

English dummy constructions revisited: a functional approach

Javier MARTÍN ARISTA
Universidad de La Rioja

ABSTRACT

Espousing the Functional Grammar model (Dik 1989, 1997), this paper deals with the underlying representation of English dummy constructions in terms of the insertion of the term operator DUM and the predicational operator DUM; and the assignment of the syntactic functions subject and object and the pragmatic function New Topic. It is argued that this proposal unifies the treatment of dummy subject and dummy object constructions and is compatible with the syntactic properties of *there* and *it*.

1. PERSPECTIVAL AND POSITIONAL SYNTACTIC NOTIONS

One of the cornerstones of the theory of Functional Grammar (henceforth FG) as devised by Dik (1979, 1989) is the definition of the syntactic functions subject and object in terms of perspective or vantage point. According to this definition, the participant *Mary* receives primary vantage point in the linguistic expression (1.a), whereas *John* receives secondary vantage point. Consequently, *Mary* is assigned subject and *John* bears object. In (1.b) the event is presented from the perspective of the participant *John*, which is assigned the syntactic function subject:

- (1) a. Mary kissed John
- b. John was kissed by Mary

On the one hand, the semantically-oriented definition of subject and object that examples (1.a) and (1.b) illustrate has proved particularly useful in the interlinguistic dimension and is consistent with the monostratal character of the theory and with the semantic orientation of the structure of the clause. On the other hand, this definition of subject and object has been criticised by scholars such as Connolly (1991), who supports a more syntactically-oriented approach to syntactic functions. As I see it, this is a methodological question concerning which dimension -the interlinguistic or the intralinguistic- is given priority: if typological adequacy is the main concern, “semantically empty, underlying universal grammatical relations (...) do not exist” (Foley 1993: 146). Indeed, the inventory of syntactic functions proposed by Connolly (1991) is of little interlinguistic relevance, given that the existence of functions like indirect object is challenged by cross-linguistic data. However, if the intralinguistic dimension takes priority over the interlinguistic one, it does not seem out of place to question certain solutions that probably follow from the semantic definition of grammatical functions. This is the case with the analysis of linguistic expressions like (2.a)-(2.d), which Dik (1997: 132) bases on a distinction between syntactic functions and syntactic positions:

- (2) a. **That she is drinking again** is very distressing
 b. **It** is very distressing **that she is drinking again**
 c. I find **that she is drinking again** very distressing
 d. I find **it** very distressing **that she is drinking again**

The constituent that is assigned the syntactic function subject in the linguistic expression (2.a) is placed in the structural position typically associated with the subject, the preverbal one. Similarly, the object of (2.c) appears in its canonical position, that is, after the verb. In the linguistic expression (2.b) the structural subject position is occupied by the dummy element *it* and the subject proper is placed in clause-final position. In (2.d) the same situation holds with respect to the object: the structural position is taken up by *it* and the object proper is linearized in clause-final position. As Dik (1997: 127) remarks, when LIPOC (language-independent preferred order of constituents) displaces a constituent out of its canonical position, the dummy element is inserted into that position. Even though Dik defines in terms of position the dummy element only, this analysis is not substantially different from the one advanced in more syntactically-driven approaches like Connolly’s: Connolly (1991: 68) subcategorizes syntactic functions into anticipatory subject and object and subject and object proper, depending on the position that they occupy in the linear order of the clause.

In my opinion, the analysis of dummies as expression phenomena imposes the distinction drawn by Dik (1997: 132) between *performing a*

syntactic function and occupying the position of a syntactic function: the element that performs a syntactic function is represented in the underlying predication, whereas the one that occupies a syntactic position is inserted by the expression component into the subject or object slot of the functional pattern which is responsible, along with the relevant expression rules, for the ordering of the constituents of the clause. If this line of argument is correct, the insertion of dummy elements into the subject or object slot represents a compromise solution between depriving them of their coding and control properties (inflection, position, inversion, tag question and raising of the subject; and inflection and position of the object) and assigning them full semantic value. Although the cost of representing dummy elements in the underlying structure of the clause may be that the perspectivizing function of subject and object is at stake (Kucanda 1990: 73), a solution may be sought better than the one that involves the existence of syntactic positions and syntactic functions, given that it does not contribute to a unified definition of subject and object; neither does it seem compatible with the semantic definition of subject and object.

