

SESSION III: NEW APPROACHES TO NULL SUBJECT PHENOMENA – ROMANCE-STYLE NULL SUBJECT LANGUAGES

1. THE FATE OF THE NULL SUBJECT PARAMETER

- Baker (forthcoming): 3 different types of parameters – microparameters, medioparameters, macroparameters; cf. also metaparameters
- Pica (2001: v-vi): “twenty years of intensive descriptive and theoretical research has shown [that] metaparameters do not exist.” → NSP = epiphenomenon resulting from the interaction of other parameters
- Sheehan (2006: 304): “... the effects traditionally associated with the NSP cannot be derived from a single parameter.”
- Newmeyer (2005): The parametric enterprise has lead nowhere ...
- Others: let’s look more carefully, drawing on what we’ve learned ...

2. NEW APPROACHES TO THE NULL-SUBJECT PHENOMENA: A THEORETICAL MOTIVATION TO THINK AGAIN

- GB typology of empty categories (and their overt counterparts):

(1)

ec type	[anaphoric]	[pronominal]	overt counterpart
DP-/A-trace	+	-	anaphors
Wh-/A'-trace	-	-	R-expressions
<i>pro</i>	-	+	pronominals
PRO	+	+	none

- 2 movement-generated empty categories (the traces) and 2 base-generated/lexically specified empty categories (*pro* and PRO)
- Copy Theory of Movement: no more traces → what about the base-generated empty categories?
- PRO: Hornstein (1998 et seq.) – Obligatory Control PRO as in (2) involves DP-traces (i.e. A-movement) and Non-obligatory Control PRO as in (3) = *pro* (!)

(2) a. *John* wants [PRO to play tennis]

b. *John* wants [~~John~~ to play tennis]

(3) a. PRO to err is human

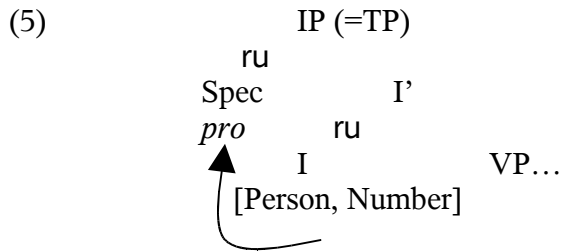
b. *pro* to err is human

(see Brody (1999 et seq.) for counter-arguments, Landau (1999 et seq.) for an Agree-based view; and Bobaljik & Landau (2007) for a very recent comment on this issue)

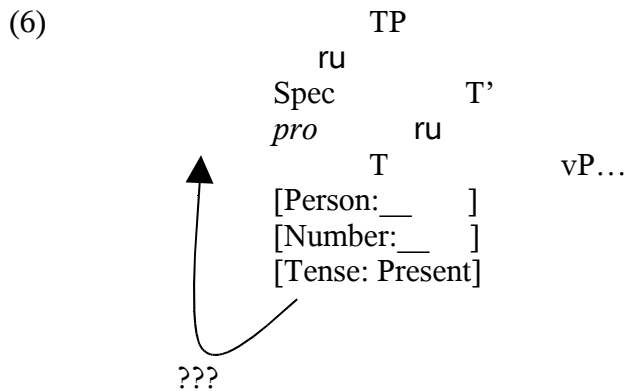
- *pro*: the importance of the EPP

(4) **Extended Projection Principle/EPP (original formulation)** (Chomsky 1982:10):

Every clause must have a subject occupying the privileged subject position that features in all clauses, i.e. Spec-IP/TP.



- Minimalist approaches to features:
 - Early (=pre-1995) and Classical (=1995: chapter 4) Minimalism: Checking-based – features vary i.r.o. interpretability: ϕ -features on nominals are assumed to be interpretable, but ϕ -features associated with I are viewed as uninterpretable
 - Probe/Goal (current) Minimalism: Agree-based – features vary i.r.o. valuation: ϕ -features on nominals are valued, whereas verbal ϕ -features are not.



- 2 possibilities:
 - (a) the uninterpretability of the ϕ -features associated with T is subject to parametric variation:
 - non-NSLs: ϕ on T is uninterpretable/valued
 - NSLs: ϕ on T is interpretable/valued
 (cf. Barbosa 1995, 2007 and Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou 1998); or
 - (b) *pro* does not in fact bear unvalued features, as originally proposed by Rizzi (1982, 1986); it is in fact a fully specified pronoun which simply undergoes deletion (cf. Holmberg 2005, Roberts 2007)

