

Pro-drop as ellipsis: evidence from the interpretation of null arguments

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GOAL. In this talk, I defend a DP/NP-ellipsis (DPE) analysis of pro-drop cross-linguistically.

1 PRO-DROP AS DPE. The standard view is that there are different types of pro-drop phenomena across languages (*cf.* recently Holmberg 2010); *e.g.* DPE is at play in Japanese-like languages (*cf.* Kim 1999, Saito 2007, Takahashi 2008), while agreement is what licenses/identifies null arguments in Spanish-like languages (*cf.* Rizzi 1986, Barbosa 1995, 2009).

1.1 Occam's razor. Unless proven wrong, a unified theory of pro-drop should be favored over one that appeals to different accounts for different languages. While it is difficult to reduce pro-drop in agreement-less languages like Japanese to an agreement-related phenomenon, reducing pro-drop in Spanish-like languages to ellipsis makes sense, in particular given that ellipsis is independently attested in the grammar and universally available in principle.

1.2 Evidence. The main argument in favor of not reducing pro-drop in Spanish-like languages to DPE is that, as assumed since Oku (1998), unlike in *e.g.* Japanese (1), in Spanish (2) null subjects cannot be interpreted as lexical DPs (*i.e.* they do not allow a sloppy reading (SR)) (*cf.* also Saito 2007, Takahashi 2007). Contradicting this generalization, I present novel data from Spanish, where null subjects allow SR (3), showing that a DPE analysis is indeed possible for this type of language (SR is not available with an overt subject).

- (1) A. Mary-wa [zibun-no teian-ga saiyo-sare-ru-to] omotteiru. *Japanese*
Mary-TOP self-GEN proposal-NOM accept-PASS-PRS-that think (Oku 1998: 165)
'Lit. Mary thinks that self's proposal will be accepted.'
B. John-mo [[e] saiyo-sare-ru-to] omotteiru.
John-also accept-PASS-PRS-that think
'Lit. John also thinks that {it(*i.e.* her proposal)/his proposal} will be accepted.'
- (2) A: María cree que [su propuesta será aceptada]. *Spanish*
Maria believes that her proposal will.be accepted (Oku 1998: 165)
B: Juan también cree que [[e]será aceptada].
Juan also believes that will.be accepted
'Juan also believes that {it(*i.e.* her proposal)/*his proposal} will be accepted.'
- (3) A: El primer año de tesis, mi director me trató muy bien.
the first year of thesis my director cl.1sg(DAT) treat very well.
B: Pues, ¡a mi [e] no me hizo caso!
well to me NEG cl.1sg(DAT) made attention
Lit. 'Well, to me, {he (*i.e.* your director)/my director} didn't pay attention!'

1.3 Accounting for the 'exception'. I argue that (2) can be accounted for independently, in terms of binding. The SR results from the elided constituent containing a bound variable pronoun (BV) (as opposed to a referential one) (Lasnik 1976, Reinhart 1983, Fox 2000). Assuming that binding relations reduce to local Agree operations (Reuland 2005, 2011, Gallego 2010), I argue that the contrast in (2)-(3) is explained as follows: (i) a BV is only possible in constructions in which it can Agree locally (with the object clitic in (3)); (ii) in cases like (2) it cannot Agree locally, and thus the pronoun can only be referential (coreferential with, but not bound by, the antecedent), as a result of which the SR is not available. Regarding the availability of the SR in (1), I argue that it cannot be accounted for by the absence of agreement morphology, since many languages without subject-agreement do not allow SRs in contexts like (1) (Chinese (Takahashi 2007), Malayalam (Takahashi 2012), and Colloquial Singapore English (Sato 2012)). Concluding from this that the

availability of the SR reading in (1) is to be accounted for in terms of language-specific properties, I propose to adopt the analysis whereby Japanese zibun can undergo LF movement to a higher clause and be locally bound there (Pica 1991, Hestvik 1992, Ishino & Ura 2012).

2 IDENTITY CONDITION. If null arguments result from DPE, we expect this operation to be subject to the same conditions on the identity with a discourse antecedent as for instance VPE or sluicing. I show that the conditions under which DPE is licensed are the same as those under which a DP can be part of a larger elided constituent.

2.1 A coherent behavior. Fox (2000) proposes the following principle which summarizes the conditions under which a DP can be elided if it is part of a constituent targeted by ellipsis:

(4) *DP Parallelism condition on ellipsis* (adapted from Fox 2000: 117)

DPs in the elided constituent and its antecedent must either

- a. have the same referential value (Referential Parallelism), or
- b. be bound in identical dependencies (Structural Parallelism).

This accounts for the availability of both strict and sloppy readings in examples like (5): the pronoun in (5b) satisfies (4a) and the one in (5c) satisfies (4b).

- (5) a. John thinks he will win, and Bill does, too.
 b. John_i thinks he_i will win, and Bill_j does <think that he_i will win>, too. *Ref. Par.*
 c. John thinks he will win, and Bill does <think that he will win>, too. *Str. Par.*

Crucially, the same is observed in the realm of pro-drop: under the strict reading, the null subject in (3B) has a coreferential antecedent ('her proposal'), and under the SR, it is bound in a dependency which is identical to the dependency in which the subject in (3A) is involved. Other (non-ambiguous) cases are also accounted for: the subject in (6) satisfies (4a) and the anaphoric null object in (7) (in the null object language Japanese) satisfies (4b):

(6) Juan_i está aquí. [e]_i quiere hablar contigo. *Spanish*
 Juan is here wants talk with.you
 'Juan is here. He wants to talk to you.'

(7) Taroo_i-wa zibun_i-o semeta-ga, Ken_j-wa [e]_j kabatta. *Japanese*
 Taroo-TOP self-ACC blamed-while Ken-TOP defended (Takahashi 2010)
 'While Taroo blamed himself, Ken defended himself.'

2.2 Testing predictions. Anaphors are not referential, and are necessarily BVs, as in (7) (Reinhart 1983, Büring 2005). If pro-drop is to be accounted for under (4), we predict that null anaphors will not be licensed when the discourse context does not provide another anaphor bound in an identical dependency. This is borne out: in (8), although the anaphor has a coreferential antecedent, it cannot be elided, since ellipsis of anaphors can only be licensed via (4b). I show that the results are the same in languages with object-agreement like Basque.

(8) John_i-ga zibun_i-o #[e]_i nagusameta (koto). *Japanese*
 John-NOM self-ACC consoled (Hoji 1998: 130)
 'John consoled himself.'

I also test predictions relative to MaxElide effects (Takahashi & Fox 2005, Merchant 2008).

3 IN SUM, after defending that pro-drop boils down to DPE across all pro-drop languages, I push this result to its limits, by exploring the consequences for the theory of the licensing of ellipsis. I show that DPs are subject to the same identity condition on ellipsis both when they are part of a larger elided constituent and when they are the bare target of ellipsis.

Selected references ▪ Barbosa, M.P., 2009, "Two kinds of subject *pro*", *Studia Linguistica* 63:2-58 ▪ Gallego, Á., 2010, "Binding through Agree" *Linguistic Analysis* 34:163-192 ▪ Holmberg, A., 2010, "Null subject Parameters", *Parametric variation*, Biberauer *et al.* (eds), Cambridge: CUP, 88-124 ▪ Ishino, N. & H. Ura, 2012, "Towards a theory of split binding",

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