In the following sections, I concentrate on the formal and functional motivation of dummies (section 2) and adopt a theoretical position with respect to the function of these elements (section 3). In section 4 I put forward that dummies are satisfactorily accounted for in the grammar by means of the introduction of the operator *dum/DUM* and the trigger and linearization rules associated with it (section 5). In conclusion, I summarise the contributions of this paper in section 6.

2. FORMAL AND FUNCTIONAL MOTIVATION OF DUMMIES

Dummies, also called *semantically empty constituents* in traditional grammar, constitute a relatively widespread phenomenon across languages. I offer below examples of the phenomenon alluded to from three Germanic languages: Danish, Dutch and German¹.

- (3) a. Danish (Koefoed 1991: 52)
Der var store grønne skovve rundt om markerne
 “There were large green woods round the fields”
- b. Dutch (Dik 1980: 109)
Er is een hond in de tuin
 “There is a dog in the garden”
- c. German
Es gibt heute nichts zu essen
 “There is nothing to eat today”

The bold-printed segments in example (3) help delimit the scope of the discussion. In the remainder of this paper I concentrate on the FG treatment of the elements in bold type in the following linguistic expressions ²:

- (4) a. **There** is a cat in the garden
 b. **It** is surprising that he has divorced
 c. I find **it** surprising that he has divorced

In other words, I take stock of what traditional grammar, as stated, for instance, by Quirk et al. (1991), has termed *existential there* and *introductory it*. In this work, it is claimed that these elements share formal characteristics and functional motivation and, therefore, must be dealt with by the grammar in a unified way. My intuition as regards dummies is that they constitute non-prototypical realizations of the grammatical functions subject and object ³. Even at an intuitive level it is clear that the subject of (5.a) and (5.b) and the object of (5.c) consist of two non-adjacent parts:

- (5) a. **There are more problems than expected**
 b. **It** is very distressing **that she is drinking again**
 c. I find **it** very distressing **that she is drinking again**

The construction of existential *there* plus a postposed nominal phrase and the construction of anticipatory *it* plus an extraposed clause have in common the formal property of containing more than one non-oblique nominal: two nominals occur in the case of (5.a) and (5.b), while three nominals appear in (5.c); these constructions also share the characteristic of allowing for other elements of structure to be linearized within them, thus occurring in non-adjacent positions. Describing these constructions as a case of syntactic discontinuity has far-reaching implications for the assignment of syntactic and pragmatic functions that gives rise to these linguistic expressions. In other words, what I argue for in this paper is the unity of form and function of the preposed dummy and the postposed nominal and, consequently, the unified grammatical treatment of these phenomena.

A word of caution is necessary at this point of the discussion. The terms *discontinuous* and *discontinuity* might suggest that the two constituents can be brought together to form one constituent, as happens in (6.b):

- (6) a. **The situation** was very hard to cope **with**
 b. It was very hard to cope **with the situation**

Morphosyntactic discontinuity, however, does not always meet the condition of recoverability, the latter being defined as the ability of non-

adjacent constituents to appear as continuous constituents of linguistic expressions without modification. My point is that the term *detachment* is preferable when the condition of recoverability is satisfied. Detachment is the result of displacement phenomena (Dik 1989: 343) like the extraposition of the phrasal postmodifier, the clausal postmodifier, the emphatic pronoun and the second term of comparison, which the following examples illustrate, respectively ⁴:

- (8)
- a. Everybody left **except the fire brigade**
 - b. The news arrived **that the president had been assassinated**
 - c. You do it **yourself!**
 - d. More problems have arisen **than we expected**

Another reason for distinguishing discontinuity from detachment can be found in the domain of morphology. Morphological evidence is of more direct applicability in FG than in other approaches, given that FG does not posit a strict distinction between morphology and syntax. In Dik's (1989: 299) words, "grammatical theory would lose in generalizing power and in typological adequacy if word-internal structure were treated as categorially different from word-external structure, and if an all too water-tight division were made between morphology and syntax". Even though discontinuous morphology is less obvious in English than in other languages, such as Hebrew or Arabic, verbal predicates like (9.a) resist the recoverability of continuity:

