SUBJECT CANONICALITY AND DEFINITENESS EFFECTS IN ROMANCE *THERE*-SENTENCES

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Evidence from main and lesser-known Romance languages indicates that the morphosyntactic properties of existential pivots correlate with semantic and pragmatic properties of noun phrases that count toward subjecthood to different degrees crosslinguistically. While fully supporting Beaver and colleagues' (2005) theory of the definiteness effects, the findings of this research also suggest that the effects cannot be fully explained in a nonconstructional way.*

Keywords: *there*-sentences, existential constructions, existential pivot, subject, definiteness, Romance

1. INTRODUCTION. Since Milsark (1974, 1977), the definiteness restrictions on the PIVOT of existential constructions (the DEFINITENESS EFFECTS, henceforth the DE) have received a great deal of attention.[1] The DE have been ascribed to semantic properties of the pivot or its determiner (Enç 1991, Heim 1987, Keenan 1987, 2003, Milsark 1974, 1977), the status of the pivot in the minds of the discourse participants (Ward & Birner 1995), the need for contextualization of pivots that presuppose existence (Abbott 1992, 1993), the organization of topical and focal information in discourse (Borschev & Partee 2002, Francez 2007, Lumsden 1988, Zucchi 1995), or a combination of semantic and pragmatic factors (McNally 1992). While shedding light on the pragmatic and semantic properties of existential constructions, these analyses fail to explain why definite pivots are more readily available in some languages than they are in others (Beaver et al. 2005, Moro 1997, Zamparelli 2000) and why some languages, rather than rejecting definite pivots, treat them differently from indefinite ones (La Fauci & Loporcaro 1993, 1997). Building upon Beaver et al. 2005, this article addresses the issue of crosslinguistic variation that is found in the DE with evidence from Romance.

Beaver and colleagues (2005) argue that the higher a noun-phrase class ranks on the definiteness hierarchy, the more likely it is to be found in subject position (the immediately preverbal position in SVO word order) and to be rejected in existential pivot function. In their account, the crosslinguistic variation in the DE depends on the extent to which the distinctive properties of each noun-phrase class count toward the canonicality of subjecthood across languages. This claim was tested against a number of main and lesser-known Romance languages. It was found that, due to a syntactic constraint on noncontrastive foci, the Romance languages admit definite postcopular noun phrases in *there*-sentences more freely than other languages do. However, the order of propensity for subjecthood (control of number agreement on the verb) of any two classes on the definiteness hierarchy is the same across Romance, a result that strongly

[1] The pivot is the noun phrase that, in English existential constructions, occurs in immediately postcopular position, for example, *a problem* in (i).

  (i) There is a problem

supports Beaver and colleagues' (2005) claim that the definiteness restrictions on the existential pivot correlate with subject canonicality. In-depth investigation of *there*-sentences with definite pivots in Romance suggests that these predicate location (Cornilescu 2009, Cruschina 2012a, Moro 1997, Remberger 2009, Zamparelli 2000) or otherwise express availability for a purpose, in which case they are genuine existentials. A genuine existential structure is a construction with specialized or noncanonical morphosyntactic properties that expresses a proposition about the existence or the presence of someone or something in a context (Francez 2007, McNally 2011:1830). If neither the locative nor the availability construal obtains, the result is ungrammatical. The definiteness effects thus turn out to be restrictions on definites in existential pivot function that cannot be captured without reference to subject canonicality, although they are not entirely explained in a nonconstructional way.

   The article is organized as follows. The range of crosslinguistic variation in the treatment of the immediately postcopular noun phrase in Romance *there*-sentences is first illustrated in §2, and then analyzed in terms of pragmatic and semantic properties that are spelled out by definiteness and associated with subjecthood crosslinguistically (§3).[2] The Beaver et al. 2005 theory of the DE is then discussed, and the rationale of the contrast between the languages that are the focus of that investigation and the Romance languages of the sample used here are explored (§4). A unified account of the Romance DE that takes into consideration data that would at first appear to challenge the proposal presented here is then provided (§5). Finally, predictions on the crosslinguistic variation in DE are spelled out (§6), and conclusions are drawn.

   2. THREE TYPES OF TREATMENT OF THE POSTCOPULAR NOUN PHRASE IN *there*-SENTENCES. We begin with the coding and behavioral properties of the immediately postcopular noun phrase of Romance *there*-sentences. By *there*-sentence is meant a structure that is formed as in 1.

   (1) (adpositional phrase +) (there +) copula + noun phrase (+ adpositional phrase)

Whereas in all of the Romance languages these sentences have a copula (with the exception of some so-called Romance creoles, although their status as Romance languages is debatable), in some such languages they do not exhibit an etymologically locative form comparable to English *there*. Where this form is present, it is referred to here as the PROFORM. The adpositional phrase is an addition, typically a locative phrase, which is known as the CODA. Several different analyses of the coda are found in the literature. The analysis adopted in this study is briefly discussed in §5.1. Although the postcopular noun phrase can be separated from the copula by a restricted class of adverbs, we need not concern ourselves with this point here.

   In addition to occurring in postcopular position, the noun phrase of *there*-sentences may not control agreement on the finite form of the copula, that is, the form that would normally spell out person and number agreement features. Contrast *sono* 'are' in the Italian example in 2 with *a* 'has' in the French example in 3a.[3]

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   [2] The variation in pivot agreement was captured in an optimality-theoretic (OT) framework in more recent work (Bentley et al. 2013), although the data set analyzed in that work is restricted to dialects of Italy. Note that while Bentley et al. 2013 exclusively deals with microvariation in agreement, placing particular emphasis on a class of pivots that is irrelevant to the current discussion (pivots that are split in focus structure), it does not address the issue that is the core of the present article, namely the DE and their crosslinguistic variation.

   [3] At this point, the Romance specialist may wonder why nonfinite agreement is not being taken into account, that is, agreement on the past participle of the perfect. This issue is addressed in n. 12.

(2) Italian

Ci so-no   tanti problemi.[4]

PF be-3PL many problems

'There are many problems.'

(3) French

a. Il y   a   beaucoup de problèmes.

it PF have.3SG many   of problems

'There are many problems.'

b. Il y   a   un problème.

it PF have.3SG a   problem

'There is a problem.'

This work focuses on number agreement, since the third-person copula of structures like 3a,b can be argued to agree with the pivot in person (Manzini & Savoia 2005:34). To be sure, 3b could also be thought to exhibit number agreement of the copula with the noun phrase. One only needs to look at the plural counterpart of 3b (given in 3a), however, to see that there is no number agreement in the third person. In addition, the selection of *avoir* 'have'—that is, a copula that is different from the agreeing copula of other copular constructions (*être* 'be')—supports the hypothesis that agreement with the pivot is lacking. For a typological perspective on the lack of number agreement in existential constructions, see Clark 1978.

Romance *there*-sentences bear witness to three types of treatment of the immediately postcopular noun phrase. In some languages, henceforth referred to as languages of type (i), the immediately postcopular noun phrase fails to control number agreement on the verb, regardless of whether it is definite. This is exemplified here with evidence from French, Brazilian Portuguese, and Soletano (Puglia, Italy).

(4) French
    a. Marie n' e-st   pas seule. Il y a   moi / toi / nous / eux.
        Mary NEG be-3SG NEG alone it PF have.3SG me   you us   them
          'Mary is not alone. There's me/you/us/them.'
    b. Nous ne pouv-ons pas divorcer: il y a   les enfants.
        we   NEG can-1PL NEG divorce it PF have.3SG the children
          'We cannot divorce: there're the children.'
    c. Fai-s   attention ! Il y a   plusieurs pépins dans ce fruit.
        do-IMP.2SG attention it PF have.3SG many   seeds in   this fruit
          'Be careful! There are many seeds in this fruit.'

(5) Brazilian Portuguese
    a. Maria não está   sozinha. Te-m   eu / você / nós / eles.
        Mary NEG stay.3SG alone   have-3SG I   you   we   they
          'Mary is not alone. There's me/you/us/them.'
    b. Não pode-mos nos   divorciar: te-m   nossos filhos.
        NEG can-1PL   REFL divorce   have-3SG our   children
          'We cannot divorce: there're our children.'
    c. Tom-e   cuidado ! Te-m   muitos caroços nessa fruta.
        take-IMP.2SG attention have-3SG many   seeds   in.that fruit
          'Be careful! There are many seeds in that fruit.'

(6) Soletano
    a. La Maria no sta-e   sula. Ave   a mie / a tie / a nui / quiddhi.
        the Mary NEG stay-3SG alone have.3SG to me   to you to us   them
          'Mary is not alone. There's me/you/us/them.'
    b. No poti-mu divorziare: ave   li piccinni.
        NEG can-1PL divorce   have.3SG the children
          'We cannot divorce: there're the children.'
    c. Sta-tte   attenta ca intru a sta frutta ave   tanti samenti.
        stay-REFL careful that inside to this fruit   have.3SG many seeds
          'Be careful! There are many seeds in this fruit.'

Note that the postcopular pronouns bear accusative case in 6a, as testified by the case marker *a*, literally 'to', which marks objects that are high on the definiteness scale, like the first- and second-person pronouns *mie* 'me', *tie* 'you', and *nui* 'us' (Aissen 2003, Bossong 1991, Sornicola 1997, among others). As mentioned briefly above, in French, Brazilian Portuguese, and Soletano, *there*-sentences also exhibit a special copula (see also 3a,b), derived from Latin HABERE 'have' (French and Soletano) and TENERE 'have' (Brazilian Portuguese). This differs from the copulas of locative and attributive predications.[5]

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[5] It could be argued that the *there*-sentences in 4–6 pattern syntactically as biargumental predications, with an overt expletive subject in the case of French, and a silent *pro* in the case of Brazilian Portuguese and Soletano. This is certainly the case with the examples with *ave* in 6a, although the reader should note that these examples could not translate as 'she has me, she has you, etc.', since the verb etymologically meaning 'hold' (< Latin TENERE) is found in the possessive construction of this dialect. The Brazilian Portuguese counterparts of these examples are not as easily amenable to such an analysis. First, the postcopular pronoun *eu* in 5a is unambiguously a nominative pronoun. Second, spoken Brazilian Portuguese increasingly behaves as a non-

(7) French
    a. Les serviettes so-nt   dans le   tiroir.
        the towels   be-3PL in   the drawer
          'The towels are in the drawer.'
    b. Marie n' e-st   pas seule.
        Mary NEG be-3SG NEG alone
          'Mary is not alone.'
(8) Brazilian Portuguese
    a. As toalhas estã-o   na   gaveta.
        the towels stay-3PL in.the drawer
          'The towels are in the drawer.'
    b. Maria não está   sozinha.
        Mary NEG stay.3SG alone
          'Mary is not alone.'
(9) Soletano
    a. Li sciucamani sta-nnu intru lu cassettu.
        the towels   stay-3PL in   the drawer
          'The towels are in the drawer.'
    b. La Maria no   sta-e   sula.
        the Mary NEG stay-3SG alone
          'Mary is not alone.'

Syntactic position, the lack of agreement control, and, in 6a, accusative case differentiate the postcopular noun phrase in *there*-sentences from the subject of French, Brazilian Portuguese, and Soletano.

In other Romance languages, referred to here as languages of type (ii), number agreement is controlled by a subset of immediately postcopular noun phrases of *there*-sentences, but not by the other subset. Although the subset of controllers never includes indefinites to the exclusion of definites, a fact that proves to be important in the analysis, a very wide range of variation was found. In the Nuorese Sardinian dialect of Orgosolo, only first- and second-person pronouns control number agreement (see n. 4 for the meaning of DIALECT in this context). Third-person pronouns and all postcopular lexical noun phrases, regardless of definiteness, fail to control agreement.[6]

(10) Orgosolo
    a. Maria no e-st   sola. Bi so   eo, bi se-s   tue, bi se-mos nois,
        Mary NEG be-3SG alone PF be.1SG I   PF be-2SG you PF be-1PL we
          b' a-t   issos.
          PF have-3SG they
          'Mary is not alone. There's me/you/us/them.'

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null-subject language. Accordingly, at least in the spoken language, the two arguments of a biargumental predication would be overt.

