Null Object Licensing in Guaraní: A Person-Split *Pro*-Drop Account

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Outline

- Guaraní language cluster (map) and the presented Guaraní data
- Guaraní null objects and Person Split Pro-Drop in simple transitive, embedded clauses and under discourse anchoring
- Minimalist (narrow) syntax approach to agreement displacement phenomena sensitive to person hierarchy
- Back to some Guaraní Facts on Null Objects and Null Argument Licensing
The Guaraní Language Cluster

Data Collection 2011-2018 | Ache Language Studies Project (ALSP, DoBeS Program, VW Foundation | Germany)
Basic Description

- Guaraní languages consistently show agreement-based null objects
- rich in verbal agreement: subject and objects (core-agreement under $T^o$)
- direct/inverse alignment marking (agreement associated to little-$v^o$)
- core agreement competes for one single morphological slot
- which arguments controls agreement is selected $1P>2P>3P$ p—hierarchy

- null direct objects and null subjects
- agreement-based or discourse anchored null arguments are encountered in both EA and IA position
- Resulting pro-drop pattern is referred to as Person-Split Pro-Drop
Basic transitive construction:

(a) \(1 + 3 = 1\)
   [subject marking]
   DIRECT: S—V—O

(b) \(3 + 1 = 1\)
   [object marking]
   INVERSE: S—O—V

\(\rightarrow\) NDO compliance with Avoid Pronoun Principle (APP, Chomsky 1981)

(1) Mbyá Guaraní (Dep. Caazapá, Paraguay)

(a) Che a–ø–echa kuri *Ø / (i)chu–pe
   pron_{SG} 1SG_{A–DIR}–see adv_{PAS} *pro/DEM_{+DOM3}
   i. [ + pro–DO–drop] [ungrammatical]
   ii. [ – pro–DO–drop] ‘I saw him/her.’ (unmarked reading)

(b) Kuña Ø / che–vy che–r–echa kuri
   woman pro/ pron_{SG+DOM1/2} 1SG_{B–INV}–see adv_{PAS}
   i. [ + pro–DO–drop] ‘This woman saw me.’ (unmarked reading)
   ii. [ – pro–DO–drop] ‘This woman saw ME.’ (emphatic reading)
Overt DO licensing in Guaraní Syntax

- Agreement, DOM and object raising shows [+animate, +specific] DOs move out of their base position in comp—VP
- 1st and 2nd person DOs move as high as spec—TP in an expanded functional domain
What can Guaraní-style pro-drop contribute to linguistic theory?

- Most generative accounts (European or European-based languages) treat null direct objects (NDOs) and null subject (NSs) as clearly distinct syntactic phenomena.

- Only discourse anchored(radical) pro-drop systems (East-Asian languages) are characterized as licensing both NSs and NDOs in overall parallel fashion (Huang 1984, 1989; Robert & Holmberg 2010; Roberts 2010; Barbosa 2011a, b, 2018).

- Guaraní-style pro-drop shares features with both these language types.
Person-Hierarchy Agreement

- systems with genuine (subject and) object agreement are widely attested cross-linguistically
- single core agreement slot may be controlled by either the EA or the IA (1/2>3 | 1>2>3 or 2>1>3 + additional distinction in the 3P: obviation 3’>3)
- Basque, Georgian, Amerindian languages such as the group of Algonquian languages and Guaraní languages from the TG language family (Jensen, 1998; Rodrigues, 1990)
- Many languages with person-hierarchy agreement permit DO to be omitted
How to model Guaraní-style pro-drop?

- recent minimalist theories on the licensing of null arguments provide us with most formal ingredients to model the Person-Split Pro-Drop

- debates regarding the nominal typologies of empty categories for both NS and NDOs (i.e. Barbosa, 2011a,b, 2019; Roberts 2019; Tomioka 2003; Cyrino 2012, Cyrino & Lopes, 2016)

- (new insight into Guaraní grammar) revealing that feature clusters related to pro-drop seems to pattern (in part) with consistent and partial null-subject languages, as well as discourse anchored pro-drop

- The missing piece: syntax theory modelling cyclic/multiple agreement, person-hierarchy effects and inverse alignment (Bejar 2003, Bejar & Rezac 2008; Oxford 2014, 2015, 2017a,b,c)
Where is the **Person-Split** in the Guaraní Pro-Drop System?