3. THE INTERPRETABLE ϕ ON T APPROACH

- EPP-satisfaction – various possibilities:
 - (a) the “English” way: DP-raising to Spec-TP
 - (b) the NSL way: V_D -raising to T
 [i.e. “V-raising checks the EPP-feature in the same way XP-raising does in non-*pro*-drop languages” (Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou/A&A 1998: 517)]
- (7) “It has been taken for granted that the strong V-feature is satisfied by V-raising to T (French vs English), not VP-raising to [Spec, T], and that the strong nominal feature is satisfied by raising of the nominal to [Spec, T], not raising of its head to T. **But the theoretical apparatus provides no obvious basis for this choice.**” (Chomsky 2001: 38)

- ‘T’-subjects (Borer 1986): the rich inflection in Romance-style NSLs can act as a subject:
 - “In languages with weak agreement, agreement affixes are not independent and therefore they cannot be characterized as having an independent categorial feature.” (A&A 1998: 522)
 - “In strong agreement languages, affixes, being pronominal [see (8) below – TB], have the semantic features which, in languages with weak agreement, are associated with pronouns.” (ibid.)
 - A&A on the “how rich?” question: “... there is no absolute correlate between richness of morphology and the availability of strong agreement in the sense of *pro*-drop ... We simply have to stipulate that in certain languages, agreement affixes have independent entries, thus qualifying as [+D].” (A&A 1998: 523)
- A&A (1998), like Barbosa (1995), develop this idea, proposing that null subject languages satisfy T’s EPP-feature by raising rich agreement-(i.e. D-)bearing V to T
- For A&A, rich agreement is equivalent to a lexical entry specifying that the language in question has “pronominal agreement”:

(8) “... the verbal agreement morphology in these languages includes a nominal element ([+D, +interpretable ϕ -features, potentially +Case]) ... This means that the verbal agreement affixes in, for instance, ... Greek ... have exactly the same status as the pronouns in the English paradigm.” (A&A1998: 516)
 (cf. also Bobaljik & Thráinsson’s (1998) reference to a “separate agreement morpheme”)
 → so NSLs once again differ from non-NSLs i.r.o. a **lexical** property
- Consequences of analysis:
 - (A) preverbal subjects are not in A-positions in NSLs; and
 - (B) VSO orders in NSLs never involve a null expletive
- Evidence for (a):

(9) a. *O Petros xtes meta apo poles prospathies sinandise* [Greek]
 the Petros yesterday after from many efforts met
 ti Maria
 the Maria
 “After many attempts, Petros (finally) met Maria yesterday”

b. **Jean probablement/hier a recontré Marie*
 Jean probably/ yesterday has met Marie

(10) a. *Epidi o Petros an erthi i Maria tha figi* [Greek]
 because the Petros if comes the Maria FUT leave
 “... because if Maria comes, Petros will leave”

b. **Because Mary if Peter comes will leave*

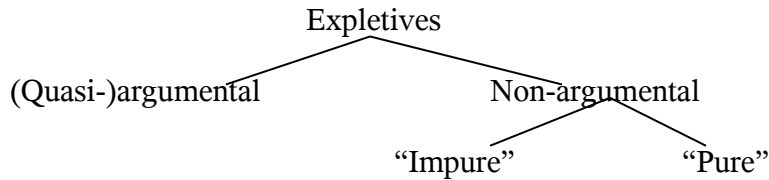
(11) a. *Temprano salia Julia de casa* [Spanish]
 early left Julia from house = “Julia left the house early”

b. **Temprano Julia salia de casa* (cf. Zubizarreta 1994)

arrived a child/the Jorgos/every friend mind
 “A child/Jorgos/every friend of mine arrived”

- Typology of expletives:

(16)



where it’s been proposed (cf. Chomsky 2001, 2004) that “impure” expletives (cf. Lasnik 1995) have a full set of ϕ -features (thereby allowing them to control agreement), whereas “pure” expletives (cf. English *there*) have only [person] and possibly [Person: 3]

- Recall the expletive highlighted by Taraldsen (2002), though: French *i*, which, unlike *il*, can’t control agreement:

(17) a. *Il est (*sont) arrivé trois filles* [French]

it is /are arrived three girls = “There arrived three girls”

b. *La fille qui est arrivée*
 the-FEMSG girl who is arrived = “the girl who has arrived”

c. *Les filles qui sont arrivées*
 the-FEMPL girls who are arrived = “the girls who have arrived”

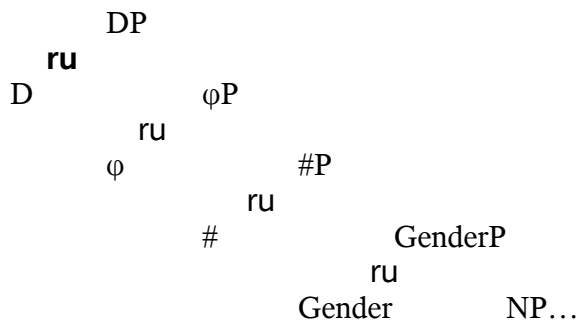
(cf. Rizzi & Shlonsky 2005: 18)

- Maybe *i* is like *there* in lacking an inherent [number] specification (i.e. [α number]) and either only featuring an unvalued [person] feature or having [Person: 3]?