  (i) Maria não está   sozinha. Ela te-m   seus pais.
      Mary NEG be.3SG alone   she have-3SG her parents
        'Mary is not alone. She has her parents.'   (Brazilian Portuguese)

As for French, the expletive pronoun *il* could indeed be argued to be in subject position (but see Culbertson 2010 for an affixal analysis of subject clitics in French), whereas the postcopular pronouns in 4a are disjunctive forms, unspecified for case or grammatical function. Importantly, the biargumental analysis is irrelevant to our current purposes. Rather, what matters is that the postcopular noun phrase does not test out as a subject (see also Lambrecht 2000).

  [6] Some speakers of this dialect freely alternate nonagreeing 'have' and agreeing 'be' in the third-person plural only (*b'at*/*est issu 'there is him' vs. *b'at*/*bi sun'issos* 'there are them').

   b. Non podi-mos isparzire: b' a-t   sos pitzinnos.
      NEG can-1PL   divorce   PF have-3SG the children
         'We cannot divorce: there're the children.'
   c. Ist-a   attentu! In custa frutta b' a-t   medas semenes.
      stay-IMP.2SG careful in this   fruit PF have-3SG many seeds
         'Be careful! There are many seeds in this fruit.'

The same pattern was found in the Italo-Romance dialect of Belluno (Veneto, Italy), which does not exhibit a special copula in *there*-sentences without agreement, but rather the copula 'be' of attributive and locative predications. The reader should note that, in Bellunese, the third-person singular and plural of the copula 'be' are syncretic, as shown by the occurrence of invariant *é* in the locative predication in 12a. The lack of agreement with the third-person plural pronoun *lori* in 11a, and with the postcopular noun phrases in 11b,c, is testified by the selection of the masculine singular subject clitic *l*, which contrasts with plural *i* in 12a. Sentence 12b provides further evidence that *l* is a third-person singular subject clitic.[7]

  (11) Bellunese
   a. Maria no la   é   sola. So-n mi. Te   s-é   ti.
      Mary NEG 3F.SG.SBJ.CL be.3SG alone be-1SG I   2SG.SBJ.CL be-2SG you
        S-ion noi. L'   é   lori.
        be-1PL we 3M.SG.SBJ.CL be.3SG they
       'Mary is not alone. There's me/you/us/them.'
   b. No pod-on divorziar: l'   é   i boce.
      NEG can-1PL divorce   3M.SG.SBJ.CL be.3SG the children
        'We cannot divorce: there're the children.'
   c. Sta   tenta che te sti   frutti qua l'   é   tanti
      stay.IMP.2SG careful that in these fruits here 3M.SG.SBJ.CL be.3SG many
       semi.
       seeds
       'Be careful! There are many seeds in this fruit.'
  (12) a. I   sugaman i   é   te la casèla.
      the towels 3M.PL.SBJ.CL be.3PL in the drawer
       'The towels are in the drawer.'
   b. Incoi Luigi l'   é   mort.
      today Luigi 3M.SG.SBJ.CL be.3SG died
       'Luigi died today.'

In another subgroup of type (ii) languages, number agreement is controlled only by personal pronouns, regardless of person, whereas all postcopular lexical noun phrases fail to control agreement. This type is illustrated with examples from another Italo-Romance dialect, Florentine (Tuscan), and from Catalan. The latter language, unlike the former, has a special nonagreeing copula.

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[7] Subject clitics are only mentioned here because they provide a clue as to whether there is number agreement in the Bellunese constructions illustrated above. The analysis focuses on affixal agreement, because this is the only kind of finite verb agreement that allows broad crosslinguistic comparison in Romance. Subject clitic agreement is found only in a small number of such languages and exhibits variation in accordance with a number of factors that need not be discussed here (Renzi & Vanelli 1983). I should stress, however, that, in this large-scale survey of Italo-Romance dialects (see n. 4), no cases were found in which number agreement is not marked on an overt subject clitic, while being marked by a verbal affix.

(13) Florentine

a. La Maria la   unn' è   sola. Ci so-no io. Tu   ci
the Mary 3F.SG.SBJ.CL NEG be.3SG alone PF be-1SG I   2SG.SBJ.CL PF
     se-i   te. E   ci s-iamo noi. E   ci so-n loro.
     be-2SG you 1PL.SBJ.CL PF be-1PL we 3PL.SBJ.CL PF be-3PL they
   'Mary is not alone. There's me/you/us/them.'

b. Un si   pò   divorziare: c' è   i bambini.
NEG IMPRS.CL can.3SG divorce   PF be.3SG the children
   'We cannot divorce: there're the children.'

c. Sta   attenta che in questa frutta c' è   tanti semi.
stay.IMP.2SG careful that in this   fruit PF be.3SG many seeds
   'Be careful! There are many seeds in this fruit.'

(14) Catalan

a. La Maria no està   sola. Hi só-c   jo. Hi e-ts   tu. Hi so-m
the Mary NEG stay.3SG alone PF be-1SG I   PF be-2SG you PF be-1PL
     nosaltres. Hi só-n   ells.
     we   PF be-3PL they
   'Mary is not alone. There's me/you/us/them.'

b. No ens   pode-m divorciar: hi ha   els nens.
NEG REFL can-1PL divorce   PF have.3SG the children
   'We cannot divorce: there're the children.'

c. Vés   amb compte: en aquesta fruita hi ha   moltes llavors.
go.IMP.2SG with account in this   fruit PF have.3SG many   seeds
   'Be careful! There are many seeds in this fruit.'

In European Spanish, Galician, and European Portuguese, agreement is controlled by all definites, including personal pronouns (15a,b, 16a,b, 17a,b), but not by indefinites (15c, 16c, and 17c). The copula alternates in accordance with agreement.

(15) European Spanish

a. María no está   sola. Est-oy yo. Está-s   tú. Esta-mos nosotros.
Mary NEG stay.3SG alone stay-1SG I   stay-2SG you stay-1PL we
     Está-n   ellos.
     stay-3PL they
   'Mary is not alone. There's me/you/us/them.'

b. No pode-mos divorciar-nos: está-n   los niños.
NEG can-1PL   divorce-REFL stay-3PL the children
   'We cannot divorce: there're the children.'

c. Ha-y   libros (sobre la mesa).[8]
have.3SG-PF books on   the table
   'There are books on the table.'

(16) Galician

a. Mary non está   sóa. Est-ou eu. Está-s   ti. Esta-mos nós.
Mary NEG stay.3SG alone stay-1SG I   stay-2SG you stay-1PL we
     Está-n   eles.
     stay-3PL they
   'Mary is not alone. There's me/you/us/them.'

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[8] Our Spanish informants did not translate the (c) example used elsewhere as a *there*-sentence, but rather as a two-place construction with possessive 'have, hold', as in (i).

(i) Ten   cuidado: esta fruta tien-e   muchas semillas.
   have.IMP.2SG attention this fruit have-3SG many   seeds
    'Be careful! This fruit has many seeds.'   (Spanish)

   b. Non pode-mos divorciar-nos: está-n   os nenos.
       NEG can-1PL   divorce-REFL stay-3PL the children
         'We cannot divorce: there're the children.'

   c. Ten   coidado: nesta froita ha-i   moitas sementes.
       have.IMP.2SG attention in.this fruit have.3SG-PF many   seeds
         'Be careful! There are many seeds in this fruit.'

(17) European Portuguese

   a. A Maria não está   sozinha. Est-ou   eu. Está-s   tu. Esta-mos nós.
       the Mary NEG stay.3SG alone   stay-1SG I   stay-2SG you stay-1PL we
          Estã-o   eles.
          stay-3PL they
         'Mary is not alone. There's me/you/us/them.'

   b. Não nos   pode-mos divorciar: estã-o   as crianças.
       NEG REFL can-1PL   divorce   stay-3PL the children
         'We cannot divorce: there're the children.'

   c. Te-m   cuidado: nesta fruta há   muitas sementes.
       have-IMP.2SG attention in.this fruit have.3SG many   seeds
         'Be careful! There are many seeds in this fruit.'

   Finally, in the Logudorese Sardinian dialect of Bono, agreement is controlled by all definites (18a,b), as well as some classes of indefinites (19a,b) but not others (20a,b).[9] The copula alternates accordingly. The two classes of indefinites in question are later analyzed in terms of specificity.

(18) Bonese

   a. Maria no e-st   sola. Bi so   eo. Bi se-s   tue. Bi se-mus nois.
       Mary NEG be-3SG alone PF be.1SG I   PF be-2SG you PF be-1PL we
          Bi su-n   issos.
          PF be-3PL they
         'Mary is not alone. There's me/you/us/them.'

   b. Non podi-mus bessire fora 'e pare: bi su-n   sos piseddos.
       NEG can-1PL go   out of couple PF be-3PL the children
         'We cannot divorce: there're the children.'

(19) a. Bi su-n   duos de cuddos paccos.
       PF be-3PL two of those   parcels
         'There are two of those parcels.'

   b. B'e-st   un' isveglia   chi   funtziona-t   in custa domo: sa
       PF be-3SG one alarm.clock which function.IND-3SG in this   house: the
          mia.
          mine
         'There is one alarm clock that works in this house: mine.'

(20) a. Non b' a-t   un' isveglia   chi   funtzion-e-t!
       NEG PF have-3SG one alarm.clock which function-SBJV-3SG
         'There is not one single alarm clock that works well!'

   b. Ist-a   attentu chi in custa frutta b' a-t   medas semenes.
       stay-IMP.2SG careful that in this fruit PF have-3SG many seeds
         'Be careful! There are many seeds in this fruit.'

[9] Although the classes of indefinite pivots defined below can control verb agreement in all Bonese varieties, they have only been found to do so consistently in the variety of speakers who are below forty years of age. This has turned out to be the most permissive Bonese variety in the treatment of the postcopular noun phrase of *there*-sentences as a controller.

In a third group of Romance languages (type (iii)), the postcopular noun phrase of *there*-sentences consistently controls number agreement on the copula. No copula alternation was found. This type is exemplified with evidence from Italian, Romanian, and the Italo-Romance dialect of Ferrandina (Basilicata).

(21) Italian
    a. Maria non è   sola. Ci so-no io. Ci se-i   tu. Ci s-iamo noi.
       Mary NEG be.3SG alone PF be-1SG I   PF be-2SG you PF be-1PL we
           Ci so-no loro.
           PF be-3PL they
        'Mary is not alone. There's me/you/us/them.'
    b. Non poss-iamo divorziare: ci so-no i   bambini.
       NEG can-1PL   divorce   PF be-3PL the children
         'We cannot divorce: there're the children.'
    c. Sta   attenta che in questa frutta ci so-no tanti semi.
       stay.IMP.2SG careful that in this   fruit PF be-3PL many seeds
         'Be careful! There are many seeds in this fruit.'

(22) Romanian
    a. Maria nu e   singură. Sunt   eu. E-şti tu. Sunte-m noi. Sunt
       Mary NEG be.3SG alone   be.1SG I   be-2SG you be-1PL   we be.3PL
          ei.
          they
        'Mary is not alone. There's me/you/us/them.'
    b. Nu pute-m să   divorţă-m: sunt   copii-i.
       NEG can-1PL COMP divorce-1PL be.3PL children-the
         'We cannot divorce: there're the children.'
    c. Fii   atentă că în această fructă sunt   multe seminţe.
       be.IMP.2SG careful that in this   fruit be.3PL many seeds
         'Be careful! There are many seeds in this fruit.'

(23) Ferrandinese
    a. Marì nonn' è   sola. Ngə so   jì. Ngə sì   tü. Ngə si-mə nü.
       Mary NEG be.3SG alone PF   be.1SG I   PF be.2SG you PF   be-1PL we
          Ngə so   chiddə.
          PF   be.3PL they
        'Mary is not alone. There's me/you/us/them.'
    b. Non puti-mə separà: ngə so   lə criatürə.
       NEG can-1PL divorce PF   be.3PL the children
         'We cannot divorce: there're the children.'
    c. Sta-ttə   attìəndə ca nda chesta frutta ngə so   tanda
       stay.IMP.2SG-REFL careful that in   this   fruit PF be.3PL many
          səmmìəntə.
          seeds
         'Be careful! There are many seeds in this fruit.'

