Research on *There*-Insertion

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Introduction

This paper seeks the peculiarities of, points out the good and bad points of various arguments on, and suggests a more suitable method to analyze *there*-insertion sentences.

First, I want to manifest the standard analysis of *there*-insertion sentences known to every linguist.

In the second place, I want to manifest the recent hypothesis by Edwin Williams.[1] His theory on *there*-insertion consists of two main parts; one is that *there* is an NP, and the other is that *there* is a scope marker. Both parts on *there*-insertion sentences abound in original arguments. It seems that the theory of the bare NP is much more accepted than the theory of the scope marker.

And finally, I want to point out the good and bad points of *there*- insertion, which cannot be explained in the present theory.

Section Ⅰ   General Approach to *There*-Insertion Sentences

Generally speaking, the historical approach to *there*-insertion sentences can be understood through the theory by Emonds. He has developed his own theory of *there*-insertion sentences. However, Burt (1971)[2] and Milsark (1974)[3] suggested another hypothesis on *there*-insertion sentences.

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1) Edwin Williams, "*There*-Insertion," *Linguistic Inquiary* 15, 1984, pp. 131-153.

2) Marina Burt, *From Deep to Surface Structure: An Introduction to Transformational Syntax*, Regents, New York, 1971.

3) G. Milsark, "Existential Sentences in English," unpublished doctoral dissertation, MIT, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1974.

In short, the first theory on *there*-insertion sentences by Emonds (1969[4], 1970[5]) is that the transformation of *there*-insertion has two operations; one is the indefinite subject movement, and the other is the operation of *there*-insertion, which is put on the subject NP position. The following two sentences can well show the derivation of *there*-insertion sentences.[6]

(1) A girl is in the room.

(2) There is a girl in the room

(3)
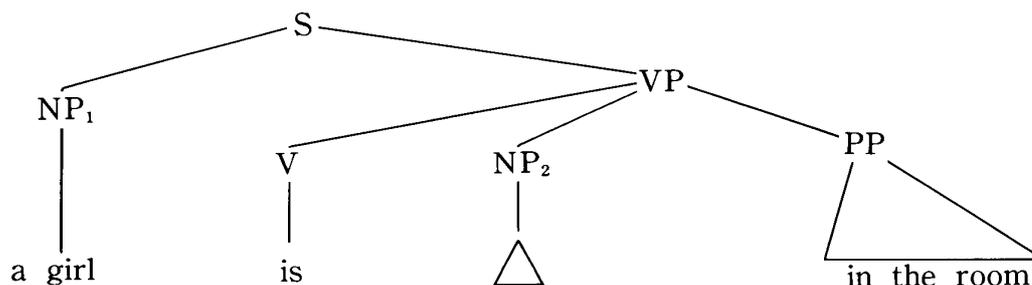
Sentence (2) can be derived by applying *there*-insertion transformation to Sentence (1). One process of *there*-insertion shown in Diagram (3) is that NP_1(*a girl*) and NP_2($\triangle$) can be replaced, and the other process is that NP_1($\triangle$) replaced from NP_2 can be inserted the item *there*; *there*-insertion. In this operation, we can find some constraints of *there*-insertion transformation. This operation can be applied only to existential sentences, and to the indefinite subject. And the sentences must have the predicative verb *be*. However, Emonds suggests the following progressive sentences.

(4) A girl is running along the street.

(5) There is a girl running along the street.

However, in Sentence (4), the word *be* is the part of the progressive. And the following sentences cannot be excluded by the above operation.

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4) Joseph Emonds, "A Structure-Preserving Constraint on NP Movement Transformations," in Binnick *et al.* (eds.), 1969, pp. 60-65.

5) ——, "Root and Structure-Preserving Transformation," unpublished doctoral dissertation, MIT, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1970.

6) The general theory of *there*-insertion sentences is based upon the following two dictionaries:

Minoru Yasui (ed.), *Kenkyusha's Dictionary of New Linguistics*, Kenkyusha, Tokyo, 1975, pp. 588-589.

Takanobu Otsuka & Fumio Nakajima *et al.* (eds.), *The Kenkyusha Dictionary of English Linguistics and Philology*, Kenkyusha, Tokyo, 1982, pp. 1251-1252.

(6) There is a child resembling John.

(7) *A child is resembling John.

(8) There is no one for us to talk to.

(9) *No one is for us to talk to.

To exclude the above sentences, *there*-insertion seems to have some other constraints. We can accept the following sentences without the predicative verb *be*.

(10) There happened a big fire in the town.

(11) There comes the bus.

The above sentences cannot be explained by *there*-insertion transformation shown above.

However, Burt (1971) and Milsark (1974) produced the following formula: [7]

(12) SD: Z, NP, X, be, Y

     SC: 1   2   3   4   5 $\Rightarrow$

          1 there 3   4 2 5

The above formula cannot contain various constraints on *there*-insertion transformation. We cannot accept the following sentences with predicative noun and adjective.

