locative source constructions containing a deictic adverb and can be treated on a par with the deictic constructions seen in (29c), the French and Italian PCs contain the specific presentational particles *ecco* and *voilà* which are characterized by a number of peculiar properties to be discussed in detail here and in the next section. In particular, in the constructions containing these presentational particles – in contrast to the deictic constructions in (29c) – the existence of the (concrete or abstract) entity involved is presupposed only with regard to the specific utterance and cannot be taken as independently established in a given (concrete or abstract) spatial dimension. Accordingly, they can be considered “pure” presentationals. This is shown by the negative reaction to tests relating to tense and polarity, which are otherwise largely compatible with the deictic constructions. As for tense, the French presentational construction containing *voilà* can be employed for referring to past events holding at the utterance time (31a), while this is not true with events holding at a reference time preceding (31b) or following (31c) the utterance time (see Bergen and Plauché 2005: 20):

(31) a. Voilà / Il y a un an qu'on se connaît.
   voilà / 3M.SG there has one year that=IMPRS REFL knows
   ‘(Notice that) it’s now one year that we’ve known each other.’

b. La semaine dernière, ça faisait / il y avait *voilà deux ans
   DEF week last DEM did / 3M.SG there had / voilà two year.PL
   qu'on se connaissait.
   that=IMPRS REFL knew.3SG
   ‘Last week, it was for two years that we had known each other.’

c. Dans un mois, ça fera / il y aura *voilà deux ans
   in one month DEM does.FUT / 3M.SG there has.FUT / voilà two year.PL
   qu'on se connaîtra.
   that=IMPRS REFL knows.FUT
   ‘In a month, it will be two years that we will have known each other.’

As for polarity, the thetic value of the pure presentationals does not allow to negate, i.e. to declare false, what is at the same time established as true for the utterance time, as shown by the Italian *ecco* and the French *voilà* constructions in
contrast to their corresponding English and German expressions (32a), while the locative constructions seen in (29c) are perfectly compatible (32b):

(32) a. *Here's no horses!*
   G *Hier sind keine Pferde!*
   here are.3PL.NEG horse.PL
   I *Non ecco i cavalli!*
   NEG ecco DEF horse.PL
   F *Ne voilà pas de chevaux!*
   NEG voilà NEG of horse.PL

b. *There are no horses!*
   G *Da sind keine Pferde!*
   there are.3PL.NEG horse.PL
   I *Non ci sono i cavalli!*
   NEG there are.3PL.DEF horse.PL
   F *Il n'y a pas de chevaux!*
   3M.SG.NEG = there has NEG of horse.PL

As expected by virtue of their referential value, only indefinite quantifiers are admitted, while the negative ones are excluded, again in neat contrast to English and German:

(33) *Here's nobody / somebody (coming).*
   G *Da ist keiner / jemand (der kommt).*
   there is none / someone REL comes
   I *Ecco *nessuno / qualcuno (che arriva).*
   ecco none / someone REL arrives
   F *Voilà *personne / quelqu'un (qui arrive).*
   voilà none / someone REL arrives

That no principled incompatibility exists between the pure presentationals *ecco* and *voilà* and the negation (as pointed out by one reviewer) is shown by possibility of having contrastive constituent negation because this operation entails an affirmative counterpart (examples adapted from the Internet):

(34) a. *Così nei negozi ecco non uno ma tre souvenir per il Giubileo*
    so in.DEF shop.PL ecco NEG one but three souvenir for DEF jubilee
    ‘Thus in the shops there's not one but three souvenirs for the jubilee;'

b. *Voilà pas un mais deux faucons!*
    voilà NEG one but two hawk.PL
    ‘There's not only one but two hawks!’