To recapitulate, in this section the coding and behavior of the immediately postcopular noun phrase of Romance *there*-sentences were discussed, and three types of behavior were identified. In type (i) languages, the postcopular noun phrase of *there*-sentences consistently fails to control finite number agreement on the copula, whereas in type (iii) it consistently behaves as a controller. By contrast, type (ii) languages are characterized by the differential treatment of the immediately postcopular noun phrase of *there*-sentences.

This variation is analyzed in the next section in terms of pragmatic and semantic properties that are spelled out by definiteness.

3. SUBJECT CANONICALITY AND THE VARIATION IN ROMANCE. The evidence discussed in the previous section indicates that although the Romance languages treat the noun phrase of *there*-sentences alike, insofar as they place it in postcopular position, they vary with respect to the behavior of this noun phrase as a controller of finite number agreement. Three principal types of behavior have been identified, which are characterized by invariant lack of control, differential control, and consistent control. All of the languages under examination exhibit definite and indefinite postcopular noun phrases in *there*-sentences. Crucially, the control of agreement appears to be sensitive to the definiteness of the noun phrase, since no languages have been found in which indefinites are controllers but definites are not. In fact, an implicational pattern arises from the variation illustrated in §2. This is illustrated in Table 1.

DEFINITENESS OF NP	LANGUAGE-SPECIFIC FINITE NUMBER-CONTROL THRESHOLD
	← French, Italo-Romance (Soletano), Brazilian Portuguese
1ST- AND 2ND-PERSON PRONOUNS	
	← Sardinian (Orgosolo), Italo-Romance (Bellunese)
3RD-PERSON PRONOUNS	
	← Italo-Romance (Florentine), Catalan
DEFINITES	
	← European Spanish, Galician, European Portuguese
DEFINITES + SOME INDEFINITES	
	← Sardinian (Bonese)
INDEFINITES	
	← Italo-Romance (Italian), Romanian, Italo-Romance (Ferrandinese)

TABLE 1. Control of finite number agreement by the postcopular noun phrase in Romance *there*-sentences (version 1).

The left-hand column of Table 1 lists the classes of noun phrases that have been found in the immediately postcopular position of Romance *there*-sentences. If a class controls finite number agreement in a language, so do all of the classes that outrank it, that is, the higher classes in the same column. The right-hand column lists the language-specific thresholds in finite number agreement in Romance *there*-sentences. Since the threshold of French, Brazilian Portuguese, and Soletano ranks above all of the noun-phrase classes listed in the left-hand column, this threshold marks invariant lack of finite number control in *there*-sentences. By contrast, since it is outranked by the whole list on the left-hand side, the threshold of Italian, Romanian, and Ferrandinese marks consistent control in *there*-sentences. In between, we find the languages that show differential behavior of the postcopular noun phrase in *there*-sentences.

Given that the noun-phrase classes listed in the left-hand column of Table 1 are definiteness classes, our results suggest that finite number agreement in Romance *there*-sentences is sensitive to a definiteness hierarchy of the kind that has received much attention both in the typological and in the theoretical literature (Aissen 2003:445, Comrie 1981, Croft 1990:128–32, Kiparsky 2008, Lyons 1999:213–15, Silverstein 1976, Wierzbicka 1981). Significantly, definiteness has been shown to be a condition on agreement in non-Romance languages (Corbett 2006:26, 200–201, and references therein). The question that should be raised at this point is why, in Romance *there*-sentences, finite number agreement exhibits structured variation in accordance with definiteness. To an-

swer this question, we must explore the pragmatic and semantic underpinnings of the Romance definiteness hierarchy, on the one hand, and the role of finite number agreement in the Romance clause, on the other.

In the theoretical literature there is no agreement on the pragmatic and semantic bases of the definiteness hierarchy. Although this is often discussed in terms of animacy, it has also been argued that topic-worthiness and individuation are more likely foundations of the definiteness rankings (Kiparsky 2008, Wierzbicka 1981, and, for some problems with this approach, see Comrie 1981:197–99). I claim that the postverbal noun phrases of Romance *there*-sentences are all low in topic-worthiness—in fact, they are encoded as foci—but can be characterized by various degrees of individuation. I distinguish between topic-worthiness, or the potentiality that a given argument be realized as a topic, and topicality, or topical encoding proper, following Lambrecht (1994: 52, 131) for the definition of topic and focus. The proposition is construed and understood as being about the topic and increases the addressee's knowledge of it. Topics are thus part of the presupposition, or the set of propositions that are evoked by the lexicon and the grammar of a sentence, and that the hearer of an utterance is expected to know or to be able to take for granted. Foci are part not of the presupposition, but rather of the assertion, or the new proposition that the hearer is expected to know as a result of hearing the sentence being uttered.

The claim that the postcopular noun phrases of Romance *there*-sentences are foci is based on the kinds of context in which *there*-sentences occur felicitously. *There*-sentences are not construed and understood as being about the argument spelled out by the postcopular noun phrase. Rather, they introduce this argument anew in a discourse domain that has an explicit or understood topic.[10] Consider the examples in 24–26 and 27–29.

(24) Soletano
    a. Cce ave   sotta lu iettu?
        what have.3SG under the bed
         'What is there under the bed?'
    b. Ave   le pantofole sotta lu iettu.
        have.3SG the slippers   under the bed
         lit. 'There are the slippers under the bed.'
    c. #Le pantofole sta-nnu sotta lu iettu.
        the slippers   stay-3PL under the bed
         'The slippers are under the bed.'
(25) Bellunese
    a. E-lo   che sot a-l   let?
        be.3SG-3M.SG.SBJ.CL what under to-the bed
         'What is there under the bed?'
    b. L'   é   le pantofole, sot a-l   let.
        3M.SG.SBJ.CL be.3SG the slippers   under to-the bed
         lit. 'There are the slippers under the bed.'

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[10] With specific respect to existential sentences, it has been argued that these are characterized by an abstract topical argument that provides the spatio-temporal coordinates of the predication. This argument differs from the postcopular pivot (Francez 2007, Parry 2010, Tortora 1997).

    c. #Le pantofole le   é   sot a-l   let.
        the slippers 3F.PL.SBJ.CL be.3PL under to-the bed
          'The slippers are under the bed.'

(26) Ferrandinese

    a. Cə ng' é   sottə u lìəttə?
        what PF be.3SG under the bed
          'What is there under the bed?'

    b. Ngə so   lə zùəcchələ, sottə u lìəttə.
        PF be.3PL the slippers   under the bed
          lit. 'There are the slippers under the bed.'

    c. #Lə zùəcchələ so   sottə u lìəttə.
        the slippers be.3PL under the bed
          'The slippers are under the bed.'

(27) Soletano

    a. Addhu sta-nnu li sciucamani?
        where stay-3PL the towels
          'Where are the towels?'

    b. #Ave   li sciucamani intru lu cassettu.
        have.3SG the towels   in   the drawer
          lit. 'There are the towels in the drawer.'

    c. Li sciucamani sta-nnu intru lu cassettu.
        the towels   stay-3PL in   the drawer
          'The towels are in the drawer.'

(28) Bellunese

    a. E-li   andé i sugaman?
        be.3PL-3M.PL.SBJ.CL where the towels
          'Where are the towels?'

    b. #L'   é   i   sugaman te la casèla.
        3M.SG.SBJ.CL be.3SG the towels   in the bed
          lit. 'There are the towels in the drawer.'

    c. I   sugaman i   é   te la casèla.
        the towels   3M.PL.SBJ.CL be.3PL in the drawer
          'The towels are in the drawer.'

(29) Ferrandinese

    a. Andò so   i   tuagghiə?
        where be.3PL the towels
          'Where are the towels?'

    b. #Ngə so   i tuagghiə ndo u   traturə.
        PF be.3PL the towels in   the drawer
          lit. 'There are the towels in the drawer.'

    c. I   tuagghiə so   ando u   traturə.
        the towels be.3PL in   the drawer
          'The towels are in the drawer.'

The *there*-sentences above are felicitous in the context of the question in 24a, 25a, and 26a, but not in the context of 27a, 28a, or 29a (the symbol # is used for grammatical examples that are infelicitous in the given context). This is because the immediately postcopular noun phrase introduces a new argument into the discourse, in the context of the presupposition provided by 24a, 25a, and 26a (something is under the bed). In 27a, 28a, and 29a, the argument spelled out by the noun phrase is part of the presupposition (the

towels are somewhere). Accordingly, the appropriate reply to these questions is the (c) sentence, where the towel is encoded as a topic, and not the (b) sentence, where it is encoded as part of the assertion.

The notion of individuation is analyzed in terms of activation, accessibility (Chafe 1987, Van Valin & LaPolla 1997:200–201), and specificity (Enç 1991). First- and second-person pronouns refer to speech act participants (SAP), which are by definition accessible, that is, situationally available (Chafe 1987, Van Valin & LaPolla 1997:200–201), and uniquely individuated within the discourse context (Benveniste 1966:230), as well as topic-worthy (Givón 1976, Wierzbicka 1981:64). Third-person pronouns, while not referring to participants in the discourse context, nonetheless refer to active or accessible arguments. These are arguments that are not mentioned by name or by a lexical noun phrase, since they are in the current focus of attention of the discourse participants, or they are textually, situationally, or inferentially available (Chafe 1987, Van Valin & LaPolla 1997:200–201). Both personal pronouns and definite noun phrases (proper names and nouns with a definite determiner) are subclasses of specifics (Enç 1991:9), in that they encode arguments that are linked to a previously established individual or set by a relation of identity. Thus, in 'there're the children' (see 4b–6b, 10b, 11b, 13b–18b, 21b–23b), the postcopular noun phrase can only refer to a set of children that is identical to an established set in the given discourse context. It would not make sense to reply to this statement with the question 'Which children?', unless either of the interlocutors was not being perspicuous (in the sense of the Gricean maxim of manner), or, alternatively, a genuine misunderstanding had occurred. Consider the contrast between 30 and 31.

    (30) Italian
        A: Non poss-iamo divorziare: ci so-no i   bambini.
           NEG can-1PL   divorce   PF be-3PL the children
             'We cannot divorce: there're the children.'
        B: #Quali bambini?
          which children
            'Which children?'
    (31) A: Non poss-iamo guardare questo film: ci so-no dei   bambini.
          NEG can-1PL   watch   this   film PF be-3PL some children
            'We cannot watch this film: there are some children.'
        B: Quali bambini?
          which children
            'Which children?'

While the question 'Which children?' is infelicitous in the context of the statement in 30, because the definiteness of the postcopular noun phrase suggests that the set of children is established in discourse, the same question makes sense in the context of the statement in 31, because the postcopular noun phrase is not specific. A definite noun phrase that is specific in the sense of identity is, therefore, one that can be individuated because of its relation of identity with an established individual or set of individuals.

A different subclass of specifics is characterized by partitivity, or a relation of inclusion in an established set (Enç 1991:10). This subclass of specifics appears to be exemplified by the Bonese *there*-sentences in 19a,b, which are repeated here for convenience.

    (19) Bonese
        a. Bi su-n   duos de cuddos paccos.
          PF be-3PL two of those   parcels
            'There are two of those parcels.'

    b. B'e-st   un' isveglia   chi   funtziona-t   in custa domo: sa
      PF be-3SG one alarm.clock which function.IND-3SG in this   house: the
        mia.
        mine
      'There is one alarm clock that works in this house: mine.'

Since the noun phrase *cuddos paccos* 'those parcels' in 19a is definite, it must be identical to an established set. Accordingly, *duos de cuddos paccos* 'two of those parcels' is a subset of an established set. As for 19b, it contrasts with 20a in the selection of the copula: 'be' is selected in the former example, and 'have' in the latter; 20a is repeated here.