- (9)
- a. She **can't have failed**
 - b. *can't have ed
 - c. Drive **as carefully as your sister**
 - d. *as as your sister

Indeed, the segments in bold type in (9.a) show formal and functional unity but they do not constitute, as (9.b) illustrates, a ready-for-use linguistic expression, thus representing an instance of discontinuity proper. Adverbial restrictors, like the one given in bold type in (9.c), do not satisfy the condition of recoverability, either. If the argument is correct, that is, if discontinuity and detachment are different phenomena, it follows that the relationship between pairs such as (6.a)-(6.b) should not be accounted for by the grammar *via* syntactic (dis)continuity, as the recoverability requirement seems to impose, but by means of expression rules that guarantee the presence of all the morphosyntactic features associated with the linguistic expressions (6.a) and (6.b) ⁵.

The phenomena under scrutiny fall into the category of discontinuity rather than detachment, since the condition of recoverability is not satisfied:

- (10) a. ***There a cat** is in the garden
 b. ***It that he has divorced** is surprising
 c. ***I find it that he has divorced** surprising

Although I shall not go into the details, it is worth mentioning that recoverability was possible in expressions like (10.b) in Early Modern English. That is to say, the following instances of subject duplication were acceptable linguistic expressions in Early Modern English (Barber 1976: 284):

- (11) a. **To conceal suche an entrepries in a seruienge man it** is deathe
 b. **To recouer himselfe it** wilbe verie harde
 c. **That I haue tane away this old mans Daughter, it** is most true

Example (11.c) provides evidence in favour of Dik's (1997: 129) statement that the origin of dummy constructions can be found in the grammaticalization of Tail constructions like (12.a), in the case of the dummy subject construction, and (12.b), in the dummy object construction:

- (12) a. **It** surprised me, **that he came**
 b. Please don't mention **it** to my mother, **that we have lost**

Example (11.c) also suggests that the grammaticalization of Theme should be considered, at least in the case of English, along with the one of Tail. Examples (11.a) and (11.b) do not contain extracausal constituents but subject duplication by means of two clause-internal constituents.

Existential and extraposed constructions also share functional properties. In semantic terms, their first part is a semantically deviant pronoun. Also of semantic import is the fact that these constructions call for the Copula Support Rule, which was first proposed within the FG framework by Dik (1980: 95).

From the pragmatic perspective, we see a displacement of the communicative value of these linguistic expressions towards the end of the utterance. For this reason, passivization is not possible, as is exemplified by (13):

- (13) a. John finds **it** distressing **that she is drinking again**
 b. **?That she is drinking again** is found distressing by John

LIPOC predicts that nominal elements are more likely to occur in initial position than clausal elements (Dik 1989: 351). In pragmatic terms, Siewierska (1991: 171) notices that "the formal motivation for recognizing a special pragmatic function New Topic (...) is the atypical postverbal location of the introduced discourse referent and its distinct behavioural characteristics". As regards existential constructions, Dik (1989: 268) dissociates the pragmatic

function New Topic (given in bold print in (14)) from expletive *there*, which does not enter the structure of (14.a) and (14.b):

- (14) a. I am going to tell you a story about **an elephant called Jumbo**
 b. In the circus we saw **an elephant called Jumbo**
 c. Long ago there was **an elephant called jumbo**
 d. Suddenly, there appeared **a huge elephant**

Extraposed constructions like the ones under (15) also seem to be associated with New Topic. In the remainder of this article I take the unmarked pragmatic function assignment in these instances to be as follows:

- (15) a. It is [distressing]**Focus** [that she is drinking again]**New Topic**
 b. I find it [distressing]**Focus** [that she is drinking again]**New Topic**

The assignment illustrated in (15) has been inspired by Dik's (1989: 269) statement that "New Topics have a strong preference for taking a relative late position in the clause". Nevertheless, Given Topic is assigned in cleft constructions, in which dummy *it* also appears (Dik 1997: 307):

- (16) It is [John]**Focus** [who is at the door]**Given Topic**

The lesson that one can learn from examples (14), (15) and (16) is twofold: on the one hand, the assignment of the same pragmatic function represents additional evidence for a unified treatment of dummy *there* and dummy *it* constructions; on the other hand, the dissociation of New Topic from dummy constructions suggests that it seems problematic to rely on pragmatic function assignment only. The solution that I propose is that the semantically empty constituents *there* and *it* are the result of the insertion of certain operators into the underlying predication.