While the Italian and French pure presentationals behave alike and stand in contrast to their locative counterparts found in German and English, an inter-
esting case of convergence with English is given by the possibility of using *voilà* with a so-called interrogative negation while this is not possible with Italian *ecco* (cf. Bergen and Plauché 2005):

(35)  

\[\text{a. Isn't there your brother?} \]

\[F \text{ Ne voilà pas ton frère?} \]

\[\text{NEG voilà NEG 2.Poss brother} \]

\[I *\text{Non ecco tuo fratello?} \]

\[\text{NEG ecco 2.Poss brother} \]

In this case, the hypothesis can be laid down that the extension of the model of the impersonals (and of the EC seen in (12a) above) has taken place, as is shown by the usage of an expletive subject *il* with *voilà* (36a) which replicates the behavior of a typical impersonal predicate like *falloir* ‘to be needed’ (36b) (see Bergen and Plauché 2005:10 for the examples):

(36)  

\[\text{a. Ne voilà-t-il pas ton frère / ta sœur?} \]


\‘Isn’t that your brother / sister there?’

\[\text{b. N’y a-t-il / Ne faut-il pas de deux kilos de beurre?} \]


\‘Isn’t there / Aren’t needed two kilograms of butter?’

In other words, the pure presentational *voilà* has undergone a process of entrenchment through the French morphosyntax developing a pattern analogy with the impersonal construction with which it primarily shares the absence of a referential subject argument, normally encoded in French by means of a dummy element (see § 2.1 above). In the next section we will contrast the properties of the two presentational *ecco* and *voilà* showing striking convergences in their behavior.

4. **The curious case of the pure presentational *ecco* and *voilà***

If we investigate in more detail the morphosyntactic properties of the French and Italian pure presentational *voilà* – as well as its proximal cognate *voici* – and *ecco*, a striking number of parallel and actually convergent phenomena are found. First, both of them generally have a purely ostensive value, addressing the attention of the listener by pointing to some entity which is clearly identifiable in the speech context:
Note that while the French presentationals are intrinsically specified for proximity / distance with regard to the speaker’s deictic center or origo and cannot be used in combination with deictic adverbs (37a), for the Italian presentational the proximal – but not the distal – specification is admitted (37b). Such a “gestural” value can also be exploited in an extended way for pragmatic purposes as shown by the following Italian examples drawn from literary works that focus on peculiar articulations of a narrative (38a), or with a textual value to emphasize particular moments of a discourse (38b), or, finally, as a true discourse marker for signaling turn-taking (38c):³

(38) a. E subito **ecc o m’empie la visione / di campagne prostrate nella luce**
   (C. Sbarbaro, *Talora nell’arsura della via*, 3–4)
   ‘And at once I’m filled by a vision of lands bowed in the light’

   ‘Do you know what we can do? – What? – Here’s: I teach you the basics of
   astrology.’

c. **ecc o, cioè: sono molto preoccupato**
   (E. Sanguineti, *Segnalibro*, 327)
   ‘well, that is... I am very worried’

Similar usages also characterize French **voi l à** (and partially **voici**) as respectively shown in the following examples made up by Morin (1985:782):⁴

(39) a. *Et j’ai ouvert la boite, voi l à!*
   ‘And I opened the box, that’s all!’

b. *X: Alors il vient, ce steak?*
   ‘What about my steak?’
   *Y: Voil à, voi l à!*
   ‘Coming, coming!’

---

³ Since the examples in (38) and (39) are rather elaborated and emphasize the discursive nature of these particles, I will not provide the glosses, but only the translation.

⁴ In the rest of the section what is discussed for **voi l à** substantially applies also to **voici** with the additional condition that spatial or conceptual proximity to the speaker has to play a role in the utterance as shown by (39c).
c.  

X: *Bonjour, monsieur! Quel est votre problème?*

‘Good morning, sir. What’s your problem?’

Y:  

*Voici, docteur: j’ai mal au bras gauche.*

‘Well, doctor, my left arm hurts.’

These usages, in which the deictic value of *eccò / voilà* is exploited at a pragmatic-textual level, also share a low degree of syntactic integration. In the rest of this section we will focus on cases where the presentationalis are fully integrated syntactically.