(20) a. Non b' a-t   un' isveglia   chi   funtzion-e-t!
      NEG PF have-3SG one alarm.clock which function-SBJV-3SG
        'There is not one single alarm clock that works well!'   (Bonese)

The morphosyntactic contrast between 'have', which is the invariant copula in Bonese, and 'be', the agreeing copula, is paired with the alternation of the subjunctive and the indicative in the relative clause that is subordinate to the noun phrase *un'isveglia* 'an alarm clock'. The structure with 'have' (20a) negates the existence of a referent for the pivot, whereas the one with 'be' (19b) individuates the only alarm clock that works among the alarm clocks in the given context. For the Romance subjunctive as a marker of lack of specificity, see Lambrecht 1994:81.

    On the basis of the above evidence, I propose that the Bonese indefinite noun phrases that control finite number agreement in *there*-sentences encode specifics, in the sense of inclusion. The notion of specificity as inclusion encompasses D(iscourse)-linked WH-phrases of the form *which N* (Enç 1991:7, Pesetsky 1987). Significantly, these contrast with non-D-linked WH-phrases in Bonese existentials in that they alone control verb agreement.

(32) Bonese
    a. Cales alunnos bi su-n?
      which pupils   PF be-3PL
        'Which of the pupils are there?'
    b. Cantos   alunnos b' a-t?
      how.many pupils   PF have-3SG
        'How many pupils are there?'

My native informants noted that the speaker of the utterance in 32a may be referring to a subset of the addressee's pupils, whereas the speaker of the utterance in 32b is referring to any pupils. The evidence in 32a,b supports the hypothesis that inclusion in an established set in the domain of discourse is the reason for the treatment of indefinites as controllers in Bonese *there*-sentences.

    The analysis of the noun-phrase classes in the left-hand column in Table 1 thus leads us to the conclusion that finite number agreement exhibits variation in accordance with the degree of topic-worthiness and the specificity of the potential controller. If the potential controller is insufficiently topic-worthy, it is encoded in focus, as testified by *there*-sentences. In French, Brazilian Portuguese, and Soletano, the focal noun phrase of *there*-sentences is not a controller, regardless of its other properties. Other Romance languages are less restrictive, allowing control by some or all classes of postcopular noun phrases in *there*-sentences. This variation is shown in Table 2.

    With respect to type (i) languages, it could be argued that the consistent failure of the postcopular noun phrase to control finite number agreement is due not to the language-specific intolerance of nontopical controllers, but rather to a structural constraint against

SEMANTIC PROPERTIES OF NP	LANGUAGE-SPECIFIC FINITE NUMBER-CONTROL THRESHOLD
TOPICAL	
	← French, Italo-Romance (Soletano), Brazilian Portuguese
SPECIFIC (SPEECH ACT PARTICIPANT)	
	← Sardinian (Orgosolo), Italo-Romance (Bellunese)
SPECIFIC (ACTIVE OR ACCESSIBLE)	
	← Italo-Romance (Florentine), Catalan
SPECIFIC (IDENTITY)	
	← European Spanish, Galician, European Portuguese
SPECIFIC (INCLUSION)	
	← Sardinian (Bonese)
NONSPECIFIC	
	← Italo-Romance (Italian), Romanian, Italo-Romance (Ferrandinese)

TABLE 2. Control of finite number agreement by the postcopular noun phrase in Romance *there*-sentences (version 2).

controllers that are not in subject position. This analysis would support Samek-Lodovici's (2002) account of agreement as a property of syntactic projections. In order to test this hypothesis, I searched for topicalized controllers in the languages under investigation, starting from the assumption that topicalized noun phrases do not occur in subject position, but rather in a higher, or more external, syntactic position (Rizzi 1997).[11] No conclusive evidence was found in French, since a subject clitic occurs obligatorily in immediately preverbal position in structures with a topicalized controller.

(33) French
    Les serviettes, elles so-nt   dans le   tiroir.
    the towels   they be-3PL in   the drawer
      'The towels, they are in the drawer.'

It could be argued that affixal agreement on the copula in 33 is controlled by the subject clitic in subject position. However, if this form is itself an agreement affix (Culbertson 2010), then the evidence in 33 supports our hypothesis of a strict correlation between finite agreement and topicality, as opposed to a correlation between finite agreement and a syntactic position.

   I was unable to elicit helpful examples in Soletano, since a topical potential controller may figure in subject position or be silent, but it is not normally topicalized (see 34b) (although the controller of copula agreement in 34a could be said to be topicalized, since there is a reading of this sentence that involves a prosodic break between the controller and the copula). Similar considerations are in order for Brazilian Portuguese (see 35b).

(34) Soletano
    a. Li sciucamani sta-nnu   intra lu cassettu?
       the towels   stay-3PL inside the drawer
         'Are the towels in the drawer?'
    b. Sì, (li   sciucamani) sta-nnu ddrai.
       yes the towels   stay-3PL there
         'Yes, they are there.'

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[11] To keep the discussion as compatible as possible with different theoretical approaches, a detailed syntactic treatment of the positions of subjects and topics in Romance is not provided here. Suffice it to say that, in Chomskyan frameworks, topicalized noun phrases are assumed to occupy dedicated portions of the left periphery of the CP, whereas the default position of the subject is lower, in SpecIP. The theoretical framework from which the notion of subject used here is derived assumes that, by default, SVO languages place topicalized noun phrases in the left-detached position, outside the clause, and subjects in the core-internal, immediately prenuclear position within the clause (Van Valin 2005:3–8, Van Valin & LaPolla 1997:17–40).

(35) Brazilian Portuguese
    a. Onde estã-o   as toalhas?
       where stay-3PL the towels
         'Where are the towels?'
    b. As toalhas estã-o   na   gaveta.
       the towels stay-3PL in.the drawer
         'The towels are in the drawer.'

Note, however, that evidence from type (ii) languages challenges the claim of a strict association between agreement and subject position. In particular, some type (ii) languages do not treat the noun phrase of *there*-sentences as a controller (see 36a) unless it is topicalized (see 36b). An example from Genoese (Ligurian) is provided here.

(36) Genoese   (Bentley et al. 2013)
    a. Su questu nu gh è   dubi.
       on this   NEG PF be.3SG doubts
         'On this there are no doubts.'
    b. Invece sì, di   dubi ghe su-n.
       instead yes some doubts PF be-3PL
         'Actually, yes, some doubts are there.'

Assuming as we do that topicalized noun phrases do not occur in subject position (Rizzi 1997), the controller *di dubi* 'some doubts' in 36b is not in subject position, a result that challenges the hypothesis of agreement as a property of a syntactic configuration.

In the absence of any definitive counterevidence, we can thus initially assume that the lack of finite number agreement in *there*-sentences of type (i) is due to the low topic-worthiness of the pivot, hence its encoding in focus. We return to this point in §5, where it is claimed that this assumption is to be revised in the case of Soletano, though not in the case of French and Brazilian Portuguese.

I argued above that, in order to understand why finite number agreement exhibits structured variation in accordance with definiteness in Romance *there*-sentences, one should not only explore the pragmatic and semantic underpinnings of the definiteness hierarchy in Romance, but also establish the role of finite number agreement in the Romance clause. In order to do so, I adopt Van Valin and LaPolla's (1997:242–309) and Van Valin's (2005:94–101) theory of grammatical relations, in particular, their assumption that grammatical relations are construction-specific, or phenomenon-specific, neutralizations of semantic contrasts for syntactic purposes (see also Farrell 2005:148–53). Put differently (and abstracting away from some of the attested range of crosslinguistic variation), the marking of grammatical relations within and beyond the clause involves the indistinct treatment of the semantic macroroles actor and undergoer (Van Valin & LaPolla 1997:139–58; see Dowty's 1991 notions of proto-agent and proto-patient). In intransitive clauses, which have only one macrorole, the semantic difference between actor and undergoer is neutralized, in that the only macrorole of the clause can behave as the head of a relative clause, the controller or the missing argument in reflexivization, equi-NP deletion, and cross-clausal coordination, as well as the controller of head- or dependent-marking verb agreement. In transitive clauses, which have two macroroles, most languages exhibit a preference in the selection of the actor or the undergoer as the controller or the missing argument of said constructions. The unmarked choice in accusative alignment is the actor. However, since grammatical relations are defined in construction-specific terms, the theory easily captures the case of languages that select the actor in some constructions or phenomena, for example verb agreement, and the under-

goer in others, for example as the missing argument in cross-clause coordination. This happens in languages with split—accusative and ergative—alignment. In Van Valin and LaPolla's (1997) and Van Valin's (2005) approach, a language can only be said to have a subject if all of the major constructions of that language exhibit the same preference of macrorole. This tends to be the actor across languages.[12]

In the Romance languages, finite number agreement classifies as a grammatical relation, in that it neutralizes the contrast between actor (proto-agent) and undergoer (proto-patient), privileging the actor as the default controller. The neutralization of the actor (A) vs. undergoer (U) contrast is seen in intransitive constructions (37a–c, 38a–c, 39a–c), where the macrorole, whether actor or undergoer, is pressed into service as the controller of agreement, whereas other thematic roles (for example, the locative role in 37d, 38d, 39d) cannot be controllers. The privileging of the actor is testified by transitive constructions, where the actor is the controller (37e, 38e, 39e).

(37) French
    a.   Les garçons (A) ont   chant-é.
          the boys   have.3PL sing-PTCP
          'The boys sang.'
    b.   Les garçons (U) so-nt   mor-t-s.
          the boys   be-3PL die-PTCP-M.PL
          'The boys died.'
    c.   Les garçons (A) so-nt   part-i-s   à l' école (locative).
          the boys   be-3PL go-PTCP-M.PL to the school
          'The boys went to school.'
    d. *À l' école (locative) e-st   part-i   les garçons (A).
          to the school   be-3SG go-PTCP the boys
    e.   Les garçons (A) ont   mang-é le gâteau (U).
          the boys   have.3PL eat-PTCP the cake
          'The boys ate the cake.'

(38) Galician
    a.   Os rapaces (A) cantar-on.
          the boys   sing.PST-3PL
          'The boys sang.'
    b.   Os rapaces (U) morrer-on.
          the boys   die.PST-3PL
          'The boys died.'
    c.   Os rapaces (A) for-on   á escola (locative).
          the boys   be.PST-3PL to school
          'The boys went to school.'
    d. *Á escola (locative) fo-i   os rapaces (A).
          to school   be.PST-3SG the boys

---

[12] Why the analysis here does not deal with nonfinite, or past participle, agreement or with morphological case can now be explained: neither of these properties classifies as a diagnostic of subjecthood, in the sense adopted here. In particular, past participle agreement is controlled only by a subset of subjects (marked actors and undergoers (see Bentley 2006) or underlying objects (see La Fauci 1984, Loporcaro 1998)). As for morphological case, following Van Valin (2005:108), it is taken here to align with semantic macroroles (actor or undergoer) rather than to involve the neutralization of semantic roles for grammatical purposes. The analysis proposed in this article does not rely on any particular theory of case, however, and could be combined with an account that does consider morphological case to be a subjecthood diagnostic.

   e.   Os rapaces (A) comer-on   o   pastel (U).
      the boys   eat.PST-3PL the cake
       'The boys ate the cake.'

(39) Italian
   a.   I   ragazzi (A) ha-nno   canta-to.
      the boys   have-3PL sing-PTCP
       'The boys sang.'
   b.   I   ragazzi (U) so-no   mor-t-i.
      the boys   be-3PL die-PTCP-M.PL
       'The boys died.'
   c.   I   ragazzi (A) so-no   anda-t-i   a   scuola (locative).
      the boys   be-3PL go-PTCP-M.PL to school
       'The boys went to school.'
   d. *A scuola (locative) è   anda-to i   ragazzi (A).
      to school   be.3SG go-PTCP the boys
   e.   I   ragazzi (A) ha-nno   mangia-to la   torta (U).
      the boys   have-3PL eat-PTCP   the cake
       'The boys ate the cake.'

With respect to the passive counterparts of 37e, 38e, and 39e, where the controller of number agreement is the undergoer, it should be noted that the selection of this controller is flagged by a periphrastic construction and the encoding of the actor in a 'by'-phrase.