Note, though, that *i* seems to differ from *il* in being compatible with definite associates (cf. (17) above).

So maybe *i* is not only more impoverished than *il* (an *it*-type expletive in agreement terms), but also more impoverished than *there* ...

(18)



(cf. Cowper & Hall 2006)

- How this might be relevant in the NSL context: some of them appear to have overt expletives which are compatible with definite associates too:

(19) a. *Gli e venuto la Maria* [Fiorentino, Brandi & Cordin 1989]

SCL is come the Maria = “Maria came”

a. *Inna-hu fatah- a l-‘awlaad-u l- baab-a* [Arabic, A&A 1998: 513]
 that- EXPL PERF.open-3SG.M the boys the door

- b. *Sitä olen minäkin käynyt Pariisissa* [Finnish, Holmberg 2005]
 EXPL have-1SG I-too visited Paris-INE
 “I have been to Paris too, actually”

- A&A prediction (1998: 516): “... we do not expect to find VSO language which does not have the option of dropping subjects.”
- Another typology, involving 2 parameters:
 - (A) the **EPP Parameter**: satisfy T’s EPP-feature via XP or X; and
 - (B) the **Spec-TP Parameter**: have Spec-TP as an “extra” subject position (cf. Bobaljik & Jonas 1996) or not

(20)

EPP (XP)	Spec-TP available	Language
+	+	Icelandic, Faroese
+	-	English
-	-	Greek
-	+	Celtic, Arabic

- Worth thinking about:
 - (i) Do V-raising languages generally have to be *pro*-drop languages? (cf. A&A 1998: 523, note 40 for a ‘no’). What about V-to-T languages more specifically? (A&A: ‘no’: “the relationship between *pro*-drop and V-raising is not biconditional. A language that is *pro*-drop must be V-raising, but a language that is V-raising is not necessarily *pro*-drop.” Cf. Biberauer & Roberts 2005 for discussion of what might be going on here ...)
 - (ii) Expletive *pro* has been dispensed with. What about referential *pro*?
 - (iii) What’s the locus of the differing agreement possibilities in VSO and SVO structures?

4. THE DELETION APPROACH

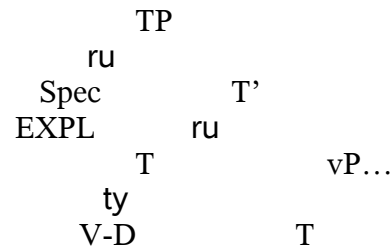
- Holmberg (2005): 2 Hypotheses
- (21) **Hypothesis A**: in null-subject languages, the ϕ -features of T are interpretable. SpecTP is therefore either absent or filled with an expletive (depending on whether T’s EPP-feature needs to be satisfied independently of its ϕ -features).

NB: in current Minimalism, an EPP-feature = a generalised movement trigger.

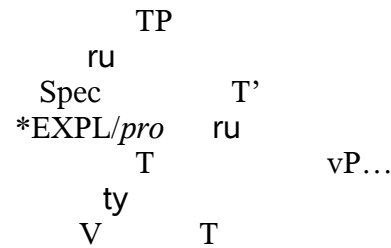
- (22) **Hypothesis B**: *pro* has interpretable features (contra Rizzi), occupies SpecTP and functions just like an overt pronoun. That *pro* is silent is thus a PF matter.

→ clear prediction: Hypothesis A predicts that it will be possible to have both an overt expletive and a null subject, whereas Hypothesis B predicts this to be impossible

(23) Hypothesis A:



(24) Hypothesis B:



- Finnish has an EPP-requirement in declaratives (cf. Holmberg & Nikanne 1993) and also has an overt expletive (cf. (19b) above):

- (25) a. **Sattui minulle onnettomuus*
happened to-me accident
b. *Minulle sattui onnettomuus*
to-me happened accident = “I had an accident”
c. *Sitä sattui onnettomuus*
EXPL happened accident = “I had an accident”

Cf. German (or any other V2 language: they all have a clear EPP-requirement, this time on C):

- (26) a. **Kam gestern ein Mädchen*
come-PAST yesterday a girl
b. *Gestern kam ein Mädchen*
yesterday come-PAST a girl = “Yesterday a girl came”
c. *Es kam gestern ein Mädchen*
it come-PAST yesterday a girl = “There came a girl yesterday”

- *Sitä* is not only possible where there are impersonal or generic subjects, though – cf. (19b) above and also (27) where focus movement has taken place (cf. Holmberg & Nikanne 2002):

- (27) *Minä sitä olen käynyt Pariisissa*
I EXPL have-1PL visited Paris-INE = “I’m the one who’s been to Paris”

