ISSUE: pro and its relation to agreement

BACKGROUND: part A

- ASL has Different types of verb classes (Padden 1989)
- Theory #1 (Lillo-Martin 1986, 1991): manual agreement counts only as a licenser
- Theory #2 (Bahan et al. 2000): non-manual agreement counts as a licenser (e.g., head tilt and eye gaze)

(1) a. AGREEING for person
   - Did John send Mary the paper?
   - YES, a-SEND

(2) a. AGREING (for location)
   - BOOK: i. a-MOVE-OVER-FINISH
     "I moved the book to that place"
   - Plain: i. AX - LOVE FISH
     "I love fish!"

PREDICTION TESTED

- Possible where pro is possible: with both agreeing and plain verbs
  - pro accompanied by manual agreement can be signed in neutral space
  - pro NOT accompanied by manual agreement: cannot be signed in neutral space

ACCOUNT: Evidence for (the lack of) pro Agreement in Romance

- Minimalist Program \rightarrow new tool-kit \rightarrow what's pro\textsubscript{ASL} (Holmberg 2005)

(14) A. Hypothesis A

The nullness is specified for interpretable-subject features, values the uninterpretable-features of age, and moves to Spec,IP, just like any other subject. This implies that the nullness is a phonological matter: the null subject is a pronoun that is not pronounced.

B. Hypothesis B

There exist all null in all noun constructions. Instead, Age (the set of defaults) of I is itself interpretable; Age is a referential, definite pronoun, albeit a pronoun phonologically affix. As such, Age is also assigned a subject 0-role, possibly by virtue of heading a chain whose foot is at VP, receiving the relevant 0-features, expressed as an

The intensification test above adds a novel tool for disambiguating the two hypotheses for a null subject language.

(15) If there is a pronounal but silent at PF, then there is no reason not to be able to have [ε intensifier], as in Japanese (consistent with the Hypothesis A). But if there is nothing nominal (i.e. of type [ε], for instance) for the intensifier to adjoin to, the construction will be impossible (consistent with the Hypothesis B).

SOME CONSEQUENCES (directions for future research)

- Agreement in SL is typologically "odd" (Lillo-Martin & Meier, 2009, in prep.)
- ASL patterns with East Asian in having pro, whose tie to agreement requires independent support
- SL null subject \# Romance null subject (pro exists in ASL but not in Romance languages)
- ASL null agreement (manual Lillo-Martin and non-manual Bahan et al. 2000) parallels agreement in Romance languages
- ASL null argument requires an account outside Lillo-Martin (1991) and Bahan et al. (2000)

If pro\textsubscript{ASL} \approx pro\textsubscript{Romance} then we expect pro + intensifier in Romance

- Romance languages allow an adnominal intensifier to adjoin to nouns and pronouns (König & Siemund 2008)
- Romance null subject languages disallow [pro + intensifier] (also holds for Serbo-Croatian and Hebrew)

(11) a. La misma persona 
   The teacher is the same person
   saw the accident

b. Podemos preguntar a María porque ella misma vió el accidente
   We can ask Maria because she saw the accident
   the accident herself

- Many Romance languages allow null subjects ("consistent null subject languages," Biber et al. 2010)

(12) Podemos preguntar a María, porque le me lo dijo
   We can ask Maria because she told me
   "Do"

- Romance null subject languages disallow [pro + intensifier] (also holds for Serbo-Croatian and Hebrew)

(13) Podemos preguntar a María, porque le me lo dijo
    We can ask Maria because (she) herself told me

Null subject in ASL ≠ null subject in Romance languages

REFERENCES