Theoretically, formal and functional considerations converge at the same point: we are dealing with similar phenomena. At the methodological level, this statement implies that these phenomena should be parsed and generated by the grammar by means of similar procedures. Indeed, it is a basic tenet of any grammar which wishes to attain descriptive adequacy that the isomorphism within and among grammar domains should reflect the iconic relationships that hold between certain areas of the linguistic code and some aspects of extra-linguistic reality.

I have already advanced the hypothesis that the existential and the postposed constructions represent non-prototypical manifestations of the subject and the object. In saying that these constructions are non-prototypical subjects and objects I focus on the fact that the linguistic phenomena subject and object are maximized for communicative purposes (Goldberg 1995: 67):

in order to satisfy special communicative needs, subject and object are coded in a special way. This may be said to be the functional motivation of the *there* construction and the *it* construction. As for their formal motivation, I derive my inspiration from Lakoff (1987: 463) who, in a study of the *there* construction, has pointed out that constructions are motivated to the extent that they inherit their structure from other constructions of the language. In the cases under scrutiny, the *there* construction must have inherited its structure from intransitives that show a semantically full nominal subject; and the *it* construction must have derived its pattern from intransitives with a semantically full nominal subject or from transitives with a semantically full object⁶:

- (17) a. White elephants exist > There are white elephants
 b. The fact is strange > It is strange that this fact ever happened
 c. I regard this fact as strange > I find it strange that this fact ever happened

Inheritance in dummy constructions is based on the assignment of a different pragmatic function, on the one hand, and on the insertion of an operator that accounts for the presence of the dummy element in the linguistic expression, on the other. Other formal aspects involved are linearization relative to the verb and special prominence. In sum, the constructions, and not only the lexical items associated with them, carry meaning (Goldberg 1995: 7)⁷.

3. ON THE FUNCTION OF DUMMIES

In the previous section I have proposed that *there* and *it* constructions show formal and functional unity and must, therefore, be dealt with by the grammar in a unified way. In what follows, I tackle a much debated problem: how can one account for the function of dummies? First I summarise the main positions that have been held as regards the function of the dummies and then proceed to compare my proposal with the solutions I quote.

The transformational analysis of *there* is based on the assumption that the postposed noun phrase is the subject of the source sentence. Milsark (1976: 90), for instance, claims that the transformation called *There-insertion* moves the subject of the source sentence to post-verbal position and introduces *there* into the subject slot.

Quirk et al. (1991: 956) have taken a similar line in describing *there* as the grammatical subject (because it exhibits subject properties) and the indefinite noun phrase as the notional subject. Their analysis of postposing is more revealing in the sense that they call *it* the anticipatory subject and

the clause the postposed subject. In other words, they opt for the double subject analysis.

Huddleston (1984: 66) remarks that *it* and *there* must be the subjects since they assume many of the prototypical characteristics of the subject.

Dik (1980: 108) assigns the subject function to the indefinite nominal of existentials and describes the *dummy* as an adverbial satellite. In a more refined analysis, Dik (1989: 362) rejects Haiman's (1974) theory of dummies as mere place-holders and argues that dummies are supporters of new topics, which do not usually appear in clause-initial position.

Hannay (1985: 14) follows the same line: he argues that post-verbal nominals have a pragmatic motivation and analyses the dummy *there* as a locative satellite without a specified syntactic function.

Givón (1993 vol II: 206), who also adopts a pragmatic approach to this topic, considers the postposed noun phrase the only subject since it is the most topical constituent, which Givón identifies with the grammatical role subject.

Kucanda (1990: 84) treats dummies very much as Haiman does and, while admitting that dummies have certain subject properties, he proposes that dummies must be the result of the application of an expression rule whose trigger is the non-assignment of subject function.

Semantically, dummies have been described as giving rise to an abstract setting (Smith 1985) or a mental space (Lakoff 1987). The construal of a mental space excludes, in the study by Lakoff (1987), the subject status of dummies. Drawing on Smith and Lakoff, Langacker (1991: 349) has analysed these constructions as consisting of two subjects that belong to different levels of structural complexity, the higher level representing a setting subject construction and the lower level designating a participant that pertains to that setting.