4.1 The syntactic entrenchment of pure presentationalis

The two pure presentationalis *voilà* and *eccò* also display a strikingly similar behavior as cornerstones of a PC which is largely integrated into their respective syntax. In this survey of the syntactic properties of the French and Italian pure presentationalis (cf. for details Morin 1985 on French *voilà*/*voici* and Gaeta 2013b on Italian *eccò*), we will benefit from Morin’s (1985) distinction between the internal syntax and of an external syntax of the constructions containing the presentationalis. The internal syntax of a construction expresses the sentence domain in which the construction instantiates its predicative function with regard to the constituents directly linked with it, e.g., the range of arguments depending on the predicate contained in the construction. The external syntax of the construction basically refers to the compound sentence in which the sentence containing the construction is inserted as a constituent playing a certain syntactic function. Recalling older suggestions from the literature on French and Italian (cf. respectively Morin 1985; Karssenberget al. 2018 and Gaeta 2013b), this perspective allows us to consider the two presentationalis in combination with their dependent syntactic environment. In the next sections, I will investigate this environment of a growing complexity in a parallel way in the two languages.

4.1.1 The internal syntax of pure presentationalis

The pure presentationalis replicate the syntactic behavior of the ECs seen above insofar as they introduce an ENT which can be further modified by a coda consisting of a relative clause (= RelC) (40a) or of a predicative element (= PE) which can consist in an adjective, in a PP, and – for French – in a present participle (40b) (see Morin 1985: 804, Bergen and Plauché 2005: 6):
In contrast to the ECs based respectively on c’è and il y a, however, the pure presentational clearly contain a direct object (= NP_DO) as is shown by the occurrence of the clitic personal pronoun (40c) resembling the parallel cliticization found with the imperative of a transitive verb (40d). In spite of their non-finite form, both voilà and ecco can accordingly be considered as a predicate which is “semantically equivalent to a predicate like ‘see!’” as already suggested by Devoto (1974:74). At least for voilà, this also corresponds to its etymological origin from the verb voir ‘to see’ to which we will come later in §4.2 below. However, voilà has clearly departed from its origin insofar as it has to be preceded by the clitic pronoun in contrast to the normal behavior observed with imperatives which are usually followed by a clitic pronoun (cf. Morin 1985:804 and Bergen and Plauché 2005:6-7 for a detailed discussion). Moreover, in the absence of any marker of finiteness no subject can be inferred to occur similarly to what is likely to be assumed for the substandard English and Italian existential constructions in (20).
above. Thus, *ecco* and *voilà* can be assumed to serve as the PRED of a subjectless PC introducing an ENT as its NP$_{DO}$.

The cliticized object (e.g. in (40c)) may also serve as the first argument or the subject of a dependent transitive verb (41), of an unergative verb (42) or of an unaccusative verb (43) – indicated respectively as $A$, $S_A$ and $S_P$ in the typological literature, while the second argument or the direct object is referred to as $P$ (cf. Comrie 1989:70) (in what follows, the French examples are adapted from the Internet):

ii. \[ecco / voilà A V_{\text{INF}} P\]

(41) *Poi eccolo prendere il suo posto in scena.*

then *ecco* 3m.sg.obl take-INF DEF 3.POSS place on stage

*Puis le voilà prendre sa place sur scène.*

then 3m.sg.obl *voilà* take.INF 3.POSS place on stage

‘Here’s him taking his place on stage’.

iii. \[ecco / voilà S_A V_{\text{INF}}\]

(42) *Eccolo dormire in posizione comoda.*

*ecco* 3m.sg.obl sleep.INF in posture comfortable

‘Here’s him sleeping in a comfortable posture’.

*Me voilà dormir avec un pull. Par précaution.*

1m.sg.obl *voilà* sleep.INF with INDF sweater by precaution

‘Here’s me sleeping with a sweater. As a precaution’.

iv. \[ecco / voilà V_{\text{INF}} S_P\]

(43) *Ecco venire Piero.*

*ecco* come.INF Piero

*Voilà venir Pierre.*

*voilà* come.INF Pierre

‘Here’s Peter coming’.

