

## STRONG AND WEAK PRONOUNS IN SLAVIC AND JAPANESE

Jelena Runić, Johns Hopkins University

**The Problem** – Runić (2013) shows that there is a dichotomy between article and article-less languages with regard to clitic interpretation, such that sloppy interpretation of clitics is available only in the latter. Thus, unlike Macedonian, in Serbo-Croatian (SC) (1b), alongside the strict interpretation in which Nikola and Danilo saw the same interesting clown - *him*, the clitic *ga* in the second conjunct can have a sloppy interpretation as well, where Nikola and Danilo saw two different clowns with an appropriate context in (1a). However, what was not noted in Runić (2013) is that such a semantic flexibility is disallowed with a strong/full pronoun, as (1c) demonstrates, in which the strong pronoun *njega* can have only the strict interpretation and thus must refer to the same clown, irrespective of the context:

(1) a. The context: [SC]

*Nikola and Danilo are cousins who live in two different cities in Serbia. Specifically, Nikola lives in Belgrade, while Danilo lives in Niš. They are both five years old and their parents take them to circus performances whenever a circus is in town. A circus is in both Belgrade and Niš at the same time. Both Nikola and Danilo saw an interesting clown in the circus, albeit not the same one.*

b. Nikola je vidio **zanimljivog klovna**, a vidio **ga** je i Danilo.

Nikola AUX.3SG saw interesting clown and saw it.CL.ACC AUX.3SG and Danilo  
'Nikola saw an interesting clown and Danilo saw him/one too.'

c. Nikola je vidio **zanimljivog klovna**, a **njega** je vidio i Danilo.

Nikola AUX.3SG saw interesting clown and him.ACC AUX.3SG saw and Danilo  
'Nikola saw an interesting clown, and Danilo saw him/\*one too.'

**Strong vs. Deficient Pronouns** - Cardinaletti and Starke (1999) present a number of asymmetries between strong and weak pronouns/clitics. One of the differences involves so-called "ostension" situations, which involve prominent discourse referents. If a new referent is introduced in the discourse (e.g., by pointing to a person in a group), only a strong pronoun can be used. Despić (2011:241) shows that SC patterns with other languages obeying this rule, as illustrated in (2), (the symbol ☞ marks an ostension situation; DEF = deficient; STR = strong):

(2) Pomogao sam {\*☞joj}/ {☞njoj}. [SC]

helped am her.DEF her.STR

'I helped ☞her.'

Similarly, there are situations in which only deficient pronouns are allowed. Despić (2011:241) also shows that SC strong pronouns cannot be used as bound variables, thus being subject to the Overt Pronoun Constraint (Montalbetti 1984), as in (3a). In addition, strong pronouns cannot achieve a backwards anaphora reading, as in (3b):

(3) a. Svaki predsednik misli da **ga**/??**njega**<sub>i</sub> svi vole.

every president thinks that him.CLITIC/him.STRONG everyone loves

'Every president<sub>i</sub> thinks that everybody loves him<sub>i</sub>.'

b. Kada je **pro**/**on**<sub>\*i/j</sub> ušao u sobu, **Jovan**<sub>i</sub> je počeo plakati.

when is.AUX *pro* entered in room, Jovan is.AUX started crying

'When he entered the room, John started crying.'

In sum, not only are SC strong pronouns unable to obtain the sloppy interpretation (1c), but also they cannot obtain bound-variable (3a) and backwards-anaphora readings (3b). Conversely, only strong pronouns are permitted under ostension circumstances, when a new referent is introduced into the discourse (2).

**The Analysis and Implications** - It has been widely discussed in the literature that strong and other emphatic pronouns are related to focus (Chomsky 1976; Larson and Lujàn 1984, *i.a.*). Similarly, clitics in SC have been argued extensively not to be related to focus (Browne 1974; Bošković 2001, Godjevac 2000, *i.a.*). Thus, the ostension situation exhibits a prominent referent, newly introduced into the discourse, which is the reflection of information focus. Focus typically cannot interfere with bound variable interpretation. Thus, when the pronoun is focalized (with the use of stress in English), the