4. THE DUMMIES AS OPERATORS

The line that I take with respect to dummies is that they constitute morphemes of the subject and the object, which logically follows from the hypothesis I have advanced above that we are dealing with a unified phenomenon of syntactic discontinuity. This proposal follows the spirit of Quirk et al. (1991) in that it acknowledges the subject status of both the preposed element and the postposed noun phrase or noun clause; and considers the preposed pronoun and the postposed noun clause of dummy object constructions the object. As I have already remarked, I part company with Quirk at the point of the distinction between the notional and the grammatical subject (apparently implicit in Dik's distinction between syntactic positions and syntactic functions). Given Goldberg's principle of

Maximized Motivation, such a distinction cannot be relevant because every element of structure must be semantically motivated. My analysis should go along these lines rather than being based on the denial of the functional motivation of certain elements. As Dik (1986: 22) remarks, “saying that a certain feature (...) cannot be functionally explained is tantamount to saying that we have not yet been able to find a functional motivation for that feature”⁸.

I also develop along a quite different path as regards the existence of double subjects. In my opinion, dummy pronouns and postposed nominals together constitute the subject or the object. It is not that we have two subjects or two objects, whatever their nature is; we are dealing with a syntactically split phenomenon that has a unified semantic motivation.

At this point of the discussion I recall Kucanda’s proposal, to which I have made reference above. Kucanda (1990: 81) opts for not assigning subject in English existential constructions. This proposal differs from the treatment of existentials in Dik (1980) and Hannay (1985) in that these linguists assign subject to the term that bears the pragmatic function New Topic, whereas Kucanda does not assign subject at all: he appeals to pragmatic function alone. The formalization in (18.b), which has been taken from Dik (1989: 177-8), illustrates Dik’s (1980) and Hannay’s (1985) representation of the existential dummy, while (18.c) offers Kucanda’s (1990):

- (18) a. There are black swans
 b. Pres $\{(\emptyset)_{\text{Loc}}\}$ (ism x_i ; swan $_N(x_i)$: black (x_i))_{Subj/New Top}
 c. Pres $\{(\emptyset)_{\text{Loc}}\}$ (ism x_i ; swan $_N(x_i)$: black (x_i)) $_{\emptyset/\text{New Top}}$

Kucanda’s reasoning is as follows: if *there* were assigned subject function, the subject characteristics of this dummy would be accounted for, but this assignment of syntactic function would imply the presence of the dummy pronoun in the underlying representation of the clause, which would result in the rejection of the essentially semantic definition of syntactic functions posited by FG. Kucanda (1990: 82, footnote 7) is right in stating that FG has already set a precedent in not assigning the indirect object of traditional grammar: the constituents that would bear this grammatical function in other theoretical frameworks are assigned only semantic and pragmatic functions in FG. However, restricting the inventory of syntactic functions so that the theory gains cross-linguistic insight is not the same as not taking into account a syntactic function that does enter the FG inventory: the subject. For this reason, the treatment of dummy subjects and objects as operators represents a significant departure with respect to Kucanda (1990), who insists on the grammatical character of dummies and generates them at the level of the expression component of the grammar.

What I propose, instead, is to parse and generate dummies as operators of the term that is assigned the pragmatic function New Topic⁹. That operator, which I term *dum/DUM*, would be reflected in the expression component in the insertion of *there* or *it* by the appropriate trigger expression rule, in the introduction of copula support, and in the placement, by means of the suitable placement rule, of one part of the subject in clause-initial position and the other in postverbal position. This is represented as follows in (19.b):

- (19) a. There are black swans
 b. (dum ism_{x_i}; swan_{N(x_i)}: black(x_i))_{∅/Subj/New Top}

Notice that no semantic function is assigned, since the introduction of the copula at the expression level calls for the term-predicate formation rule (Dik 1980: 105). This view is consistent with the characterization of *dum* as a term operator. The significant implication of the lack of semantic function is that the presence of the term operator *dum* is dealt with by the grammar as the occurrence of determiners, quantifiers and inflections, whose syntactic and semantic links with their head nominals are seldom questioned.

