pro and lack thereof: What ASL reveals about Spanish.

Claim: The purpose of this paper is two-fold: to (a) reconcile observations about *pro* in ASL with those of other null subject languages (NSLs) and (b) support a particular analysis of the null subject in consistent NSLs like Spanish. As a consequence of the data explored in the paper, a new account of *pro* in ASL arises; the account carries ramifications for the nature of *agreement* in ASL.

Background: Lillo-Martin (1991) argues that ASL has 2 types of *pro*—a Spanish/Italian and a Chinese/Japanese variety. The Spanish/Italian-type (pro_{Agr}) occurs with agreeing verbs only (and is licensed by Agr), while the Chinese/Japanese-type ($pro_{\neg Agr}$) occurs with plain verbs (Padden 1989). However, in view of the current (Minimalist) approaches to *pro* in languages like Spanish (NSL_{Agr}), *pro* in its traditional formulation (cf. Rizzi 1986) must be dispensed with; instead, it is either a real pronominal void of phonological content (Holmberg 2005) or a category non-existent all together, and all the relevant feature checking is done with the Agr, which itself is pronominal and referential Agr (Barbosa 2009). Crucially, the only real *pro*—a minimally specified nominal—is found in languages like Chinese/Japanese, i.e. $pro_{\neg Agr}$. Translated into the terms relevant for ASL, $pro_{\neg Agr}$ is expected with plain verbs; however, the null subject of an agreeing verb is either a syntactically present but phonologically null full pronominal or an element non-existent all together. In this paper, I introduce a novel diagnostic in order to discern between the two and argue, on the basis of empirical data, that the element is syntactically real. This analysis sheds further light onto the parallel issue in Romance: if the element in question is syntactically real—albeit being phonologically null—then in terms of the diagnostic, it is expected to pattern with its ASL counterpart.

Issue and account: I propose adnominal intensification (Eckardt 2002, (1)) as a diagnostic for a presence of the relevant (pro)nominal element in syntax. Contra Burzio (1986), Koulidobrova (2009) shows that not only is the adnominal intensification of the null subject in ASL possible but that it also tracks the difference between the two types of *pro* in Lillo-Martin (1991). That is, the difference between intensified pro_{Agr} and $pro_{\neg Agr}$ is evident (cf. (2)). Further, if pro_{Agr} is licensed in ASL in the manner parallel its counterpart in Romance, we expect adnominal intensification of the null subject in NSL to be possible as well. However, (3) shows that the null subject in Romance cannot be intensified, while in ASL and Japanese it can. This leads to three separate conclusions: a) the null subject in Spanish is better described in non-existent (and hence, not a subject to adnominal intensification, since there is nothing nominal to intensify), and, instead, Agr is referential, as argued by Barbosa; b) pro_{Agr} in ASL is, in fact, a minimally specified nominal, much like the one we see in Japanese; c) in ASL, agreement is doing something other than licensing *pro* (or, in the current framework, valuing phi-features). This leads to a possibility that what we have thus far been calling *agreement* is actually something else entirely. On that note, I subject ASL data to a diagnostic for cliticization (Preminger 2009, (4)) and offer a conclusion that *agreement* in ASL is better defined as *clitic doubling*. On this view, the agreement morpheme is actually an overt pronominal having cliticized to the verb, doubling either an overt or a covert element (see Tsakali 2007 on the possibility of clitic-doubling of null elements). This suggestion pays homage to the original proposal in Kegl (1987), recently resurrected in Nevins (2009).

(1) a. Let f be a function on D_e. Then Lift1(f) := *f*: $D_{((e, t), t)} \rightarrow D_{((e, t), t)}$ is defined as follows: If $Q \in D((e, t), t)$ is a principal ultrafilter, i.e. of the form $Q = \lambda P(P(a))$ for some $a \in D_e$, then $f(Q) := \lambda P(P(f(a)))$. Else, *f* is undefined. (Eckardt 2002)

b. [[$[Otto]_{EN}$ selbst]] = ID ([[Otto]]) = [[Otto]] (Eckardt 2002)

(2) a. Agreeing (for location) verb: COME

i. $JOHN_i$ **a**-IX THINK **a**-$SELF_i/e_i$ b-COME-**a**
ii. $JOHN_i$ THINK **a**-SELF / **neu**-$SELF_i/e_i$ b-COME-**a**
'John thinks he himself will come.'

b. Agreeing for (person) verb: ASK

i. $JOHN_i$ **a**-IX THINK **a**-$SELF_i/e_i$ **a**-ASK-b
ii. $JOHN_i$ THINK **a-**SELF / **neu**-$SELF_i/e_i$ **a**-ASK-b
'John thinks he himself will ask.'

c. Non-agreeing/plain verb**:** LOVE

q/t
i. (YOU KNOW) $JEFF_i$ a-IX_i **a**-SELF*i* / ***neu** -$SELF_i$ / e_i LOVE FISH

q/t
ii. (YOU KNOW) $JEFF_i$ ***a-**SELF / ***neu**-$SELF_i$/ e_i LOVE FISH
'(Do you know) Jeff? He himself loves fish.'
[ASL] (adapted from Koulidobrova 2009)

(3) a. Podemos preguntar a Maria, porque *(ella) misma vió el accidente
We.can ask OBJ *Maria because she* INT.SG.FEM *saw the accident*
'We can ask Maria because she saw the accident herself.'
[Spanish] (adapted from König & Siemund 2008)

b. $Taroo_i$-wa [e_i-zisin-ga soko-no itta to] itta
Tarro-TOP self-NOM there went that said
'Taroo said that he *(himself rather than his friends) went there.' [Japanese]

(4) Given a scenario where the relation *R* between an agreement-morpheme μ and target noun-phrase *X* is broken—but the result is still a grammatical utterance—the proposed diagnostic supplies a conclusion about *R* as follows:
a. μ shows up with default φ-features (rather than the features of *X*) => *R* is Agree
b. μ disappears entirely => *R* is clitic-doubling.
(Preminger 2009)

Selected References:

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