(13) Some graduate students are union members.

(14) *There are some graduate students union members.

(15) Few taxi drivers are too rich.

(16) *There are few taxi drivers too rich.

In the formula (12), there is no specification of NP. If we can have any NP in the formula (12), Sentence (14) will be grammatical. Besides, we cannot have a predicative adjective such as in Sentence (16). In the formula (12), we cannot find the manifestation whether this transformation is optional or not. The following sentences can well show that *there*-insertion transformation must be obligatory if there is no Y in the formula (12).

(17) *A ghost is.

(18) There is a ghost.

The above sentences without the item Y seem to have more constraint; the verb *be* is not a verb but a copula. According to the theory by Emonds and other historical linguists, *be* without postcopulative NP cannot be treated as a copula. If the verb *be* in Sentence (17) is commonly known, the degree of grammaticality of Sentence (17) isn't so low, for the verb *be* can be thought of as the verb *exist*. Therefore, we can have

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7) Takanobu Otsuka & Fumio Nakajima *et al.* (eds),

The Kenkyush's Dictionary of English Linguistics and Philology, p. 1252.

the following grammatical sentence.

(19)　A ghost exists.

Whether the word *be* is the verb which is dominated by VP or the copula which is dominated by S and is considered as Aux is still under debate in the historical approach to *there*-insertion transformation. But, we cannot find *be* treating as a copula dominated by S in the historical approach. Williams seems to be the first linguist to theorize a copula dominated by S, but his theory is the most recent, so I will consider it in the next section.

According to the formula (12), we cannot exclude other modal auxiliary. So we cannot exclude the following sentences.

(20)　Three senators are to be here for the conference.

(21)　*There are three senators to be here for the conference.

There are lots of demerits in the formula (12), but Emonds suggests a very comprehensive hypothesis called structure-preserving hypothesis to modify these bad points. His structure-preserving hypothesis partly seems to cover the demerits on *there*-insertion transformation. He claims:

If *there* insertion is a structure-preserving substitution of the predicate attribute NP, then we expect that the state-descriptive but not the characterizing adjectives in general appear after the sequence *there-be*-NP, as pointed out by Milsark...

I conclude that a second AP position within the VP, the circumstantial AP position, is the source of any AP that follows postcopular NP's moved by *there* insertion...

On the other hand, some of the verbs in (102) can also take a circumstantial AP: Hence, *They painted the house unsanded, Bill cooked the meat unsalted, Bill cooked the meat dry* (without water). With these verbs, as with linking verbs, the predicate attribute (resultative) AP must precede the circumstantial AP when the two occur...

A final note in order. The analysis of *there* insertion given here, as well as that in Jenkins (1974), is not compatible with the claim that the sentences (105) are derived directly from those in (104) by movement of the subject NP into the auxiliary...

Of course the sentences in (106) are, in turn, open to alternative analyses; Jenkins (1974) claims that they are variants of the cleft construction and that a rule very similar to relative clause reduction effects the change to the sentences in (105).[8]

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8)　Joseph Emonds, *A Transformational Approach to English Syntax: Root, Structure-Preserving and Local Transformations*, Academic Pr., New York, 1976, pp. 108-110.

(104) Several prizes are distributed on Saturday.

Some children have been playing in the yard.

(105) There are several prizes distributed on Saturday.

There have been some children playing in the yard.

(106) There are several prizes that are distributed on Saturday.

There have been some children who were (?have been) playing in the yard.

As shown above, Emonds seems to establish *there*-insertion transformation based upon the structure-preserving hypothesis. His hypothesis in the historical point of view seems to be typical, but, even his hypothesis cannot be considered the most suitable on *there*-insertion transformation.

According to the structure-preserving hypothesis, we cannot derive the following sentences.

(22) Quite a few students are $\begin{Bmatrix} \text{missing} \\ \text{absent} \end{Bmatrix}$.

(23) There are quite a few students $\begin{Bmatrix} \text{missing} \\ \text{absent} \end{Bmatrix}$.

The general theory on *there*-insertion transformation seems to be well-established, but there remains some unsolved problems.

As classified by E. Rando & D. Napoli,[9] *there*-sentences fall into two types; one is *existential*, and the other is *list*. *There*-insertion transformation seems to be applied only to the existential sentences, so that *there*-sentences can have only indefinite NP. However, in the list *there*-sentences, *there*-insertion transformation cannot be applied, but list *there*-sentences have both indefinite NP and definite NP.

From the linguistic point of view, it seems to be better that *there*-insertion transformation may deal with both existential and list *there*-sentences.