(40) Le gâteau (U) a   ét-é   mang-é   par les garçons (A).
    the cake.M.SG have.3SG be-PTCP eat.PTCP-M.SG by the boys
     'The cake was eaten by the boys.'   (French)

(41) O   pastel (U) fo-i   comi-d-o   po-los rapaces (A).
    the cake.M.SG be.PST-3SG eat-PTCP-M.SG by-the boys
     'The cake was eaten by the boys.'   (Galician)

(42) La torta (U) venn-e   mangia-t-a   da-i   ragazzi (A).
    the cake.F.SG come.PST-3SG eat-PTCP-F.SG by-the boys
     'The cake was eaten by the boys.'   (Italian)

Assuming that the less canonical of two alternative associations of structural and substantive values is generally morphosyntactically more complex than the more canonical one (Aissen 1999, Silverstein 1976), the passive testifies to the noncanonicality of the undergoer as subject choice. Incidentally, the contemporary spoken varieties of a few Italo-Romance dialects have no passive-voice construction (Bentley et al. 2013), a fact that further supports the view that the actor is the default choice in the assignment of grammatical relations in these languages.

The neutralization of the contrast between actor and undergoer, and the privileging of the actor, is also witnessed in Romance by the assignment of the immediately preverbal position in the clause, which can be taken by the actor or undergoer of intransitive clauses (37a–c, 38a–c, 39a–c, 40–42) and by the actor, but not the undergoer, of transitive clauses (37e–39e). It would be beyond the scope of this work to discuss the discourse-related variations of the basic SVO word order illustrated above (see Cruschina 2012b for a comparative account). The point that should be stressed here is that the Romance languages assign grammatical relations consistently in accordance with the grammatical principle that privileges the actor (the accusative alignment principle). Therefore, they can be claimed to have a subject in Van Valin and LaPolla's (1997) and Van Valin's (2005) sense. Significantly, the noun phrase of Romance *there*-sentences figures in a position that is not

the default position of the subject (see n. 11). The property that is responsible for the placement of the noun phrase of *there*-sentences in postcopular position is their low topic-worthiness (see 24–29). In fact, in the Romance languages, the immediately preverbal position is not normally available to foci (for some seeming exceptions, which however do not occupy the subject position, see Benincà & Poletto 2004 and Cruschina 2012b), and the noun phrase of *there*-sentences figures in the default position of noncontrastive foci.[13]

Having broken down the notion of subject into construction-specific grammatical relations, we can now argue that the Romance languages consistently deny subject behavior to the noun phrase of *there*-sentences by placing it in a position that is not the canonical position of the subject, because of its low topic-worthiness. They vary, however, in the assignment of another grammatical relation to this noun phrase, namely the control of finite number agreement. Table 2 suggests that this variation depends on the language-specific sensitivity to the topicality and specificity of the controller.

4. THE ROMANCE DATA VIS-À-VIS THE BEAVER ET AL. HYPOTHESIS. The Romance evidence on the correlation between the pragmatic and semantic properties spelled out by definiteness, on the one hand, and subjecthood, on the other, supports Beaver and colleagues' (2005; henceforth Beaver et al.) theory of the DE of existential sentences. Developing a proposal originally formulated by Mikkelsen (2002), Beaver et al. claim that existential sentences are in competition with copular constructions with a canonical subject. The noun phrases that have properties associated with subjecthood occur in subject position in canonical copular constructions, whereas the noun phrases that do not exhibit these properties take the postcopular position of existential sentences. Since the properties associated with subjecthood tend to be spelled out by definiteness, a patent result of said competition is the limited occurrence of definite noun phrases in the postcopular position of existential constructions. This, in Beaver et al.'s view, is the essence of the definiteness restrictions of existential sentences, which are thus understood as the manifestation of deviations from canonical subjecthood.

Importantly, Beaver et al.'s account of the DE takes the definiteness restrictions on the pivot to be gradient, and aims to determine the probability of occurrence of different noun-phrase classes in subject position and existential pivot function across languages. On the basis of the results of a quantitative corpus analysis of English and Dutch, as well as further evidence from Hebrew and Russian, Beaver et al. establish the following hierarchy of noun-phrase classes, whereby each class is less likely to be found in pivot function than those to its right.

(43) local pronouns > nonlocal pronouns > proportional NPs > definite descriptions > prototypical indefinites > downward monotone NPs

Local pronouns are first- and second-person pronouns, whereas nonlocal pronouns are third-person ones. In some corpora, proportional noun phrases (for example, *the majority of NP*) rank as high as personal pronouns, the ranking illustrated in 43 pertaining to the analysis of the largest English corpus. By prototypical indefinites, Beaver et al. mean whichever indefinites are most common in a language. Finally, a clear case of low-ranking downward monotone noun-phrase class is provided by *at most N* and its equivalents in other languages.

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[13] Following Molnár (2002), I distinguish between noncontrastive focus, which simply expresses new information, and contrastive focus, which operates on predicted or stated alternatives. The syntax of contrastive focus differs in Romance from that of noncontrastive focus, the latter being relevant to our analysis.

Beaver et al.'s theory of the DE predicts that local pronouns are the noun-phrase class that is the most likely to be found in subject position in canonical copular constructions, and the least likely to be found in pivot function in existential sentences. At the other extreme, downward monotone noun phrases are the least likely candidate for subjecthood and the most likely one for pivothood. The crosslinguistic variation in DE will depend on the extent to which the distinctive properties of each class count toward the canonicality of subjects across languages. The order of propensity for subjecthood of any two of the noun-phrase classes shown in 43, however, is predicted to be the same across languages (and, within each language, across genres). This is a strong, falsifiable prediction, which should be tested crosslinguistically.

The Romance evidence discussed in §§2 and 3 supports Beaver et al.'s theory of the DE in two ways. First, the hierarchy of noun-phrase classes that emerges from this evidence (see the left-hand column in Table 2) is in agreement with the hierarchy in 43. Thus, local pronouns outrank nonlocal pronouns, definites outrank indefinites, and so forth. Although we do not have comprehensive results on proportional noun phrases in Romance, to the extent that we do have evidence, these tend to pattern with definites, in accordance with Beaver et al.'s results. In fact, proportional noun phrases appear to be sufficiently topic-worthy to be preferred as topics.

(44) French
    a. *?Il y a   la plupart de-s étudiants dans la classe.
        it PF have.3SG the majority of-the students in   the classroom
        lit. 'There is the majority of the students in the classroom.'
    b.   La plupart de-s étudiants so-nt dans la classe.
        the majority of-the students be-3PL in   the class
        'The majority of the students are in the classroom.'

(45) Galician
    a. *?Ha-i   a maioría de alumnos na   clase.
        have.3SG-PF the majority of students in.the class
        lit. 'There is the majority of the students in the classroom.'
    b.   A maioría d-os alumnos está-n na   clase.
        the majority of-the students stay-3PL in.the class
        'The majority of the students are in the classroom.'

The NP type *at most N* also appeared to behave as predicted by Beaver et al. Second, the implicational pattern emerging from our investigation (see the left-hand column of Table 2) correlates with subjecthood, as predicted by Beaver et al.

Our study, however, indicates that a distinction must be drawn between postcopular noun phrases of *there*-sentences that are bad subjects, and postcopular noun phrases that are not subjects at all, in that they do not bear any grammatical relation (more precisely, any clause-internal grammatical relation).[14] The difference between bad subjects

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[14] While claiming that the postcopular argument of French impersonal constructions is not a subject, Legendre (1990:118) points out that this argument controls the omitted argument of clauses with *en* 'by' plus gerund, as well as *sans* 'without', *avant* 'before', and *après* 'after' plus infinitive.

(i) Il a   saut-é   beaucoup d' otages par le fenêtre en hurl-ant.
    it have.3SG jump-PTCP many   of hostages by the window in scream-GER
      'There jumped many hostages through the window while screaming.'   (French)

The data brought to light by Legendre indicate that there is a sense in which the pivot behaves as a grammatical relation, that is, as the controller of the missing argument of the following nonfinite clause, while failing to classify as the subject of its own clause. For the lack of subject properties of nontopical noun phrases, see also Creissels's (2010) analysis of French.

and nonsubjects in Romance *there*-sentences is encoded by the control of verb agreement or lack thereof. Type (i) Romance languages consistently fail to encode the immediately postcopular noun phrase of *there*-sentences as a controller of finite number agreement. By contrast, type (ii) Romance languages treat the postcopular noun phrases differentially, in accordance with the semantic properties listed in the left-hand column of Table 2. Finally, type (iii) languages are the most permissive ones, treating all postcopular noun phrases of *there*-sentences as controllers, and hence as subjects, albeit noncanonical ones.

The question that arises from the comparative analysis of Beaver et al.'s findings and ours is why in English the classes that are high on the hierarchy in 43 are infrequent in existential pivot function, whereas in Romance the high classes in the left-hand column of Table 2 are found in *there*-sentences, although they may be distinguished from the low ones in terms of their coding and behavioral properties. To address this issue we first consider the discourse structure of *there*-sentences, and then move on to their semantics in §4.1.

Section 3 provided evidence that indicates that Romance *there*-sentences are not construed and understood as being about the postcopular noun phrase, but rather they introduce its referent into discourse (see 24–29). The postcopular noun phrase of Romance *there*-sentences is thus focal. Whereas a great many Romance languages are pragmatically rigid, associating focus primarily with the postverbal portion of the clause, English is pragmatically flexible, and can mark narrow focus in situ with main accent (Ladd 1996:231–36, 251–53, Vallduví 1991, Van Valin 1999). English can thus leave in precopular position focal arguments that are otherwise good candidates for subjecthood, and mark focus intonationally. Compare the Italian data in 46a–c and their English counterparts in 47a–c (focus is indicated with small caps).

(46) Italian
    a. Chi c' è   in cucina?
        who PF be.3SG in kitchen
          'Who is in the kitchen?'
    b. C' è   TUA SORELLA (in cucina).
        PF be.3SG your sister   in kitchen
          lit. 'There is your sister in the kitchen.'
    c. TUA SORELLA (#è   in cucina).
        your sister   be.3SG in kitchen
          'Your sister is in the kitchen.'
(47) a.   Who is in the kitchen?
     b.   *?There is YOUR SISTER in the kitchen.
     c.   YOUR SISTER (is in the kitchen).

Of the two options in 46b,c, 46c is clearly infelicitous, if formulated as a whole clause. In fact, this structure would only be felicitous in a context that allows a contrastive interpretation (see n. 13).[15] Contrastingly, 47c is the only grammatical option in English.

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[15] Observe that contrastive preverbal focus does not take the same position as the subject in Italian or Romance (Cruschina 2012b). The occurrence of foci in a position other than the canonical subject position is explained by Grimshaw and Samek-Lodovici (1998) by postulating that the constraint ALIGNFOCUS dominates SUBJECT. The former constraint is violated by nonaligned foci (foci that are not in focus position), whereas the latter is violated when there is no subject in the canonical subject position. This is an OT formalization of the insight that Italian is syntactically flexible and pragmatically rigid. The account of the DE given here is compatible with this formal account of focus, although, crucially, position is taken to be but one of the clause-internal and construction-specific diagnostics of subjecthood.

Observe in passing that the formal difference between the Italian and English questions in 46a and 47a—the former, unlike the latter, exhibiting a proform—is not indicative of a difference in meaning. Rather, the Italian proform is an obligatory locative clitic that cataphorically refers to the locative prepositional phrase. We return to this point in §4.1. Now observe the data in 48 and 49.

(48) Italian
    a. Che cosa c' è   su-l lungomare?
       what thing PF be.3SG on-the promenade
         'What is there on the promenade?'
    b. Ci so-no ALCUNI NEGOZI su-l   lungomare.
       PF be-3PL some   shops on-the promenade
         'There are some shops on the promenade.'
    c. ALCUNI NEGOZI (*?so-no su-l   lungomare).
       some   shops   be-3PL on-the promenade
         lit. 'Some shops are on the promenade.'
(49) a. What is there on the promenade?
    b. There are A COUPLE OF SHOPS on the promenade.
    c. A COUPLE OF SHOPS (*?are on the promenade).

In this case, there is no contrast between Italian and English, which suggests that focal noun phrases that are also bad subjects in that they have properties spelled out by indefiniteness are encoded in pivot function in English.