It is my contention that this underlying representation is also applicable to the dummy *it*, both in subject and in object position. Let us consider the linguistic expressions (20.a) and (20.b):

- (20) a. It was surprising that John came
 b. Joan found it surprising that John came

Structurally, the term-predicate formation rule is not applicable to instances like (20) because it yields only one-place predicates. Therefore, the derivation of (20.a) and (20.b) should go along these lines, respectively (following Dik (1997), I use capital letters between square brackets instead of subscripts)¹⁰:

- (21) a. *surprising* [A] (DUM e₁)_{∅/Subj/New Top}
 b. Past e₁: *find* [V] (*Joan*) (*surprising*) (DUM e₂)

Semantically, the operator *dum* is a term operator (represented by the FG formalism Ω) that applies to a first order entity *x*, whereas in the context of dummy *it* as subject and object, the π operator DUM restricts the reference potential of a predicational term *e* that embodies a certain state of affairs. A more refined representation of (21.b) is rendered in (22):

- (22) Decl E: X: Past e₁: *find* [V] (*Joan*)_{Exp/Subj}
 (*surprising*) (DUM Sim: e₂: *come* [V] (*John*)_{Ag/Subj})_{Go/Obj/New Top}

At this point in the discussion, let us gather some additional evidence that may justify the representation of dummy constructions put forward in (19.b), (21.a) and (22). The morphological marking of syntactic and pragmatic functions is a well-attested phenomenon, even though it is not very common in English. Let us consider these examples:

- (23) a. It is unusual **for Charlie** to be working
 b. **Claudia's** posing
 c. The writing **of the book**

Even in the intralinguistic dimension, the morphological marking of direct cases is not restricted to dummy constructions, as the presence of *for* in infinitival subjects, as in (23.a), and the genitive coding of nominalized subject and object structures, as in (23.b) and (23.c), respectively, show ¹¹.

5. EXPRESSION RULES

So far I have been dealing with the underlying structures of dummy subject and dummy object constructions and I have claimed that dummies are the result of the insertion of a term operator *dum* or a predication operator *DUM*. At the semantic level I have opted for assigning the zero function to the subject argument. From the pragmatic point of view, I have concentrated on examples in which the displaced constituent bears the function *New Topic*.

As regards the rules that govern the expression of dummy subject and dummy object constructions, Dik (1997: 132) states that dummies are structural elements that preserve the canonical order of constituents in expressions like the following:

- (18.a) There are black swans
 (20.a) It was surprising that John came

However, no provision is made for instances of the type of (20.b) in Dik's (1997) approach to the dummy phenomenon:

- (20.b) Joan found it surprising that John came

I propose the following expression rules, which may remedy the undesirable situation just mentioned. In the first place, two trigger rules (of the form proposed by de Groot 1990) guarantee the presence of the dummy operator in the underlying representations of the linguistic expressions under scrutiny:

- (24) a. **Dum trigger rule:**
input: any term x_1
output: *there*- x_1
conditions: x_1 =New Topic
- b. **DUM trigger rule:**
input: any predicational term e_1
output: *it*- e_1
conditions: e_1 =New Topic

Rule (24.a) predicts that phrasal terms that bear New Topic call for the presence of *there* in the linguistic expression; this is accounted for by the dum operator. Rule (24.b) stipulates that predicational terms require the support of *it* in the expression component of the grammar and that this is achieved through the insertion of the operator DUM at the level of the underlying representation of the clause. Notice that I have assumed, along with de Groot (1990: 189), that operators can be considered triggers, because specified operators will receive expression. From the point of view of linearization, it is suggested that the following constituent order rule is applicable to the dummy phenomena (the form of the syntactic template has been taken from Connolly (1991)):

- (25) a. **Dummy subject linearization rule:** Insert the dummy pronoun into N2 and the postposed subject into N7.
- b. **Dummy object linearization rule:** Insert the dummy pronoun into N4 and the postposed object into N6.