Furthermore, *there*-insertion transformation shows that two indefinite NPs can be freely replaced, so that we cannot find any subtle shades of meaning between *there*-sentences and the corresponding sentences. As shown in Diagram (3), the two NPs; NP_1, NP_2 are not dominated by S. NP_1 is dominated by S, and NP_2 is dominated by VP. Therefore, the degree of specificality between NP_1 and NP_2 will be different. Even if the two NPs are indefinite, the degree of grammaticality of NP_1 will be higher than that of NP_2.

Another insufficiency of the historical approach is that *there*-sentences with primary stress cannot be mentioned. With primary stress, we cannot derive the sentences which have the same meaning from the semantic point of view. With primary stress, *there* seems to have some reference to a scope marker. However, these problems have still not been discussed.
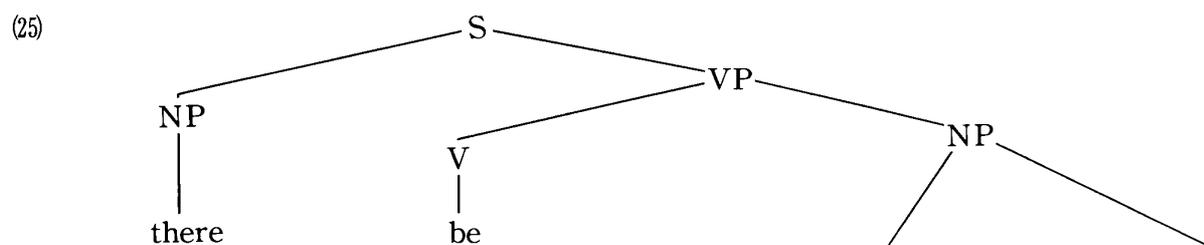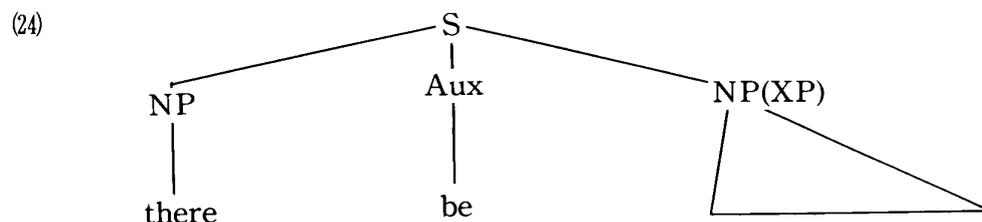
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9) Emily Rando & Donna Napoli, "Definites in *there*-sentences," *Language* 54, 1978, pp. 300-313.

Though I've mentioned some weak points of the historical approach to *there*-insertion sentences, the approach shown above is regarded as a general one. In the next section, I want to consider the most recent analysis of *there*-insertion sentences.

Section II Recent Approach to *There*-Insertion Sentences

The historical or general analysis on *there*-insertion transformation can well show the mechanism of its derivation.

Williams has established the original theory on *there*-insertion sentences. Whether his hypothesis can be accepted or not has not yet been discussed, but his hypothesis seems to worth considering. It consists of two parts; one where *there* is an NP, and the other where *there* is a scope marker. Recently, *there* has been regarded as an NP, though Milsark (1974) and others suggested that *there* is a small clause. In short, these opposite ideas on *there*-insertion sentences can be well shown in the following diagram:

(24)

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                    S
           ┌────────┼────────┐
          NP       Aux      NP(XP)
           │        │        ╱│
         there      be      ╱ └──────
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(25)

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                    S
           ┌────────────────┐
          NP               VP
           │          ┌─────┴─────┐
         there        V          NP
                      │          ╱│
                      be        ╱ └──
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The important difference between Milsark's theory and Williams is that postcopular material in *there*-insertion sentences is completely different; the material in Milsark's theory as shown in Diagram (25) is a small clause, but in Williams' as shown in Diagram (24) it is an NP or expanded NP(XP). In the theory of Williams the word be is regarded as Aux; namely, *be* can play a role of a copula. Therefore, the two NPs have the same functions and can be replaced without changing the meaning, for both these two NPs are dominated by one element; S. However, in Diagram (24), Milsark and others have suggested a different analysis on *there*-insertion sentences. They classified the verb *be* as a copula. But since it is dominated by V, *copula* doesn't seem

to be a suitable label; the verb *be* can play a role as a *linking verb*. There is not a clear distinction between the copula and linking verbs, but we can find a clear difference as shown in Diagram (24) and Diagram (25). It seems to be defined as follows: the copula *be* is only the connection between separate elements, but the linking verb *be* is one part of VP, which cannot have the same alternative elements. Williams, whose analysis is completely different from that of Milsark and others. claims that postcopular material in *there*-insertion sentences is an NP, but the reference to the copular element cannot be found.