    On the basis of the evidence in 46–49 the contrast between English and Romance can begin to be explained. Due to a syntactic constraint that is contravened by noncontrastive foci in preverbal position, the occurrence of definite noun phrases in Romance *there*-sentences is less restricted than it is in English. As was shown in §§2 and 3, however, the Romance languages differ in their tolerance of bad subjects. The variation found in Romance fully supports Beaver et al.'s prediction about the crosslinguistic variation in the DE, in that no evidence was found against the assumption that the order of propensity for subjecthood of any two of the noun-phrase classes shown in the left-hand column in Table 2 is the same across languages.

    Before moving on to the next section, we note that, in a limited number of Romance languages, noncontrastive preverbal focus is admitted, albeit not freely. One such language is Sicilian, which therefore licenses precopular noun phrases in *there*-sentences. This is illustrated with evidence from the dialect of Buscemi (south-eastern Sicily).

(50) Buscemi
    a. Cu c' è   na   cucina?
       who PF be.3SG in.the kitchen
         'Who is in the kitchen?'
    b. C' è   TÒ SUORU na   cucina.
       PF be.3SG your sister in.the kitchen
         lit. 'There is your sister in the kitchen.'
    c. TÒ SUORU c' è   na   cucina.
       your sister PF be.3SG in.the kitchen
         lit. 'Your sister there is in the kitchen.'

    In this context, we do not dwell on the restrictions on preverbal focus in Sicilian (for these restrictions, see Bentley et al. 2012, Cruschina 2012b, and references therein), but rather simply note that the Sicilian structure in 50c tends to exhibit definite noun phrases in narrow focus. This detail proves to be relevant to the distinction between existential and locative *there*-sentences, which is dealt with in the next section. Once this matter has

been dealt with, a full answer to the question raised above about the difference between English-type languages, on the one hand, and the Romance languages, on the other, can be provided.

4.1. LOCATIVE AND EXISTENTIAL *there*-SENTENCES IN ROMANCE. It is now time to ascertain whether, in Romance, the constraint on foci that was claimed above to be responsible for the occurrence of definite noun phrases in the postcopular position of *there*-sentences invalidates the pragmatic and semantic restrictions on the licensing of existential pivots. Recall from §1 that these restrictions are the principal focus of the existing research on the DE.

Assuming with McNally (2011:1830) that existential constructions are noncanonical constructions that express propositions about the existence or the presence of someone or something (see §1), it would seem that Romance *there*-sentences can be existential constructions, but can also be construed in other ways. It has long been noted that *there*-sentences with a definite postcopular noun phrase tend to receive a locative interpretation (see Cruschina 2012a, Moro 1997:154, Zamparelli 2000:68–69 for Italian, Remberger 2009 for Sardinian). The findings presented here offer some support to the hypothesis that Romance *there*-sentences should in some cases be analyzed as locative predications, or sentences that predicate location rather than existence. To begin with, as predicted by Zamparelli (2000:68–69) and Zucchi (1995) with respect to Italian, when the postcopular noun phrase is a definite description of an entity that does not normally have physical realization, the *there*-sentence can be marginal.

(51) Il y a   (*?les) deux solutions à ce   problème.
     it PF have.3SG the two solutions to this problem
        lit. 'There are the two solutions to this problem.'   (French)

(52) Hi ha   (*?les) dues solucions a aquest problema.
     PF have.3SG the two solutions to this   problem
        lit. 'There are the two solutions to this problem.'   (Catalan)

(53) Ci so-no (*?le) due soluzioni di questa equazione.
     PF be-3PL   the two solutions of this   equation
        lit. 'There are the two solutions to this equation.'   (Italian)

Interestingly, some of our informants noted that the examples above become acceptable if a locative adverb or phrase is added, and thus a physical realization is provided explicitly for these definite descriptions.

(54) Aquí hi ha   les dues solucions a aquest problema.
     here PF have.3SG the two solutions to this   problem
        'Here you find the two solutions to this problem.'   (Catalan)

(55) Qui ci so-no le due soluzioni di questa equazione.
     here PF be-3PL the two solutions of this   equation
        'Here you find the two solutions to this equation.'   (Italian)

Second, *there*-sentences with a definite postcopular noun phrase may resist negation, in which case the *there*-sentence in question must be turned into a copular predication with a precopular noun phrase in order to be negated.

(56) French
     a. On   peut s'   amuser   ce soir: *?il n' y a   pas
        IMPRS can REFL have.fun this evening it NEG PF have.3SG NEG
           tes   parents.
           your parents
             lit. 'We can have fun tonight: there are not your parents.'

    b. On   peut s' amuser ce soir: tes parents ne so-nt pas là.
       IMPRS can REFL have.fun this evening your parents NEG be-3PL NEG there
         'We can have fun tonight: your parents are not there.'

(57) Catalan
    a. Ens ho pode-m passar bé aquesta nit: *?no hi ha   els
       REFL CL can-1PL spend well this   night NEG PF have.3SG the
         teus pares.
         your parents
        lit. 'We can have fun tonight: there are not your parents.'
    b. Ens ho pode-m passar bé aquesta nit: els teus pares no hi
       REFL CL can-1PL spend well this   night the your parents NEG PF
         só-n / no só-n aquí.
         be-3PL NEG be-3PL here
        'We can have fun tonight: your parents are not here.'

In the existential constructions in 56a and 57a, the pivot takes narrow scope, and hence it is within the scope of negation (Heim 1987; see also Veselinova's (2013) claim that existential negation marks absolute negation, or absence of existence, and is incompatible with a construal whereby an individual or entity is not at some location, but rather at another location). Since it makes no sense to negate the existence of an individual or an entity whose existence is established in discourse, as is the case with all specifics (Enç 1991), these sentences are not sensible sentences in the respective languages. By contrast, the copular constructions in 56b and 57b are grammatical because negation has scope over a locative predicate, while being outscoped by the definite subject.

Importantly, the equivalents of both members of the pairs in 56a,b and 57a,b are grammatical in Italian, a language of type (iii), and Galician, a language of type (ii) that treats nontopical specifics as controllers (see Table 2).

(58) Italian
    a. Ci   poss-iamo divertire stasera: i   tuoi genitori non ci so-no.
       REFL can-1PL   have.fun tonight the your parents NEG PF be-3PL
         'We can have fun tonight: your parents are not (t)here.'
    b. Ci   poss-iamo divertire stasera: non ci so-no i   tuoi genitori.
       REFL can-1PL   have.fun tonight NEG PF be-3PL the your parents
         'We can have fun tonight: your parents are not (t)here.'

(59) Galician
    a. Pode-mos pasa-lo ben esta noite: teus pais   non está-n.
       can-1PL   spend-CL well this night your parents NEG stay-3PL
         'We can have fun tonight: your parents are not (t)here.'
    b. Pode-mos pasa-lo ben esta noite: non está-n teus pais.
       can-1PL   spend-CL well this night NEG stay-3PL your parents
         'We can have fun tonight: your parents are not (t)here.'

The contrast between the data in 56 and 57, on the one hand, and 58 and 59, on the other, suggests that the postcopular noun phrase of 58b and 59b outscopes negation, on a par with the precopular noun phrase of 58a and 59a. This construal is possible because the pivot controls copula agreement in both cases. Thus, the (a) sentences and the (b) ones only differ in word order: the (a) sentences are read as locative constructions in which the predicate is in focus, whereas the (b) ones are read as locative constructions in which it is the subject that is in focus. This hypothesis is supported by the European Portuguese counterpart of 58b and 59b, where we find a locative adverb.

(60) Pode-mos divertir-mo-nos   esta noite: não estã-o   cá os teus pais.
    can-1PL   have.fun-1PL-REFL this night NEG stay-3PL here the your parents
      'We can have fun tonight: your parents are not here.'   (European Portuguese)

Supporting evidence for our analysis of the facts illustrated in 56–60 is also provided by English. As pointed out by Lyons (1999:236–37), this language distinguishes between unstressed pleonastic *there* (which can be reduced phonologically, with British English pronounciations like [ðəz] for *there is*, and [ðərə] for *there are*), and stressed locative *there* [ˈðɛə]. In accordance with this contrast, the existential structure with unstressed *there* is ungrammatical (61a), whereas the locative one with stressed *there* is not (61b).

(61) a. We can have fun tonight: *there aren't your parents.
     b. We can have fun tonight: your parents are not (t)here.

The contrast between negated specialized existential constructions with an invariant copula, as in 56a and 57a, and negated *there*-sentences with an agreeing copula thus indicates that the latter type of construction does not necessarily predicate existence, but can also predicate location, as in 58b, 59b, and 60.

Further evidence in support of the locative analysis of *there*-sentences with a definite postcopular noun phrase was first uncovered by Leonetti (2008), who noted that the coda of Catalan and Italian *there*-sentences is normally separated by a prosodic break from an immediately postcopular definite noun phrase. This break is indicated with a comma in the Italian example in 62b.

(62) Italian
    a. Chi c' è   in cucina?
        who PF be.3SG in kitchen
          'Who is in the kitchen?'
    b. C' è   il   gatto, in cucina.
        PF be.3SG the cat   in kitchen
          'The cat is in the kitchen.'

Arguing that these structures are inverse locatives, or sentences with a topical locative predicate and a focal argument, Cruschina (2012a) has proposed that prosody works in parallel with syntax in these sentences. The topical locative predicate is dislocated, and cataphorically—or anaphorically—resumed by the locative pronominal clitic *ci*. Evidence in support of this analysis is provided by the ungrammaticality of inverse locatives with a focal locative WH-word, which Cruschina (2012a) ascribes to the incompatibility of resumptive clitics with foci (Rizzi 1997:289).

(63) DOVE (*c') è   il   gatto?
    where   PF be.3SG the cat
      'Where is there the cat?'   (Italian)

We can now reconsider the Sicilian *there*-sentences with precopular noun phrases (e.g. 50c) and, in the light of Cruschina's (2012a) analysis of Italian, clarify why these structures tend to exhibit definite noun phrases in narrow focus. These are inverse locative sentences with a focal definite argument and a topical locative predicate. This counterevidence to the postcopular occurrence of foci in Romance is thus constrained to locative *there*-sentences, and does not concern existential constructions proper.

Let us return to the main focus of this article, and ascertain whether definite postcopular noun phrases occur at all in genuine Romance existentials. I believe that this is indeed the case, since definite noun phrases can be found in *there*-sentences with no

prosodic break between the postcopular noun phrase and the locative coda. A relevant example from Italian is provided here.

(64) Italian
    a. Che succed-e?
       what happen-3sG
         'What is happening?'
    b. C' è   IL GATTO IN CUCINA. Fa-llo   uscire.
       PF be.3sG the cat   in kitchen make.IMP.2sG-CL go.out
         'The cat is in the kitchen. Show him out.'

In 64b, the proform cannot be claimed to be a resumptive locative pronoun, since the locative phrase is focal (contrast this example with 63). To be sure, this *there*-sentence could be claimed to be a presentational sentence, rather than an existential construction: that is, a structure formed by a noun phrase and a predicative coda, which introduces a new proposition into discourse (Cruschina 2012a; see also Leonetti's 2008 notion of eventive construction).[16] While presentational-*there* sentences constitute a construction of Modern Italian and other Romance languages, we note that the distinction between existentials and *there*-presentationals is subtle. More to the point, some *there*-sentences with definite postcopular noun phrases do not lend themselves either to the locative analysis or to the presentational one.

(65) Italian
    a. Se vuo-i   controllare quell'informazione, c' è   Wikipedia.
       if want-2sG check   that information PF be.3sG Wikipedia
         'If you want to check that piece of information, you can use Wikipedia.'
    b. Ogniqualvolta tu vogli-a   uscire, c' è   la mia macchina.
       whenever   you want-SBJV.SG go.out PF be.3sG the my car
         'Whenever you want to go out, you can take my car.'