By contrast, the Italian and French ECs discussed above are clearly incompatible with this syntactic environment (44):

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5. Recall however the parasitic occurrence of a dummy subject in the French interronegations discussed in (35) above.
(44) *Poi c’è lui prendere il suo posto in scena.
then there=IS 3M.SG.OBL take.INF DEF 3.POSS place on stage
*Puis il y a lui prendre sa place sur scène.
then 3M.SG there has 3M.SG.OBL take.INF 3.POSS place on stage
int.: ‘There’s him taking his place on stage’.

In this sense, the presentational constructions clearly depart from their existential correspondents insofar as their internal syntax crucially includes the government of a dependent verb in the infinitive form.

Furthermore, the pure presentational can also govern a past participle which is however highly selective as for the possible verb class. In fact, only the participle of an unaccusative verb including its argument (45a) (cf. Bergen and Plauché 2005:18, Morin 1985:805 for the examples), as well as the (passive) participle of a transitive verb accompanied by its direct object (45b) can serve as the environment of the presentational predicates, while unergative verbs are incompatible (45c):

v. [ecco / voilà V_{PSTPTCP} S_P / P]

(45) a. Eccomi partita per le vacanze.
ecco.1SG.OBL leave.PST.PTCP.F for DEF holidays
Me voilà partie on vacances.
1SG.OBL voilà leave.PST.PTCP.F up holidays
‘Here’s me just gone on holidays’.

b. Ecco rotto il monopolio di cui godevano i membri delle
ecco broken DEF monopoly of REL enjoy.PST.3PL DEF member.PL of. DEF
corporazioni.
corporation.PL
‘Here’s the monopoly disrupted that was enjoyed by the corporation members.’
et voilà cassé le mythe totalitaire qui assurait la
and voilà broken DEF mith totalitarian REL guarantee.COND.3SG DEF
cohésion politique
cohesion politic
‘Here’s the myth disrupted that guaranteed political cohesion.’

c. *Eccola dormita sul sofà.
ecco.3F.SG sleep.PST.PTCP.F ON.DEF couch
*La voilà dormie sur le canapé.
3F.SG voilà sleep.PST.PTCP.F on DEF couch
int. ‘Here’s her who has slept on the couch’.

On this basis, we might suggest that ecco / voilà as presentational predicates can serve as a sort of (ostensive) unaccusative auxiliaries because they display the
typical behavioral properties of unaccusative verbs (see Gaeta 2013b for a detailed discussion based on Italian *ecco*).

Finally, the internal syntax of the pure presentationals also encompasses the possibility of governing a finite sentence introduced by the standard complementizers It. *che* / Fr. *que* ‘that’:

vi.  [**ecco / voilà** Comp S\textsubscript{FIN}]

\[(46)\] a. *Dopo il terzo colpetto **ecco** che il pezzetto di pane*  
\hspace{1cm} after DEF third stroke.DIM *ecco* that DEF bit.DIM of bread  
\hspace{1cm} *viene / *venga espulso*  
\hspace{1cm} ‘After the third stroke, here’s that the bit of bread is expelled’.

b. *Or **voilà** que le vin se met / *mette à manquer.**  
\hspace{1cm} or *voilà* that DEF wine REFL puts / put.SBJV.3SG at lack.INF  
\hspace{1cm} ‘Or here’s that one runs / *run short of wine’.

Given their nature of ostensive predicates, it does not come out as a surprise to observe their factive value insofar as the embedded sentences must be asserted as true, which makes them incompatible with the subjunctive.

### 4.1.2 The external syntax of pure presentationals

The pure presentationals behave alike also in their external syntax. In particular, also in this case the subordinate clauses (= SubC) in which they are usually employed in initial position after a given complementizer (= Comp) are normally asserted and accordingly introduce rhematic content which stands in the foreground and is postponed after the main clause. This is true for declarative (47), relative (48), causal (49) and temporal (50) clauses:

viii.  **S [Comp ecco / voilà ...]\textsubscript{SubC}**

\hspace{1cm} ‘Sheamus says that here’s another week of SDL and here’s another show as children of the New Day’.

b. *Personne ne dit que voilà une situation facile.*  
\hspace{1cm} ‘No one is saying that this is an easy situation’.