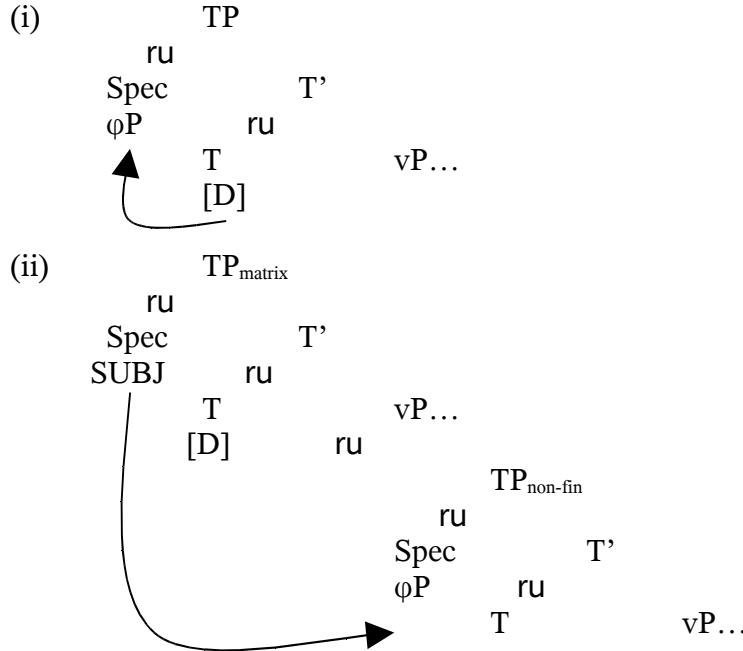
- The test: a subject containing a null subject

- (28) a. **Sitä puhun englantia*
EXPL speak-1SG English
b. **Oletteko (*sitä) käyneet Pariisissa?*
have-2PL-Q EXPL visited Paris-INE

- Hypothesis A makes the wrong prediction! The null subjects in Finnish therefore appear to be pronouns which are deleted at PF (*pro*).

- Typology of null subjects proposed by Holmberg (based on Cardinaletti & Starke/C&S 1999):

(29) a. “a null weak pronoun ... specified for φ -features, but lacking D and therefore incapable of (co)referring, without the help of a D-feature in I” (cf. Cowper & Hall 2006) = φ P



- b. a DP that is deleted under the usual conditions of recoverability (cf. Longobardi 1994); this type carries its own reference (cf. 1994)
- c. null Ns – the only “true” instance of classical *pro* as it genuinely is a noun lacking φ -features

- Where these are found:
 - (29a) in classic (Romance-style) NSLs where they have definite reference (i.e. are referential) because consistent NSLs are assumed to have I[D]; and in partial null-subject languages like Finnish and Hebrew, which don't have I[D], and where these null subjects are consequently interpreted as generic
 - **correlation**: NSLs have overt generic pronouns – this is because null subjects have to be interpreted referentially!
 - BUT: how do we get expletive null subjects in NSLs then??
 - (29b) in all languages wherever ellipsis occurs; and in partial null-subject languages wherever a null-subject receives a referential interpretation (e.g. 1st and 2nd person null subjects in Finnish)
 - the categorial status of pronouns may vary within a language (cf. Déchaine & Wiltschko 2002 who argue that English 1st and 2nd person are DPs, whereas 3rd person = φ P; see Cowper & Hall 2006 for counter-argumentation)
 - (29c) in “discourse *pro*-drop” languages since these have independently been argued to allow bare N argument (contra Déchaine & Wiltschko 2002)
- New typology of null-subject languages:

- (30) a. Consistent null-subject languages (Romance): I[D]
 b. Partial null-subject languages (Finnish, Brazilian Portuguese, etc): I
 c. Non-null-subject languages (Germanic): I
- Worth thinking about: Holmberg appears to do better than A&A on the VSO vs SVO agreement question (Holmberg can postulate an expletive pronoun in Spec-TP, whereas A&A can't and must therefore postulate "referential" vs "non-referential" agreement paradigms), but he ultimately faces the same problem as his proposal cannot actually account for the occurrence of null expletives in Romance-style languages: if I is always I[D], then not just generic subjects, but non-referential subjects more generally should have to be overt in consistent NSLs ...
 - A possible adjustment: Sheehan (2006) formalises the NSP as I [uD], i.e. instead of an interpretable D-feature (I[D]), the formal representation of NSLs entails I[UD]. Expletives can now be viewed as suitably impoverished pronouns, which are then deleted under identity with the features located on I (cf. also Roberts 2007).
 - Worth reading: Barbosa (2007) who compares European and Brazilian Portuguese, arguing that Hypothesis A is in fact correct for EP, while Hypothesis B seems right for BP (a partial NSL).

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