sentence automatically becomes ungrammatical (e.g., When he works, John doesn't drink. vs. \*When HE works, John doesn't drink (Larson and Luján 1984)). Focalized pronouns refer to a unique referent, which thus cannot obtain the sloppy interpretation, but only the strict interpretation. This explains why strong pronouns in SC do not have semantic freedom, as the deficient one ((1b) vs. (1c)). If this analysis is on the right track, it makes some predictions for languages whose phonologically null pronouns can have the sloppy interpretation. Thus, in addition to the strict interpretation, Japanese null objects can have the sloppy interpretation, just like clitics in Slavic. To illustrate, given the antecedent sentence in (4a), (4b) can refer to Taro's mother (strict interpretation), but also to Hanako's mother (sloppy interpretation). Crucially, this semantic freedom is excluded with the overt pronoun *kanojo* in (4c), just like the strong pronoun in SC (1c):

- (4) a. Taro-wa **zibun-no hahaoya-o** aisiteiru. [Japanese, Şener and Takahashi 2010:79]  
 Taro-NOM self-GEN mother-ACC love  
 'lit. Taro loves self's mother.'  
 b. Hanako-wa  $e$  nikundeiru  
 Hanako-TOP hates  
 'Hanako hates *e*.' (✓Hanako hates her (her = Taro's mother); ✓Hanako hates her own mother (her = Hanako's mother))  
 c. Hanako-wa **kanojo-o** nikundeiru  
 Hanako-TOP her-ACC hates  
 'Hanako hates her.' (✓Hanako hates her (her = Taro's mother); ✗ Hanako hates her own mother (her = Hanako's mother))

In addition to the parallelism between (4c) and (1c), some other previously unnoticed distributional similarities hold: (i) in ostension situations, only overt pronouns can be used, as in (5a); (ii) Japanese overt pronouns are subject to the Overt Pronoun Constraint (Montalbetti 1984:183), as in (5b); (iii) Japanese overt pronouns are strongly dispreferred in backwards pronominalization contexts, while such reading is perfectly acceptable with *pro*:

- (5) a. Watasi-wa { \* $\varnothing$ pro } / { ✓ $\varnothing$  **kanozy-o** } tasuke-ta. [Japanese]  
 I-TOP she-ACC help-PAST  
 'I helped  $\varnothing$ her.'  
 b. Daremo-ga<sub>i</sub>  $e_{ij}$  / **kare-ga**<sub>\*ij</sub> atama-ga ii to omotteiru.  
 everyone-NOM he-NOM be-smart COMP think  
 'Everyone thinks that he is smart.'  
 c. [  $e_{ij}$  / **Kare-ga**<sub>?ij</sub> heya-ni haitta toki ] **John-wa**<sub>\*ij</sub> nakihajimeta.  
 he-NOM room-DAT entered when John- TOP cry.started  
 'When he entered the room, John started crying.'

Given the parallelism between the two, I argue that SC strong and Japanese overt pronouns should be analyzed as focalized pronouns referring to a unique referent, which thus cannot obtain the sloppy interpretation, but only the strict interpretation. In brief, this explains why strong pronouns in SC and Japanese lack semantic freedom.

**References:** Bošković 2001. *On the nature of the syntax-phonology interface: Cliticization and related phenomena*. Browne 1974. On the problem of enclitic placement in Serbo-Croatian. In *Slavic transformational syntax*. Cardinaletti and Starke 1999. The typology of structural deficiency: A case study of the three classes of pronouns. In *Clitics in the languages of Europe*. Chomsky 1976. Conditions on rules of grammar. *Linguistic Analysis* 2: 303-351. Despić 2011. Syntax in the absence of Determiner Phrase. Doctoral dissertation, University of Connecticut. Godjevac 2000. Intonation, word order and focus projection in Serbo-Croatian. Doctoral dissertation, Ohio State University. Larson and Luján 1984. Emphatic pronouns. Ms. Montalbetti 1984. After binding: On the interpretation of pronouns. Doctoral dissertation, MIT. Runić 2013. A new look at clitics: Evidence from Slavic. *Proceedings of FASL* 22. Şener and Takahashi. 2010. Ellipsis of arguments in Japanese and Turkish. *Nanzan Linguistics* 6:79-99.