The structure illustrated in 65a is a speech act conditional construction (Sweetser 1990:113–25), in which the topical protasis provides the background context to justify the assertion made in the apodosis. The apodosis predicates the existence or availability of something that is relevant for a purpose that has been established in discourse with the protasis. The apodosis is thus an existential sentence, which is only grammatical and sensible in the given context, as is generally the case with existential sentences with definite pivots (Abbott 1993:42). Similarly, in 65b, the adverbial clause provides the discourse context in which the existence of the entity denoted by the pivot (my car) is relevant. Whereas in 65a the entity whose existence is being predicated cannot be claimed to have physical realization in space, the same cannot be said of the entity whose existence is predicated in 65b. In this case, however, the adverbial clause provides an atemporal and nonphysical context for the existential predication. Neither structure thus lends itself to a locative analysis. Extending Cruschina's (2012a) proposal for the existential proform to existentials with definite pivots, we thus assume that in these examples the proform is a proargument spelling out the abstract argument that provides the spatio-temporal coordinates of the existential predication (Francez 2007, Parry 2010, Tortora 1997).

    Further evidence that definites do occur in availability existentials is provided by European Portuguese, where locative *there*-sentences exhibit a locative adverb, whereas

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[16] In this account, the proform is a lexicalized discourse marker (Cruschina 2012a).

availability existentials do not. Observe the contrast between 66a (see also 60) and 66b (see also 17a,b).

(66) European Portuguese
    a. Olha!   Está   ali   a   Maria.
        look.IMP.2SG stay.3SG there the Mary
          'Look! There is Mary.'
    b. A Maria não está   sozinha. Estã-o a Susana e   a Licinia.
        the Mary NEG stay.3SG alone   stay-3PL the Susana and the Licinia
          'Mary is not alone. There're Susana and Licinia.'

Observe that the definite noun phrases that figure in postcopular position in 65a,b and 66a,b (see also 17a,b and their counterparts in the other Romance languages discussed in §2) are true specifics, rather than being nonspecifics encoded by definite noun phrases. Some evidence is given below that suggests that nonspecifics encoded by definite noun phrases require the nonagreeing copula in the Romance languages that do not treat nonspecifics as controllers (see Perlmutter 1970 for the semantics of relativized definites).

(67) a. Ha-y   la cerveza que me   gust-a.
        have.3SG-PF the beer   that 1SG.CL please-3SG
          'There's the beer I like.'   (European Spanish)
    b. Ha-i   a talla que us-o.
        have.3SG-PF the size that use-1SG
          'There's the size I use.'   (Galician)
    c. Há   aquela cerveja de que   eu gost-o.
        have.3SG that   beer   of which I   enjoy-1SG
          'There's the beer I like.'   (European Portuguese)

Whether definite noun phrases occur less frequently than indefinite ones in Romance existentials can only be established with quantitative corpus analysis of the kind carried out by Beaver and colleagues (2005). The native-speaker informants of some Romance languages of type (i) and (ii) spontaneously provided us with biargumental alternatives for availability existentials (although similar alternatives were also provided for existentials with indefinite pivots; see n. 8).

(68) French
    a. Nous ne pouv-ons pas divorcer: il y a   les enfants.
        we   NEG can-1PL   NEG divorce   it PF have.3SG the children
          'We cannot divorce: there're the children.'
    b. Nous ne pouv-ons pas divorcer: nous av-ons   les enfants.
        we   NEG can-1PL   NEG divorce   we   have-1PL the children
          'We cannot divorce: we have the children.'

(69) Brazilian Portuguese
    a. Não pode-mos nos divorciar: te-m   nossos filhos.
        NEG can-1PL   REFL divorce   have-3SG our   children
          'We cannot divorce: there're our children.'
    b. Não pode-mos nos divorciar: te-mos   as crianças.
        NEG can-1PL   REFL divorce   have-1PL the children
          'We cannot divorce: we have the children.'

(70) Catalan
    a. No   pode-m divorciar-nos: hi ha   els nens.
        NEG can-1PL divorce-REFL PF have.3SG the children
          'We cannot divorce: there're the children.'

      b. No ens pode-m divorciar: teni-m   els nens.
         NEG REFL can-1PL divorce   have-1PL the children
           'We cannot divorce: we have the children.'

(71) European Spanish
      a. No nos pode-mos divorciar: está-n   los niños.
         NEG REFL can-1PL   divorce   stay-3PL the children
           'We cannot divorce: there're the children.'
      b. No nos pode-mos divorciar: tene-mos hijos.
         NEG REFL can-1PL   divorce   have-1PL children
           'We cannot divorce: we have children.'

    Crucially, the specialized existential constructions without agreement are licensed on the basis of the language-specific sensitivity to the topic-worthiness and the specificity of the controller of finite verb agreement. Thus, they are licensed in French, Brazilian Portuguese, and Catalan (68a, 69a, 70a), but not in European Spanish, Galician, and European Portuguese (72–74), in accordance with the language-specific thresholds shown in the right-hand column of Table 2.

(72) No nos pode-mos divorciar: *ha-y /   está-n   los niños.
     NEG REFL can-1PL   divorce   have.3SG-PF stay-3PL the children
       'We cannot divorce: there're the children.'   (European Spanish)
(73) Non pode-mos divorciar-nos: *ha-i /   está-n   os nenos.
     NEG can-1PL   divorce-REFL   have.3SG-PF stay-3PL the children
       'We cannot divorce: there're the children.'   (Galician)
(74) Não nos   pode-mos divorciar: *há /   estã-o   as crianças.
     NEG REFL can-1PL   divorce   have.3SG stay-3PL the children
       'We cannot divorce: there're the children.'   (European Portuguese)

    If specifics are licensed in specialized existential constructions without agreement, on the basis of the language-specific finite number control threshold, and an availability reading is not obtained, the result is ungrammaticality (e.g. 56a and 57a). The couterparts of these structures are grammatical in languages where they can be construed as locative predications (e.g. 58b, 59b, 60).

    4.2. INTERIM CONCLUSION. A full answer can now be provided to the question that arises from the comparative analysis of the Beaver et al. 2005 findings and those presented here: why, in some languages, for example English, the classes that are high on the definiteness hierarchy are less frequent in existential pivot function than the low classes, whereas in Romance *there*-sentences these classes are readily available, although they may be distinguished from the low ones in terms of their coding and behavioral properties. I have argued that definite postcopular noun phrases occur in Romance *there*-sentences because of a syntactic constraint on noncontrastive foci. These do not figure in the canonical subject position, but rather postverbally. I have further claimed that Romance *there*-sentences with definite postcopular noun phrases can receive nonexistential construals (locative ones), unless they express the presence or availability of an entity or an individual for a purpose that is, or is being, established in discourse.

    5. A UNIFIED ACCOUNT OF ROMANCE DE. Beaver and colleagues' (2005) account defines the DE in terms of the probability of occurrence of a hierarchy of noun-phrase classes in subject or pivot position. The crosslinguistic variation in DE is argued to depend on the extent to which the properties that define the relevant noun-phrase classes count toward the canonicality of subjects across languages. Crucially, the order of

propensity for subjecthood of any two of these classes is predicted to be the same across languages. Our investigation of Romance has led us to the conclusion that a crosslinguistically adequate account of the DE should be formulated in terms of the probability of subject treatment of a definiteness hierarchy of noun-phrase classes, without constraining the notion of subjecthood to the syntactic position of the subject. Inasfar as the pragmatic and semantic underpinnings of definiteness are concerned, the subject treatment of the immediately postcopular noun phrase of Romance *there*-sentences was argued to depend on the language-specific sensitivity to the following properties.

(75) topic-worthiness > specificity (SAP) > specificity (activation or accessibility) > specificity (identity) > specificity (inclusion) > lack of specificity

We found that the postcopular noun phrase fails to behave as a subject in terms of the clause-internal subjecthood diagnostics in French because it is not a topic (see n. 14). The same hypothesis was advanced with respect to Brazilian Portuguese and Soletano. A second type of language treats the postcopular noun phrases of *there*-sentences differentially, setting the finite number agreement threshold at various points on the scale in 75. A third group of languages invariably treats postcopular noun phrases of *there*-sentences as subjects in terms of the control of agreement, while denying the canonical subject position to these noun phrases. Crucially, no evidence was found challenging the prediction that the order of propensity for subjecthood of any two of the noun-phrase classes in 75 is the same across Romance. To give but one example, no languages were identified in which specifics in the sense of inclusion are finite number agreement controllers, while specifics in the sense of identity are not.

It was further claimed that the contrast in existential pivot function between languages like English, where definite noun phrases are less frequent than indefinite ones, and the Romance languages, where definite noun phrases are readily attested in the immediately postcopular position of *there*-sentences, depends, on the one hand, on the pragmatic rigidity of Romance, which generally encodes noncontrastive focus in postverbal position, and, on the other hand, on the possibility of interpretation of Romance *there*-sentences with definite postcopular noun phrases as constructions that predicate location. This possibility arises in Romance *there*-sentences that are not specialized in the sense of the lack of number agreement on the verb. Despite the possibility of locative construal, we found that definite pivots do occur in genuine existential constructions in Romance. These express the existence or availability of a specific individual or entity for an established purpose in discourse. When the locative and availability construals do not arise, for example in negated specialized existential constructions, the result is not acceptable to the native speaker. I suggested that the reason for this judgment is that it makes no sense to negate the existence of an individual or an entity whose existence is established in discourse, as is the case with all specifics (Enç 1991).

In order to account fully for the Romance DE a final step must now be taken. Looking beyond *there*-sentences, we must seek to ascertain whether the hierarchy in 75 correlates with subjecthood in general, rather than solely in copular constructions.

5.1. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE AND POTENTIAL CHALLENGES. Beaver and colleagues' (2005) theory of the DE is based on the assumption that canonical copular constructions are in competition with existential sentences. However, they explicitly argue against a constructional analysis of the DE, and claim that the DE should be derived from general markedness constraints on grammatical subjects. It is thus predictable, or at least conceivable, that the language-specific sensitivity to canonical subjecthood is manifested not just in copular constructions, but rather across constructions. This is exactly what one finds in a number of Romance languages, where the postcopular argument of *there*-

sentences has the same coding and behavioral properties as the immediately postverbal argument of other intransitive clauses. Examples from French, Brazilian Portuguese, Bonese Sardinian, and Italian are provided here. With respect to the French and Brazilian Portuguese examples, it should be stressed that the given examples are from the colloquial registers.

(76) French
    a. ??Ici il pass-e   les avions   à longueur de journées.
        here it pass-3SG the airplanes at length   of days
        'The airplanes pass overhead here all day long.'
    b.   Ici il pass-e   des avions   à longueur de journées.
        here it pass-3SG some airplanes at length   of days
        'There are airplanes passing overhead here all day long.'

(77) Brazilian Portuguese
    a. Às duas cheg-ou   os pais   de-les e   as crianças
       at two arrive-PST.3SG the parents of-them and the children
         acalmaram.
         calmed.down
      'At two o'clock, their parents came back, and the children calmed
        down.'
    b. De repente, entr-ou   dois ladrões pe-la janela.
      of sudden enter-PST.3SG two burglars by-the window
      'Suddenly, two burglars came in by the window.'

(78) Bonese
    a. Bi su-n benni-d-a-s   sas piseddas.
      PF be-3PL come-PTCP-F-PL the girls
      'The girls have arrived.'
    b. B' a-t   benni-du   piseddas.
      PF have-3SG come-PTCP girls
      'There have arrived some girls.'

(79) Italian
    a. So-no entra-t-i   i ragazzi.
      be-3PL enter-PTCP-M.PL the children
      'The boys came in.'
    b. So-no entra-t-i   dei ragazzi.
      be-3PL enter-PTCP-M.PL some children
      'There came in some boys.'

The sentences in 76–79 would occur in discourse as out-of-the-blue utterances. Finite number agreement is missing in 76 and 77, since nontopical subjects are not tolerated in French and Brazilian Portuguese. To be sure, native speakers reported a difference in the acceptability of definite and indefinite postverbal noun phrases in the French constructions, the first type being problematic, unlike the latter. Significantly, though, agreement with definite postverbal subjects was not found in French noncopular constructions. The alternation between agreement and lack thereof in Bonese is also expected, since it correlates with specificity (cf. 18–20). Finally, in Italian we find that the postverbal subject controls finite number agreement on the verb. The evidence in 76–79 therefore strengthens the view of the DE as the result of general constraints on grammatical subjects, indicating that the same DE are found across constructions regardless of whether these are copular.