- Asymmetry between 1P/2P versus 3P plays a prominent role
- Person-Split holds for Subjects and Objects alike
- 1P and 2P internal arguments **must** be null in discourse-independent matrix clauses: encoding a **non-emphatic** interpretation (compliance with the APP)
- 3P null objects are **not allowed** in discourse-independent matrix clauses
- 1P/2P null objects can/must be null in embedded clauses and establish binding/co-reference with a higher DP, while 3P null object cannot do that (so easily)
1P| 2P null objects in embedded clauses:

(2) Paĩ-Tavỹterã /Kaiowá (Dep. Amambay|Paraguay)

(a) Che₁ he'í Pedro–pe [ Maria che–ve₁/Ø₁ che–r–echa–ma]
pron₁SG say NPR₁DOM₃ NPR pron₁SG+DOM₁₂/pro 1SG_B–INV–see–ANT
i. [−pro–DO–drop] ‘I tell Pedro that Maria saw ME’ [emphatic reading]
ii. [+pro–DO–drop]. ‘I tell Pedro that Maria saw me’ [unmarked reading]

(b) Pedro he'í che₁–ve [ Maria che–ve₁/Ø₁ che–r–echa–ma]
NPR say pron₁SG+DOM₁₂ NPR pron₁SG+DOM₁₂/pro 1SG_B–INV–see–ANT
i. [−pro–DO–drop] ‘Pedro tells me that Maria saw ME’ [emphatic reading]
ii. [+pro–DO–drop] ‘Pedro tells me that Maria saw me’ [unmarked reading]

→ NDO compliance with Avoid Pronoun Principle (Chomsky 1981)
Back to the **Person-Split** in the Guaraní Pro-Drop System?

- 3P null objects are impossible in discourse-independent matrix constructions (example 1a)
- 3P referential \([±\text{animate}; +\text{specific}]\) direct objects can be null when anchored in discourse (example 3)
- While 3P subjects can be null in embedded structures and bound by matrix DP, 3P null objects cannot do that — or not so easily (example 4)
- **Repair Strategy:** the pro-drop system inserts a first-person element to establish binding with a 3P DP in the next clause up --> **Indexical Shifting Pattern**
Null 3P Objects in discourse contexts and in agreementless environments

(3) Paraguayan Guaraní (Asunción | Paraguay)

**Speaker A:** Kuehe a-h-echa peteĩ kóche i-vaĩ-va.

Yesterday 1SG$_A$–DIR–see NUM$_{one}$ car 3SG-ugly-NLZ

‘Yesterday I saw an ugly car (literally a car that is ugly).’

**Speaker B:** ___S___ A-h-echa ___O___ avei

1SG$_A$–DIR–see as well

‘I saw it/one (too).

• Sloppy Reading (B saw a different ugly car)
• Strict Reading (B saw the same ugly car as A)

| Tonhauser, 2014, p. 38 example 47 |
3P null arguments in embedded clauses:

(4) Paï-Tavýterã /Kaiowá (Dep. Amambay | Paraguay)

(a) Juan_{i} kwa’a [Ø_{i}*/k*há’_{i}/k*–o–h–echa–ø–gue Maria–pe ]

  NPR know pro /DEM 3P_{A–DIR}–see–AG–PAS NPR_{+DOM}  

  ‘Juan_{i} knows that (he_{i})_{k} saw Maria.’

(b) Juan_{i} kwa’a [Maria o–h–echa–ø–gue Ø_{i}/ichu–pe_{k}]

  NPR know NPR 3P_{A–DIR}–see–AG–PAS pro /DEM_{+DOM}  

  ‘Juan_{i} know that Maria saw (him_{i})’

> given that Guaraní has agreement-based null objects a repair strategy seems to be available
3P null arguments in embedded clauses

(4) Paĩ-Tavýterã /Kaiowá Guaraní (Dep. Amambay|Paraguay)

(c) Juan₁ kwa [ Maria ₀ᵢ/che–veᵢ  pro/pron₁PS–DOM₁|₂. 1SG₉–INV–see–AG–PAS

i. [–pro–DO–drop] ‘Juan₁ knows that Maria saw HIMᵢ/*₉
     → [indexical shifting, emphatic reading]

ii. [+pro–DO–drop] ‘Juan₁ knows that Maria saw himᵢ/*₉
    → [indexical shifting, unmarked reading]
What about agreement-based null objects in generative theory?