Another unanswered problem with the copular element is, that in Diagram (24) the operation of *there*-insertion transformation can be optional, for there are two alternative elements; NP, and NP or XP, on the contrary, in Diagram (25), the operation of *there*-insertion transformation seems to be obligatory, for we cannot find the two elements which have structurally the same meaning. In general, the operation of *there*-insertion transformation is optional. If this analysis is correct, the hypothesis of Williams will be much more suitable than those of Milsark and others.

Williams has stated that the postcopular material in *there*-insertion sentences is a bare NP in favor of the theory made by Jenkins.[10] On the contrary, Milsark and others feel that it must be a small clause. Williams has represented some evidence to support the Jenkins' theory.

One is that we can generate all the strings of *there*-insertion sentences from the following structure.

(26) there be NP   (= Williams (4)[11])

However, the sequence shown in (26) seems to suggest the constraint to exclude the devient sentences; namely, we cannot extract only one or two elements from the bare NP. If we persists on keeping the bare NP theory, we cannot generate the following devient sentences.

(27) There is someone believed to be a liar. (= Williams(5a)[12])

(28) Someone believed to be a liar is in the next room. (= Williams(5b)[13])

(29) *To be a liar is someone believed.

(30) *A liar is someone believed to be.

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10) Lyle Jenkins, *The English Existential*, Max Niemeyer, Tübingen, 1975.

11) Edwin Williams, "*There*-Insertion, "p.132.

12) *Ibid.*, p.132.

13) *Ibid.*, p.132.

As the devient sentences in (29) and (30) show, we cannot extract one element from the bare NP. In applying *Wh*-movement or other movement transformations, these two NPs can be alternative, but both of them seem to have a semantic and syntactic meaning which prevents *there*-insertion sentences. If both NPs cannot share the same cycle, then they have to share a different specificality with each other. Therefore the degree of cycle seems to have a very minute relation with the degree of specificality.

Another argument suggested by Williams to support the bare NP theory is as follows:

> This analysis predicts that the possible termini of TISs are exactly the possible termini of NPs, since TISs terminate in NPs. The absence of such structure as (6) is thus predicted:
>
> (6) *There was a friend of mine an imposter.
>
> (7) *A friend of mine an imposter is in the next room.
>
> No other analysis proposed for TISs can make this prediction. For example, the small clause analysis cannot, since there are small clauses of the form (8):
>
> (8) 〔 NP   NP 〕 : I consider 〔 a friend of mine an imposter 〕
>
> Nor can the classical NP postposing analysis of TISs, since the input to postposing is fully grammatical.
>
> (9) A friend of mine is an imposter.[14]

Another argument suggested by Williams refers to the peculiar distribution of the preposition *with*. The following sentences can well show the peculiar distribution of *with*.

(31) *The man is with a green coat. (= Williams(10a)[15])

(32) The man with a green coat is here. (= Williams(10b)[16])

(33) There is a man with a green coat. (= Williams (11)[17])

In addition to the peculiarity of the preposition *with*, Sentence (33) can well show that the two NPs must share the cycle and must be indefinite NPs.

Another argument is referred to the fact that the postnominal predicate cannot be fronted by *Wh*-movement.

(34) There was someone happy.

(35) *How happy was there someone? (= Williams (14)[18])

(36) You met someone happy.

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14) *Ibid.*, p.132.

15) *Ibid.*, p.133.

16) *Ibid.*, p.133.

17) *Ibid.*, p.133.

18) *Ibid.*, p.133.

(37) *How happy did you meet someone? (=Williams (15)[19])

According to the bare NP theory that *there*-insertion sentences have to preserve the sequence *There be NP*, we can easily explain that only one word in Sentence (35) and Sentence (37) cannot be extracted from the bare NP: the sequence of the bare NP has to be treated as one sequence. Williams has regarded Sentence (34) as a grammatical one, but the sentence involving quantifiers can be interpreted in two ways; speaker-oriented and non-speaker-oriented. If *someone* in Sentence (34) is speaker-oriented; *someone* has the specific feature, then the constraint of two indefinite NPs must be blocked. If *someone* is non-speaker-oriented; *someone* has the non-specific feature, then we have no problem to protect the constraint. The following problems seem to be manifested; the degree of specificality, the cycle problem, and the relation between them.

A further argument to support the bare NP theory refers to the fact that the bare NP theory can be derived from the action of Heavy NP Shifts (HNPS) on *there*-insertion sentences.

I support the bare NP theory in favor of Jenkins and Williams. Some devient sentences can be explained by applying the bare NP theory. However, some problems remain. Indeed, the bare NP theory can be a very good way to treat the postcopular sequences as one sequence, but we cannot find some constraint of the bare NP that appears after a copular.

Concerning the theories where *there* is treated as a scope marker, only a few linguists have supported this theory, so that more research is needed on this theory.

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19) *Ibid.*, p. 133.