Whereas a great many Romance languages offer overwhelming support for the analysis of the DE proposed above, in that they exhibit comparable word order and finite number agreement patterns across intransitive constructions, other Romance languages do not. In these languages, the view of the DE that was developed above would at first seem to be supported solely by copular constructions. Observe the following evidence from the dialect of Soleto and from Galician.

(80) Soletano
    Mannaggia! Me cader-a   li piatti.
    damn   CL fall.PST-3PL the plates
      'Damn! I dropped the plates.'

(81) Galician
    a. Raios. Caér-on-me   os / algúns pratos.
       damn fall.PST-3PL-CL the some plates
         'Damn! I dropped the/some plates.'
    b. Chegar-on   os / algúns paquetes.
       arrive.PST-3PL the some parcels
         'The parcels arrived/There arrived some parcels.'

Recall from 6a–c that agreement is never controlled by the postcopular noun phrase of *there*-sentences in Soletano. It was hypothesized above that this is explained by the lack of topicality of this noun phrase in discourse structure, which is sufficient to rule it out as a controller. The example in 80, which is to be understood as an out-of-the-blue utterance, challenges this claim, since the lack of topicality of the postverbal argument does not prevent agreement in this case. As for Galician, I pointed out above that only definite postverbal noun phrases control agreement in the *there*-sentences of this language (see 16a–c) and thus hypothesized that the lack of agreement is due to the lack of topicality and specificity. Again, this hypothesis is challenged by the evidence in 81, since in this case there is clearly no agreement alternation in accordance with specificity.

In the light of contrasts between *there*-sentences and other intransitive structures like those found in Soletano and Galician, one might want to suggest that the DE are to be analyzed in constructional terms. In the spirit of Mikkelsen (2002) and Beaver and colleagues (2005), however, I make a different proposal. In particular, I start from Francez's (2007, 2010) observation that, crosslinguistically, the pivot is the only essential component of existential sentences, proforms and copulas being found in some languages but not others. I further rely on Francez's (2007, 2010) claim that the existential coda (i.e. the adjectival or prepositional phrase that can—but need not—accompany the pivot; see the adpositional phrase in 1) is not a predicate, but rather a modifier. If Francez is right on both accounts, there is no predicate imposing any lexical entailments on the existential pivot. The lack of lexical entailments makes the pivot a noncanonical argument, a property that the pivot does not share with the focal argument of other intransitive constructions.[17] The lexical entailments imposed by predicates on their arguments play a crucial role in the assignment of semantic roles and macroroles and, ultimately, in the syntactic realization of arguments (Dowty 1991, Van Valin & LaPolla 1997:113–58). The lack of lexical entailments is thus a property that makes the existential pivot a 'bad' argument, and hence a bad candidate for the grammatical relation subject. The contrast in finite number agreement between existentials and other intransitive

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[17] In fact, existential pivots have been claimed to be predicates themselves (Cornilescu 2009, Francez 2007, La Fauci & Loporcaro 1993, 1997, among others).

constructions in Soletano and Galician can thus be attributed to the poor argumentality of the pivot of the former type of construction.

We should now return to the hierarchy shown in Table 2 and to the claim that non-subject treatment of the postcopular noun phrase of French, Brazilian Portuguese, and Soletano *there*-sentences is due to its low topic-worthiness, and hence its realization in focus (see §3). The evidence considered in this section suggests that this claim holds true for French and Spoken Brazilian Portuguese, but not for Soletano. In the latter language, the existential pivot is not treated as a subject because it is a 'bad' argument. Given that topicality and specificity are not crucial properties in the assignment of agreement in Soletano, this dialect must be removed; the modified hierarchy is given in Table 3.

SEMANTIC PROPERTIES OF NP	LANGUAGE-SPECIFIC FINITE NUMBER-CONTROL THRESHOLD
TOPICAL	
	← French, Spoken Brazilian Portuguese
SPECIFIC (SPEECH ACT PARTICIPANT)	
	← Sardinian (Orgosolo), Italo-Romance (Bellunese)
SPECIFIC (ACTIVE OR ACCESSIBLE)	
	← Italo-Romance (Florentine), Catalan
SPECIFIC (IDENTITY)	
	← European Spanish, Galician, European Portuguese
SPECIFIC (INCLUSION)	
	← Sardinian (Bonese)
NONSPECIFIC	
	← Italo-Romance (Italian), Romanian, Italo-Romance (Ferrandinese)

TABLE 3. Control of finite number agreement by the postcopular noun phrase in Romance *there*-sentences (final version).

Turning now to Galician, the evidence in 16a–c and 81a,b is not contradictory, but rather suggests that three properties are relevant to subject treatment in this language, namely topic-worthiness, argumentality, and specificity (in the sense of identity). Arguments that are encoded in focus because they are low in topic-worthiness are denied subjecthood in terms of syntactic position, but not in terms of control of finite number agreement (see 81a,b). Existential pivots are not only low in topic-worthiness, but they also lack a crucial property of arguments, the lexical entailments imposed by a predicate. If existential pivots are specific, they are nonetheless encoded as controllers in Galician (see 16a,b). If they are not specific, they are denied subject behavior (16c). Definite postcopular noun phrases of *there*-sentences can, of course, be proper arguments of locative predications (see §4.1), in which case they will be controllers on account of their argumentality (59b). Given that specifics (in the sense of identity) are realized as controllers in *there*-sentences, regardless of whether they are arguments, Table 3 need not be revised in the light of the Galician data.[18]

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[18] In the spirit of the Bentley et al. 2013 OT account of finite number agreement in Italo-Romance (see n. 2), the Galician facts could be explained as follows: *-AGR/actor <<>> *-AGR/topical >> *-AGR/undergoer >> *-AGR/specific (identity) >> NOFEATS. This hierarchy states that all arguments are realized as subjects, with optionality in subject choice between the actor (proto-agent, Dowty 1991) and the topic (which can be an actor, but can also be an undergoer or proto-patient, as is normally the case with passive constructions). Existential pivots, which are treated as nonarguments and hence have no macroroles, are controllers only if they are specific in the sense of identity or any of the higher-ranked senses. Otherwise, subject agreement will be blocked by NOFEATS (Samek-Lodovici 2002), which is the equivalent of Prince and Smolensky's (1993) *STRUCT and is a constraint exerting limiting pressure on morphological structure. This account predicts that

5.2. CONCLUSION. The evidence analyzed in §5.1 suggests that the hierarchy in 75 does correlate with subjecthood in general, rather than apply specifically in copular constructions. Thus, in languages that do not tolerate nontopical subjects (for example, French and Spoken Brazilian Portuguese), the control of subject (finite number) agreement is denied to foci, including existential pivots. There are Romance languages that require a subject, rather than an expletive, at all costs (Italian, Ferrandinese, Romanian), thus licensing finite number agreement with all existential pivots. In the dialect of Soleto, finite verb agreement is missing in existential sentences, but not in intransitive constructions with a postcopular subject. It was argued that, in this dialect, agreement is sensitive to whether the candidate to subjecthood is a canonical argument, that is, an argument that receives lexical entailments by a predicate, and can thus be assigned a semantic role and macrorole, as well as a grammatical relation. In some Romance languages, argumentality interacts with the subjecthood properties that are part of the definiteness hierarchy in 75. Thus, in Galician, existential pivots (nontopical bad arguments) only fail to control finite number agreement if they are nonspecific.

6. TWO PREDICTIONS. The account given here predicts that, in a given language, a given noun-phrase class on the hierarchy in 75 will not exhibit subject behavior if a higher class does not. This prediction was tested with evidence from *there*-sentences and other intransitive structures in Romance and proved to be robust. Although definite noun phrases are licensed in immediately postcopular position when they are foci, whether they are treated as subjects (controllers of finite number agreement) depends on the language-specific control threshold, which, in turn, is indicative of the language-specific tolerance of noncanonicality in subjects. Significantly, definite postcopular pivots in *there*-sentences proved to be ungrammatical when a locative or availability reading did not arise. This suggests that the DE cannot be entirely explained in terms of subject canonicality, but rather must also depend on the existential proposition being about the existence or the presence of someone or something in a context (Francez 2007, McNally 2011:1830).

To conclude this article, a second hypothesis about the crosslinguistic variation in DE, which arises from our findings, must be spelled out. In particular, whereas we expect to find crosslinguistic consistency in the semantic restrictions on pivots that are not captured in terms of subject canonicality, the strong correlations between the DE and subject coding and behavior that were the focus of this article may not be found in languages with split alignment. Recall that, from the theoretical perspective taken here, these languages do not have a subject (see §3). In this section, we thus take a brief look at Kalkatungu (Pama Nyungan; see Blake 1979), which is a language with split alignment.

Kalkatungu is morphologically ergative, but shows a mixture of accusative and ergative alignment in syntax. In particular, verbal agreement, when overt, follows the accusative principle, whereas the grammatical relation of relative and purpose clauses is absolutive (the only macrorole of intransitives (S) or the undergoer of transitives (U)). The word order of Kalkatungu is flexible, but tendentially SV and AUV or AVU.

By contrast with English and Romance, Kalkatungu does not differentiate formally between existential and locative predications. The existential pivot is normally under-

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topicalized existential pivots (nonarguments) are controllers in Galician. As was explained in §3, it is difficult to elicit data with topicalized pivots (one normally obtains pivots that are split in focus structure between a focal quantifier and its topical complement; see Bentley et al. 2013). Accordingly, the author was not able to test this prediction properly.

stood as nonspecific (see 82a), although it can be taken to be specific in context. Definiteness can only be marked by a demonstrative, in which case an existential reading is not default, but is not ruled out, either (see 82b).

(82) Kalkatungu
    a. Thuarr ntia-pia   pirrinha (ini).
        snake rock-LOC up/on   (sit)
           'The snake is on the rock.'/'Thr's a (/the) snake on the rock.'
    b. Thuarr tjaa ntia-pia   pangithi.
        snake this rock-LOC that.LOC
           '(Thr is) this snake (is) at/on/under that rock.'
                                      (Barry Blake, p.c., September 26, 2008)

Given that the word order of Kalkatungu is tendentially SV, the occurrence of the existential pivot in this position is no surprise. The lack of differentiation between existential pivots and the argument of locative predications is unexpected from a Romance perspective, though. The Kalkatungu case is by no means exceptional. The existence of languages that do not differentiate morphosyntactically between constructions that predicate existence and constructions that predicate the location of an argument is amply reported in the literature, although little information is normally provided on prosody, which could encode focus in these languages (by way of example, see Clark 1978:96, 103, Dryer 2007:243, Koch 2012, and Levinson's 2000, 2006 treatments of Yélî Dnye, Rossel Island, an isolate with split alignment). Our study of Romance *there*-sentences may have provided a clue to the rationale of the contrast between English- and Romance-type languages, on the one hand, and Kalkatungu-type languages, on the other. This contrast may be related to the lack, in the latter type of language, of a cluster of grammatical relations that consistently align with a cluster of pragmatic and semantic correlates.[19] Clearly, this tentative hypothesis should be tested further, although this endeavor is beyond the scope of the present work.

7. CONCLUSION. In this article, I have provided evidence from main and lesser-known Romance languages that fully supports Beaver and colleagues' (2005) claim that the DE of existential constructions correlate with subject canonicality: the morphosyntactic properties of existential pivots have turned out to depend on semantic and pragmatic properties of noun phrases that count toward subjecthood to different degrees crosslinguistically. While our findings indicate that the DE can only be captured in a crosslinguistic perspective if due reference is made to general constraints on grammatical subjects, they also suggest that the DE cannot be exhaustively explained in a nonconstructional way.

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[19] Cooreman (1988), Dixon (1979), and Wierzbicka (1981:73–74) have noted that in languages with ergative case marking, or predominantly ergative alignment, the discourse-role topic strongly tends to align with the agent, in our terms the macrorole actor. The alignment of actor with topic is bound to result in some degree of dissociation between some construction-specific grammatical relations and topic-hood.

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