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# Review Of "The Syntactic Recoverability Of Null Arguments" By Y. Roberge

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The Syntactic Recoverability of Null Arguments by Yves Roberge

Review by: Donna Jo Napoli

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dividual basis, as W has noted. This choice would then be more dependent on economic prestige.

In her final chapter, W discusses the differences between first- and second-generation immigrants to Catalonia with regard to the learning of Catalan. For those immigrants who do not live in a predominantly Catalan neighborhood, W hypothesizes that those who were born outside Catalonia are more likely to learn Catalan than those who are native-born of immigrant parents. She says that immigrants who have moved to Catalonia are not part of a social group when they first arrive, so it is not a great risk for them to learn Catalan and thus define themselves as members of the Catalan social group. Those who are born in Catalonia, however, grow up with a social identity, which for immigrants is usually Castilian. These speakers must accept the risk of rejection by their own social group if they wish to learn Catalan. W points out that other researchers have keyed on the cognitive-linguistic background of immigrant children, but that in view of her findings in Catalonia it might be worthwhile to examine the social risks as well.

In spite of shortcomings in the design of the matched-guise test, Woolard's book is a valuable study. She explains very clearly the complexity of bilingualism in Catalonia, and her ethnographic portrait elucidates the feelings and conflicts between Catalans and Castilian immigrants. This book will be of great interest to researchers in the areas of bilingualism, language prestige, ethnic identity, and language planning, and to anyone who wants to understand fully the unusual status of the Catalan language in Spain.

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**The syntactic recoverability of null arguments.** By YVES ROBERGE. Kingston & Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990. Pp. x, 217. \$34.95.

Reviewed by DONNA JO NAPOLI, *Swarthmore College*

Roberge begins his book with an introduction to the theoretical framework adopted, that of Government and Binding (GB) Theory. A survey of previous accounts of null arguments, particularly in Romance languages (the primary data base for the book), follows. The prose is clear and easy to understand, despite the fact that the works being summarized are full of complex arguments. The reader can be deceived into thinking this is a rather simple book; but the remaining chapters disabuse one of this initial false impression. There are four chapters in all: 'Syntactic theory and null arguments' (10–34), 'Null arguments in Romance languages' (35–84), 'On clitic doubling' (85–151), and 'Clitics and agreement markers' (152–80).

The main thesis of the book has two parts. First, all empty categories must be licensed, a familiar concept in GB and one that R calls the RECOVERABILITY

PRINCIPLE (8). Second, two mechanisms for licensing null arguments are a rich enough inflection (AGR) and clitics. The notion of recoverability itself is not explored explicitly. But from the very fact that R claims that AGR and clitics can license because they have the relevant features of person, number, and, sometimes, gender and Case, we are led to the idea that recoverability here means not just predictability, but an actual subset relation between sets of assigned roles or features (as in Larson 1990:613, n. 14). For example, an act of eating predictably involves something eaten (or to eat). But we cannot deduce from that pragmatic fact that a verb like *eat* has a syntactically present null object in a sentence like *John ate already*. With R's approach a verb could have a null argument only if there is some syntactically realized element that will allow us access to all the relevant information about the null argument. Since lexical pronouns in Romance languages are feature bundles for person, number, gender, and Case, only if this set of features can be recovered about a null argument will the null argument be licensed.

Pro, the null pronoun, is allowed in subject position of languages with a rich AGR (where R gives a nice discussion of the nontransparency of the qualification of 'rich', beginning on p. 47). Pro is allowed in object position if an object clitic is attached to the verb. (R takes the position that object clitics are base generated as sisters to V under a higher V node, where object pro is then a sister to the higher V. Arguments for base generation of clitics are reviewed in §2.2.4, 'Base generation of clitics'.) Pro is allowed in an object of a P position if a clitic is attached to the P; pro is allowed in a complement of an N position if a clitic is attached to the head N. (Both of these last two options are realized in Modern Hebrew and Arabic, though not in the Romance languages.)

R's approach seems eminently sound. There is one question, however. With this approach we expect null arguments to be allowed anywhere a lexical pronoun can occur, so long as the relevant features can be recovered. But null subjects, in particular, offer a challenge. In general in Romance, pronouns (clitic or otherwise) are phonetically distinguished for person, number, and Case. But only the third-person pronouns are phonetically distinguished for gender. Yet we know that these pronouns have a gender feature, since agreement processes involving gender can apply to first- and second-person pronouns in the same way they do to third:

(1) ITALIAN SUBJECT PRONOUNS:

(*Io*) *sembro* {*bello* (m.sg.)/*bella* (f.sg.)}.

'(I) seem beautiful.'

(*Tu*) *sembri* {*bello* (m.sg.)/*bella* (f.sg.)}.

'(You) seem beautiful.'

(*Lui*) *sembra bello*, (*lei*) *sembra bella*.

'(He) seems beautiful, (she) seems beautiful.'

(*Noi*) *sembriamo* {*belli* (m.pl.)/*belle* (f.pl.)}.

'(We) seem beautiful.'

(*Voi*) *sembrate* {*belli* (m.pl.)/*belle* (f.pl.)}.