“If consistent, agreement licensed null subjects are only found where T° has φ–features, D–features and EPP–feature, then we expect exactly the same to hold at the v–level. We therefore expect to find consistent, agreement–licensed null objects just where v° has φ–features, a D–feature and most important, an EPP–feature. It therefore follows that such null objects will only be found on OV languages, since the presence of EPP–features on v° will guarantee OV order ...”

(Roberts, 2010, p. 78)

> the exact nature of all agreement heads (v°/T°) in the narrow syntax
Cyclic | Multiple Agreement
Articulated φ-structures AGR° heads

- phase-based or cyclic (narrow) syntax approach to agreement displacement phenomena sensitive to person hierarchy (Bejar 2003, Bejar & Rezac 2009) generating direct/inverse alignment (Oxford 2015, 2017a,b,c)

- Model preference for agreement control by the internal argument derived by cyclicity (Bejar & Rezac 2009); or strictly downward probe-goal implementation in a cyclic and phase-based account (Oxford 2014, 2015)

- IA agreement emerges as the primary agreement relation, EA agreement is the result of agreement displacement

- articulated (Person) π-Probes (as a matter of parameterization) on core and secondary agreement head (for my Guaraní analysis: T° and v°) containing a feature bundle of person features (((3 (2 (1) (Bejar & Rezac 2009)
 1 — speaker
 2 — participant
 3 — π Person
Equidistance of IA and EA
(Oxford 2014, 2015, 2017a,b,c)

- as result of AGREE with complex $v^\circ_{[\text{u}^\pi]}$ probes, IA goal may undergo raising to spec-$vP$
- resulting in equidistance of EA and certain IAs (Oxford, 2015, 2017a)
- IA are thus available to further derivation under $T^\circ$
- approach predicts true multiple agreement under $T^\circ$ with both the IA and EA in the narrow syntax (Oxford 2015)
- $1P+2P = 1|2P$
- portmanteau agreement + multiple licensing of agreement-based $pro$
Agree under $v^o$

(1) Mbyá Guaraní (Dep. Caazapá, Paraguay)

(b) Kuña $\emptyset$ / che–vy che–r–echa kuri woman pro/ pron$_{1SG+DOM1|2}$ 1SG$_B$–INV–see adv$_{PAS}$
   i. [+ pro–DO–drop] ‘This woman saw me.’ (unmarked reading)
   ii. [− pro–DO–drop] ‘This woman saw ME.’ (emphatic reading)

- 1P internal argument $\varphi$ [π: 3,2,1]
- Probe under $v^o$ is fully articulated $u\varphi$ [u,π: 3,2,1]
- 1P is a full match for complex probe under $v^o$
- 1P(or 2P) IA raise into spec–vP (≠ 3P)
- spec–vP they are equidistant with the EA, hence both IA and EA are available for further derivation under $T^o$ (Oxford 2015, 2017a,b)
- 1P(or 2P) objects ultimately land in spec-TP (subject-like pro-drop pattern)
Multiple agreement-based *pro* Portmanteau Agreement $1+2 = 1|2$

(5) Mbyá–Guaraní (MG) (Caazapá | Paraguay)

$Ø/\text{che} \quad \text{ro–}ø–\text{echa} \quad Ø/\text{nde–vv}$

$Ø/\text{pron}_{1\text{SG}} \quad 1/2\text{SG–DIR–see} \quad \text{pro/}\text{pron}_{2\text{SG}+\text{DOM}_{1|2}}$

i. [+ pro–DO–drop] ‘(I) saw (you).’ (unmarked reading)

ii. [− pro–drop] ‘I saw YOU’ (emphatic reading)
Conclusion

► Objects and Subject act in rather parallel fashion when it comes to null argument licensing (leading to features like multiple pro; pro in indexical shifting)

► Asymmetry between 1P/2P versus 3P plays a stronger role in the licensing of null arguments (than asymmetries related to grammatical function)

► Person-Split Pro-Drop System can be modelled by introducing a narrow syntax approach on cyclic and multiple agreement (Bejar 2003, Bejar & Rezac 2008; Oxford 2014, 2015, 2017a,b,c)
Thank you!

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References