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6. Since the examples display a certain syntactic complexity, I will not provide the glosses, but only a literal translation. Moreover, while the Italian examples are adapted from the Internet, the French examples (47b), (48b), (49b) come from Morin (1985:788–789) and the example (50b) is adapted from the Internet.
(48) a. *Noi cominceremo con [la Qabbalah], della quale, *ecco* esposta la suddivisione.*

‘We will start with the Qabbalah, whose partition is presented here.’

b. *Reconnaîtrais-tu [la personne], *dor_t* voici la photo*?

‘Would you recognize the person whose picture this is?’

(49) a. *Ma lo spettacolo è solo cominciato perché *ecco* arrivare il giocatore che tutte le teenager stavano attendendo.*

‘But the show has just begun, because here’s the player coming that all teenagers were waiting for.’

b. *Elle précise que l’intervention du medecin était inhabituelle, car *voilà* un acte qu’il aurait normalement délégué à une infirmière.*

‘She adds that the doctor’s intervention was unusual, as this is an act that he would normally have handed over to a nurse.’

(50) a. *Tutto appare sereno, *quando* *ecco* spuntare la Bavosa Metallaris.*

‘Everything appears calm when here’s the slobbery Metallaris cropping up.’

b. *Quand *voilà* l’heure de copier, tout le monde a son nez rivé sur le papier.*

‘When here’s the time for copying, people are focused on their own paper.’

In contrast to its Italian correspondent *ecco*, the French pure presentational – with its load of theticity – is also found in a negated sentence as in (47b) above or in a conditional clause, i.e. outside of the rhematic part of a sentence (see Morin 1985: 789 for the example):

(51) *Et si *voilà* malade, qu’*est-ce qui va arriver?*

‘And if he gets sick, what is going to happen?’

The crucial point is that even in these cases the part of the sentence in which *voilà* occurs is presented as true independently of the truth of the whole sentence.

4.2 Phylogeny of pure presentationals

One striking property of the Italian presentational *ecco* is its diachronic stability. In fact, *ecco* goes back to Latin *ecce* (through its inflected form *eccum*) which in its turn is taken to go back to a neuter form of the demonstrative pronoun *+ed* followed by a deictic particle *ce* (also found in *ce-do ‘give here!’, hi-ce ‘here’, etc.): *+ed-ce* (Pokorny 2002: 282).7 Since its early beginnings, the thetic value of *ecce* appears to be strictly connected to the initial sentence position and to a low degree of word-level categoriality which is manifested in the lack of morphological traits.

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7 A partially different reconstruction is provided by de Vaan (2008: 185) to which the reader is referred for a more detailed discussion.
Historically, a continuous expansion of the usages of *ecce* can be observed with regard to its internal and external syntax since the earliest attestations until the Late Latin period, subsequently in Old Italian and finally in Modern Italian (cf. Gaeta 2013b and forthcoming for a detailed discussion). In contrast to the remarkable continuity observed in Italian, most Romance languages have lost the followers of *ecce* and of its inflected variant *eccum*. Sparse remnants are marginally witnessed in older stages including Old Portuguese *eis*, Old Provençal *ec* and especially Old French *es* which is also found in combination with verbal arguments in *ez le vos* ‘here’s it to you’ and has also given rise to a plural form: *es-tes le vos* (cf. Diez 1882: 743, Rew §2822). However, it was replaced by *voilà* which results from the grammaticalization of the imperative form of the verb *voir* ‘to see’ followed by a deictic particle: *voi là > voilà*. Note that the order of presentational and clitic is inverted – *le voilà*, recall in contrast (15c) above: *veez me là* – in accordance with the syntactic model found in declarative sentences: *je le connais ‘I know him*, *il me voit ‘he sees me*, etc. (cf. Morin 1985: 804, Bergen and Plauché 2005: 6).