These rules predict that, whereas *there* is always linearized in clause-initial position, *it* occurs either preverbally or postverbally depending on the assignment of subject or object, respectively, to the postposed noun clause. The ordering rules (25.a) and (25.b) modify Kucanda's (1990: 85) remark that any rule of dummy insertion should be based on the non-assignment of subject. Contrary to this view, I observe that it is the assignment of syntactic and pragmatic functions that ultimately guarantees the correct application of dummy rules, both for trigger and linearization.

Rules (24) and (25) represent the unmarked options with respect to LIPOC, that is, they produce linguistic expressions like those in (26.a), (26.c) and (26.e):

- (26) a. There are three men waiting at the door
b. **Three men** are waiting at the door
c. It is distressing that she is drinking again
d. **That she is drinking again** is distressing
e. I find it distressing that she is drinking again
f. I find **that she is drinking again** distressing

The presence of clausal subjects and objects in preverbal and postverbal position in linguistic expressions like (26.d) and (26.f) conspires against LIPOC, which favours nominal rather than clausal elements in these positions. As Dik (1997: 131) points out, however, “the tendency for Topic and Focus to be placed in P1 is apparently stronger than the pressure exerted on them by LIPOC”. The marked character of (15.a) is not a result of a violation of LIPOC, but rather of the placement of New Topic in P1 (Dik 1989: 269). I consider the structure of (26.d) and (26.e) the expression correlate of the assignment of the pragmatic function Given Topic:

- (27) a. [That she is drinking again]**Given Topic** is distressing (LIPOC-marked)
 b. I find [That she is drinking again]**Given Topic** distressing (LIPOC-marked)

6. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

I have claimed in this article that the disassociation of the pragmatic function New Topic from dummy constructions and the syntactic properties of dummies are arguments against the representation of *there* and *it* at the level of the expression component only. I have put forward an underlying representation of dummies based on the insertion of the term operator dum and the predicational operator DUM; and the assignment of syntactic and pragmatic functions. This proposal has two advantages: first, the treatment of dummy subjects and that of dummy objects are unified; and, second, this proposal is compatible with the syntactic properties of *there* and *it*. On the other hand, this proposal has a disadvantage: the definition of perspective should be enlarged to accommodate non-prototypical subjects. This could be done at practically no cost given that, in orthodox FG, clausal (thus non-prototypical) subjects are assigned a syntactic function; and the notion of subject has been relaxed to include positional subjects.

NOTES

¹ The funding for this research has been granted through the projects DGES-PB96-0520 and UR-API-97/B18, whose main researcher is Dr. Francisco Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez (Universidad de La Rioja). I should like to thank the Editor and the anonymous referees of *Estudios Ingleses de la Universidad Complutense* for their numerous useful suggestions and comments on an earlier version of this paper.

² The following abbreviations have been used throughout this paper: A (Adjective), V (Verb), x (Term variable), e (Predication variable), X (Proposition variable), Sim (Simultaneous), Pres (Present), Ø (Zero), Ag (Agent), Exp (Experiencer), Go (Goal), Loc

(Locative), Subj (Subject), Obj (Object), i (Indefinite), ms (Mass Quantifier), dum (Dummy term operator), DUM (Dummy predicational term operator), P1 (Clause-initial position), N (Nuclear position).

³ See Langacker (1991: 143) on non-prototypical nominals.

⁴ See Noonan (1985: 83) with reference to compulsory extraposition. The examples given in Dik (1997: 128-129) are also worth considering. See Downing and Locke (1992: 410) on the form and function of the qualifier.

⁵ See Spencer (1991: 134) and Katamba (1993: 172) as regards discontinuous morphology. For a more detailed discussion of discontinuity in prepositional groups, I refer the reader to Downing and Locke (1992: 603).

⁶ For a more detailed discussion of the transitive and the intransitive prototypes, see Croft (1991: 183) and Givón (1993 vol II: 46).

⁷ Even though I have sought formal and functional motivation for the existence of these constructions, I am aware that I am using the concept of construction in a more structurally-related way than Lakoff (1987), Goldberg (1995) or Kay (1997), whose works are more lexically-driven.

⁸ In this respect, it is relevant to quote Goossens (1992: 53), who rejects the traditional view that the copulative verb *be* is only an expression phenomenon (that is, meaningless): it qualifies as semi-predicational, and even as fully predicational, in some instances.