'(You all) seem beautiful.'

(*Loro*) *sembrano* {*belli* (m.pl.)/*belle* (f.pl.)}.

'(They) seem beautiful.'

## (2) ITALIAN OBJECT CLITICS:

<i>Carlo mi considera bello</i> (m.sg.)/ <i>bella</i> (f.sg.)	
<i>ti</i>	<i>bello</i> (m.sg.)/ <i>bella</i> (f.sg.)
<i>lo</i>	<i>bello</i> (m.sg.)
<i>la</i>	<i>bella</i> (f.sg.)
<i>ci</i>	<i>belli</i> (m.pl.)/ <i>belle</i> (f.pl.)
<i>vi</i>	<i>belli</i> (m.pl.)/ <i>belle</i> (f.pl.)
<i>li</i>	<i>belli</i> (m.pl.)
<i>le</i>	<i>belle</i> (f.pl.)

'Carlo considers {me/you/him/her/us/you all/them} beautiful.'

(Certainly past participle agreement with a first- or second-person direct-object clitic is optional in many varieties of Italian; cf. e.g. *Ci ha {visto (m.sg.)/visti (m.pl./viste (f.pl.)}* '(He) has seen us'. This fact does not detract from the overall point here, however.)

Given facts like those in 1–2, we would expect *pro* to occur only where all its features can be recovered. Object *pro* in Romance is no problem for R's theory, because it is licensed by clitics, which carry all the relevant features (as seen in 2). But subject *pro* is problematic, because AGR in Romance languages with null subjects shows only the features of person and number, never gender or Case. Why, then, is AGR in any Romance language rich enough to license subject *pro*? Certainly, one could argue that the feature of Case is recoverable by the very fact that the *pro* in question will be coindexed with AGR, where AGR can be associated with only one Case (that of the subject). The question then boils down to this: why is the feature of gender allowed NOT to be recovered? I would hope and expect that the answer would not threaten R's proposal, since the proposal works so well otherwise.

R shows that the so-called 'null subject parameter' (the properties associated with which he lists on p. 24) is a misnomer. He gives strong evidence that free inversion of subjects does not correlate with the possibility of subject *pro* (see §2.4, 'Free inversion'). He brings up a series of constructions whose proper analysis is potentially challenging to his hypothesis and shows in each case that a viable analysis consistent with his hypothesis exists. Included here is a brief overview of the literature on causatives (§2.5 'Causatives'), an extensive discussion of clitics in coordinate structures (in various parts of Ch. 4), complex inversion in Standard French (§3.4, 'A note on complex inversion'), and a detailed account of both subject doubling and object doubling.

The potential problem with doubling constructions arises out of Case Theory. If a clitic is present as well as a lexical NP for a given argument slot, both of them cannot be assigned the same Case. R argues that there are two possible solutions compatible with his overall approach, and he does not choose between them. While the discussion is too complex to reproduce here, I will outline part of it briefly. Let there be a parameter of whether or not a clitic absorbs Case. If clitics absorb Case in Language A, then doubling is disallowed (as in Standard French), because the lexical NP cannot receive Case. If clitics do not absorb Case in Language B, then doubling is allowed (as in Colloquial French for subject doubling) because the lexical NP can be assigned Case. But

the plot thickens for object doubling, because we find that, in those languages that allow direct object doubling, a P always introduces the lexical object (§3.2.2, 'Case assignment'). R, following Jaeggli 1986, argues that these Ps are dummies (111); therefore, their most likely motivation is the need for a Case-Assigner for their object. Why can't the V assign Case? R suggests that case absorption by a clitic has two parts. Case assigners have a feature of Case (call it [+C]) and a feature of being able to assign Case (call it [+CA]). If a clitic absorbs both features, doubling is disallowed. But if a clitic absorbs only the feature [+CA], the V is left with a Case to assign but without the ability to assign it. Hence a P is introduced to 'transmit' the Case of the V to the direct object in these doubling constructions.

The argument here is acrobatic (in the GB tradition), but that fact should not obfuscate the more important fact that such an analysis is empirically adequate in the face of data that seem otherwise capricious.

Another phenomenon examined by R is extraction out of doubling constructions—not just object doubling, which has been covered in other literature, but also subject doubling. R tests both extraction by WH-movement (an extraction that is apparent at S-Structure) and extraction by Quantifier Raising (an extraction that is not apparent until Logical Form). He argues that some languages disallow extraction at both SS and LF, while others disallow it only at SS in these doubling constructions (§3.3, 'Extractions'). The book ends with an extended discussion of the differences between agreement markers and clitics, lest one should be (naturally) inclined to want to conflate the two.

The book gives a rich, if (to my eye) rather provincial, set of references, staying for the most part within the GB literature. R's review of the literature cited is incisive, and his own contributions are insightful. At several points he offers tantalizing hypotheses and then leaves them a bit too quickly for my taste. I look forward to his continuation of these explorations.