In the light of the clear conservative evolution of Latin *eccu*(*m*) into Italian *ecco*, a historical conundrum arises. Given the neatly different diachronic origin of *ecco* and *voilà*, how can we explain their close behavioral correspondence observed through §4? The first hypothesis that comes to mind is that *voilà* might have filled the functional space previously occupied by *es* in Old French forcing the disappearance of *es* in a kind of push chain or – alternatively – occupying the position left empty by *es* as in a drag chain. However, this implies that *es* in Old French should have behaved similarly to what we can observe for *ecco* in Old Italian, that clearly adumbrates the modern behavior of *ecco*. Accordingly, *es* should have had a much larger distribution than what we have evidence for, unfortunately. This scanty evidence suggests that the development of *voilà* might have been totally independent of *es*, and therefore raises the question of how it concretely evolved. A reasonable explanation might be sought in the salience of the Idealized Cognitive Model hinted at in §3.2 above which thanks to the value of |pointing| as a pure presentational gesture is likely to motivate the rise and the impressive development of *voilà* as a way for encoding such a primary cognitive experience. This explanation is however not entirely satisfactory in the light

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8. This is for instance the line followed by Bergen and Plauché (2005: 36) who investigating English and French existential and presentational constructions conclude that “[d]espite significant overlaps in the properties of their various senses, French and English deictics and existentials differ along one major axis”, namely the collapse of deixis and existence within one single radial category of constructions (*there/here*) in English in contrast to the French distinction into two radial categories of constructions (*il y a* and *voilà/voici*).
of the peculiar behavior of Italian and French in contrast to what we observe for instance in German or English where such pure presentationals are not found to the same extent. As a matter of fact, a connection with their common ancestor \textit{ecce} cannot be denied insofar as its behavior is partially reproduced and further expanded in the sister languages. In other words, one has the feeling that a sort of Sapirian drift should be invoked here which might have guided the development of \textit{ecco} and \textit{voilà}, ultimately driven by their common origin in the Latin mother tongue as is reflected in the ostensive predicate \textit{ecce}. In spite of the vagueness of this idea, such a drift-like diachronic convergence might have played a fundamental role in shaping in an almost identical way the concrete linguistic expression of the Idealized Cognitive Model of [\textsc{pointing}] which is observed in the two sister languages. However, such a speculative view has to be left open for further research which would be surely benefit from empirical evidence collected in other similar cases of long-lasting diachronic evolution.

5. Conclusion

To sum up, the semasiological approach, which neatly distinguishes the concrete semasiological elements occurring in a construction from the corresponding onomasiological contents, allows us to provide a systematic typology of possible ECs with respect to their source constructions. In this light, we have seen that both pure existentials and pure presentationals can be individuated, whose character is directly connected with a locative specification. As for pure existentials, their peculiar features can possibly be related to their source verbs which do not immediately refer to a spatial onomasiological content and only display an existential value. This purely existential value might be a case of persistence after grammaticalization and shows interesting links to well-established semantic distinctions such as the opposition between Individual-Level and Stage-Level predicates. As for pure presentationals, the Idealized Cognitive Model centering on [\textsc{pointing}] provides the cognitive scaffolding on which the presentative value of Italian \textit{ecco} and French \textit{voilà} is based, in which the existence of the (concrete or abstract) entity involved is presupposed only with regard to the specific utterance and cannot be taken as independently established in a given (concrete or abstract) spatial dimension. Further research will tell us whether the striking parallels between the two languages, which have a clear functional and/or etymological relationship with the Latin ancestor \textit{ecce}, results from the force of the basic Cognitive Model centering on [\textsc{pointing}] or rather from a drift-like diachronic convergence.
Acknowledgements

Parts of this paper were presented on several occasions, and in particular at the Workshop on “Indexicality” (54th International Annual Meeting of the Societas Linguistica Europaea, 30.8–3.9.2021) and at the International Workshop on “Existential Constructions in Typological Perspective” (École Normale Supérieure, Paris 18–19.11.2016). I am very grateful to the people present in these occasions, as well as to the editors of the volume and in particular to Karen Lahousse for very insightful comments and remarks. The usual disclaimers apply.

List of glosses

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