⁹ Hannay (1990: 5) and Mackenzie and Keizer (1991: 172) contend that the pragmatic function New Topic is, in fact, a type of Focus.

¹⁰ Dik (1997: 113) assigns a free operator position π_2 that accounts for the fact that commentative predicates, as in *It is surprising that John came*, are compatible with all tense operators in their complements.

¹¹ For nominalizations as discrepancies between underlying clause structure and expression, see Dik (1997: 335).

Departamento de Filologías Modernas
Universidad de La Rioja
Cigüeña, 60
26004 Logroño
e-mail: javier.martin@dfm.unirioja.es

REFERENCES

- Barber, Charles (1976). *Early Modern English*. London: André Deutsch.
- Connolly, John (1991). *Constituent order in Functional Grammar: Synchronic and diachronic perspectives*. Dordrecht: Foris.
- Croft, William (1991). *Syntactic Categories and Grammatical Relations*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Dik, Simon (1979). *Functional Grammar*. Dordrecht: Foris.
- Dik, Simon (1980). *Studies in Functional Grammar*. New York: Academic Press.
- Dik, Simon (1986). On the notion 'functional explanation'. *Belgian Journal of Linguistics* 1: 11-52.
- Dik, Simon (1989). *The Theory of Functional Grammar I: The Structure of the Clause*. Dordrecht: Foris.
- Dik, Simon (1997). *The Theory of Functional Grammar II: Complex and Derived Constructions*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

- Downing, Angela, & Philip Locke (1992). *A University Course in English Grammar*. Hemel Hempstead: Prentice Hall International.
- Foley, William (1993). The conceptual basis of grammatical relations. In William Foley (ed.): *The Role of Theory in Language Description*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 130-174.
- Givón, Talmy (1993). *English Grammar: A Function-Based Introduction* (2 vols.). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Goldberg, Adele (1995). *Constructions*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Goossens, Louis (1992). Graded predicationality, semanticization and *be* in a functional grammar of English. *Belgian Journal of Linguistics* 7: 57-73.
- Groot, Casper de (1990). Morphology and the typology of expression rules. In Mike Hannay & Elseline Vester (eds.): *Working with Functional Grammar: Descriptive and Computational Applications*. Dordrecht: Foris, 187-201.
- Haiman, John (1974). *Targets and syntactic change*. The Hague: Mouton.
- Hannay, Mike (1985). *English Existentials in Functional Grammar*. Dordrecht: Foris.
- Hannay, Mike (1990). Pragmatic function assignment and word order variation in a Functional Grammar of English. *Working Papers in Functional Grammar* 38. Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam.
- Huddleston, Rodney (1984). *Introduction to the Grammar of English*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Katamba, Francis (1993). *Morphology*. London: Macmillan.
- Kay, Paul (1997). *Words and the Grammar of Context*. Stanford, Ca.: CSLI.
- Koefoed, H. (1991). *Teach Yourself Danish*. London: Hodder and Stoughton Ltd.
- Kucanda, Dubravko (1990). On the subjecthood of existential *there*. In Mike Hannay & Elseline Vester (eds.): *Working with Functional Grammar: Descriptive and Computational Applications*. Dordrecht: Foris, 73-85.
- Lakoff, George (1987). *Women, Fire and Dangerous Things*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Langacker, Ronald (1991) *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar II: Descriptive Application*. Stanford, Ca.: Stanford University Press.
- Mackenzie, John, & Evelien Keizer (1991). On assigning pragmatic functions in English. *Pragmatics* 1: 169-215.
- Milsark, G. (1976). *Existential sentences in English*. Bloomington: Indiana University Linguistics Club.
- Noonan, Michael (1985). Complementation. In Timothy Shopen (ed.): *Language typology and syntactic description* (3 vols.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 42-140
- Nuyts, Jan (1992). *Aspects of a cognitive-pragmatic theory of language*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Quirk, Randolph et al. (1991). *A Grammar of Contemporary English*. London: Longman.
- Siewierska, Anna (1991). *Functional Grammar*. London: Routledge.
- Smith, M. (1985). An Analysis of German Dummy Subject Constructions. *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Pacific Linguistics Conference* 1, 412-425.
- Spencer, Andrew (1992). *Morphological Theory*. Oxford: Blackwell.