One point I needed further comment on, for example, concerns the third-person reflexive clitic. R chooses French as his example. He argues that *se* cannot be a true clitic, because if it were the pro in object position, which is an anaphor, would be bound by the antecedent (in his examples, the subject) and still be the foot of a clitic chain. The problem here stems from a condition on clitic chains that is presented in Borer (1984:118) and adopted by R (§3.3.4, 'C-Chains'), whereby the foot of a clitic chain must be locally free. But an anaphor cannot be locally free. I will not go into the definition of 'clitic chain' or the arguments for the condition appealed to here, because neither tangent would be relevant to my question (and both would significantly lengthen this review). It is important to R, then, to argue that the pro in reflexive sentences is not part of a clitic chain, which would follow if *se* in a sentence like 3 is not a clitic:

(3) *Jean se*            *voit* **pro**.

CL.REFL

'Jean sees himself.'

R points to a range of differences between *se* and other third-person clitics, including the facts that *se* does not show features of case, number, or gender,

is never involved in clitic doubling in languages that allow doubling (such as Romanian and River Plate Spanish), and can be 'inherent' (that is, can appear with certain verbs without relating to any argument slot). He argues that *se* does not play a role in recovering the object *pro*, since the antecedent will supply all the information necessary to recover this anaphor *pro*.

My question here is, what is the status of first- and second-person clitics when they occur in reflexive contexts, such as 4?

- (4) *Je me vois.*  
'I see myself.'

Are we to assume that there are two *me*'s, one a true clitic which has person, number, gender, and Case (where gender and Case are—accidentally—not phonetically distinguished), and the other a nonclitic like *se*? If that is so, why is it that *me* and not *se* appears in 4. That is, if *se* is not coindexed with an object *pro*, why does it occur only when third-person reflexives are involved? And why does precisely *me* and not any other form occur when first-person singular reflexives are involved, such as in 4? I need more discussion here before I can be convinced (and I would like to be convinced, because the overall approach seems useful).

Another question concerns R's quick reference to Rizzi 1986 in §1.2.3, 'A theory of *pro*'. He points out Italian examples such as 5:

- (5) *Questo conduce alla seguente conclusione.*  
'This leads to the following conclusion.'

Rizzi argues that there is a *pro* object of *conduce* in 5. R shows in Ch. 2 that the conditions for licensing a *pro* are not met in 5, but he never returns to the question of what the proper analysis of 5 is. In particular, the issue of why the sentences studied by Rizzi allow only for an indefinite-referent interpretation (as with indefinite-subject *si* sentences in Italian) demands an account.

In sum, this book offers a wealth of data from Standard French, Colloquial French, Pied Noir French, Spanish, River Plate Spanish (two varieties), Argentinian Spanish, Uruguayan Spanish, Italian, Trentino, Fiorentino, Romanian, Portuguese, Arabic, and Modern Hebrew. It gives a thorough and clear discussion of relevant literature within GB. It defends a plausible hypothesis. I could easily imagine this book serving as a text for a course on comparative Romance syntax, where each construction touched on in the book could be backed up with articles specifically on that construction. I recommend the book for all syntacticians, and it is a must for Romance scholars in particular.

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**Conditions for second language learning: Introduction to a general theory.** By BERNARD SPOLSKY. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989. Pp. x, 272.

Reviewed by ROBERT DEKEYSER, *University of Pittsburgh*

It has been about five years since Ellis 1986 provided second language acquisition (SLA) researchers and those interested in the scientific basis for the art of second language teaching with a comprehensive overview of SLA. The amount of research in this field has grown very rapidly since then, both in quantity and quality, and therefore a new overview is particularly welcome.

The goal of S's book is precisely 'to explore the requirements for a general theory of second language learning by examining the conditions under which languages are learned, and to consider the relevance of such a theory for language teaching' (2). In other words, it is supposed to be a broad overview of SLA. The originality of the book consists mainly of two things: the use of one of the author's own studies to test 'the model' at the end of the book, and the way the book is organized around a set of 'conditions for second language learning', as reflected in the title.

These 74 (sic) conditions are rather heterogeneous in nature. Not only are they of different kinds—necessary or typical, categorical or graded—but they also vary from 'real conditions' (dealing with social or psychological determinants of success in second language learning) to more general statements, such as Condition 13: 'Ability to use language knowledge varies in accuracy' (18). Many of these short statements cannot render the complexity of the issues involved, and at times they seem outright trivial, e.g. Condition 51: 'The more time spent learning any aspect of a second language, the more will be learned' (23). At any rate, they are a poor substitute for a conclusion or summary at the end of a chapter or section.

Even though the book is general in nature, some areas of SLA clearly receive more emphasis than others. There is more discussion of the sociolinguistic context (in particular accommodation theory and the theory of ethnolinguistic vitality—see Ch. 9, 'The social context') than in most SLA books; and there is more analysis of the different components of knowledge and skill (see especially Ch. 3, 'Knowing how to use a language') and how they can be tested (see Ch. 5, 'Measuring knowledge of a second language'). Particularly welcome is the discussion of HOW (certain types of) attitudes and motivation differentially affect certain aspects of second language learning (Ch. 10, 'Attitudes and motivation'). Another strength of the book is the inclusion of many examples from