Expletive do/da ‘there, then’ and the rise of V2 in German
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Abstract
Across the Germanic languages, we can observe a systematic correlation between a rigid V2 syntax and the existence of C-related expletives, which occupy the clause-initial position (the so-called Vorfeld) e.g. in existential and presentative sentences:

(1) a. Es ritten drei Reiter durch das Tor hinaus. (German)
   EXPL rode three riders through the gate out
b. Pað voru blöð, blek og pennar á borðinnu. (Icelandic)
   EXPL were paper ink and pens on table
c. Det er løver i Afrika. (Norwegian)
   EXPL are lions in Africa
d. Er is hier veel sneeuw. (Dutch)
   EXPL is here much snow

This correlation seems to be contradicted by diachronic facts from the history of German. More precisely, there seems to be a chronological gap between the development of a rigid V2 syntax (end of the Old High German period, 11th/12th century, cf. Lenerz 1984, Axel 2007) and the grammaticalization of the Vorfeld-expletive *es* (in the Middle High German period, 13th/14th century; cf. Brugmann 1917, Behaghel 1923, Lenerz 1985, Abraham 1993).

This paper claims that the close connection between V2 and the existence of Vorfeld-expletives can be maintained, arguing that in German, the rise of a rigid V2 syntax was accompanied by the development of a C-related expletive do/da via a reanalysis of the discourse-anaphoric adverbs tho/do ‘then’ and thar/da ‘there’. The expletive do/da was later replaced by the new expletive *es*, but is still found in dialectal varieties of German such as Bavarian which make only sparse use of the Vorfeld- *es* (cf. Weiß 1998):

(2) Do/*Es is gsunga und gtnzr worn.
   EXPL is sung and danced been
   ‘There was singing and dancing.’

Focusing on presentative and existential constructions, the paper discusses the distribution of expletive do/da in current (dialectal) and historical varieties of German and proposes a new theoretical explanation for the correlation between C-related expletives and a rigid V2 syntax.