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Peter Ackema, Patrick Brandt, Maaike Schoorlemmer & Fred Weerman (eds.), *Arguments and Agreement*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, 349 pp.

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The book 'Arguments and Agreement' is the outcome of the workshop 'The Role of Agreement in Argument Structure', organised by the Utrecht institute of Linguistics (UiL OTS, The Netherlands) in 2001. The book edited by Ackema, Brandt, Schoorlemmer and Weerman focuses on the occurrence of null arguments. In Italian, for example, the subject pronoun may be omitted as in 'cred-o' (believe-1.sg), while this is not the case in e.g. English. This phenomenon is called 'pro-drop'. To a large extent, pro-drop appears to be related to the presence of agreement affixes. Intuitively, this makes sense: if an agreement affix identifies the syntactic subject, an overt pronoun seems to be superfluous. However, the relation between agreement and pro-drop appears to be more complex. The conditions under which pro-drop occurs, vary between languages. Throughout the book, different authors discuss various languages that show pro-drop phenomena. In addition to examples from familiar pro-drop languages like Italian, Greek and Spanish, data is presented from polysynthetic languages, partial pro-drop languages and asymmetrical pro-drop languages. Moreover, some authors present data from dialects and earlier stages of a language to support their claims.

The idea that the historical development of a language can help account for pro-drop phenomena is taken up by several authors. Poletto presents data from Venetian and Paduan (two Northern Italian dialects), demonstrating that in these dialects some verbal forms allow null subjects, whereas other verbal forms require a subject clitic. Poletto explains this asymmetry by evaluating earlier stages of these dialects and comparing these to the development of French. In his chapter on partial pro-drop in Standard Finnish and Modern Hebrew, Koenenman also demonstrates how historical development may have played a role in the occurrence of pro-drop. In these languages null subjects are allowed only if the subject is first or second person. To support his claim that first and second person agreement affixes in these two languages are pronominal and therefore license the occurrence of pro, Koenenman shows how these affixes originate in first and second person pronouns.

More exotic languages are discussed in the chapters on polysynthesis. Polysynthetic languages are characterised by their non-configurationality (word order is essentially free) and by rich, obligatory subject and object inflection on the verb. Lexical arguments, if present, appear in dislocated positions. Jelinek presents data from two unrelated polysynthetic languages, Navajo and Lummi (a Salishan language), to demonstrate that polysynthetic languages form a distinct class. Baker contrasts Mohawk and Mapudungun with Bantu languages to prove that, despite the absence of inflection in a specific case, Mapudungun belongs to the class of polysynthetic languages.

Interestingly, some authors point at instances of pro-drop in languages that are hardly ever discussed when it comes to pro-drop. Bennis argues that in Dutch, commonly assumed a non pro-drop language, instances of pro do occur: in Dutch (and English) imperatives the subject may remain unexpressed. Finally, Zwitserlood & Van Gijn present data from Sign Language of the Netherlands, and demonstrate that pro-drop is an intrinsic property of the language. Whereas in spoken languages null arguments take the form of inaudible arguments, in sign languages, null arguments take the form of invisible arguments.

All chapters are written from a generative perspective. Nevertheless, with respect to variation in the occurrence of null arguments, we see that the different authors of this book take different routes to come to an explanation of the linguistic facts. For instance, some authors view the presence of null arguments (or the optional absence of visible arguments) as a language-specific property (Jelinek, Baker, Alexiadou, Speas), while others relate the

occurrence of pro to properties of agreement affixes (Koenenman) or particular constructions (Bennis).

Jelinek and Baker – be it in different terms – both assume the existence of a parameter that sets polysynthetic languages apart from other languages. Alexiadou and Speas also adopt the view that language variation can be accounted for by parameters, but embed this within the Minimalist Program. Their parameters set apart pro-drop languages from non pro-drop languages. In the Minimalist Program, uninterpretable Extended-Projection-Principle (EPP)-features on I° must be deleted. According to Alexiadou, the execution of EPP-checking is parameterised. She further argues that pro-drop languages lack a syntactic position for the subject. If subjects are expressed, they appear in dislocated position. In this respect, pro-drop languages would be similar to the polysynthetic languages discussed by Jelinek and Baker. Speas introduces a different parameter, one that relates to the strength of agreement. She proposes that if agreement in a language is strong, agreement affixes are listed independently in the lexicon. In such a language, a pronoun or lexical subject is optional. In languages with weak agreement, an overt subject is needed to license the affix on the verb.

Koenenman rejects Speas' parameter and argues that the occurrence of pro-drop is directly related to properties of the verbal paradigm. If a paradigm as a whole obeys certain identification conditions, agreement is assumed to be [+pronominal], in which case an overt subject is not needed. Interestingly, Koenenman argues that single affixes may also be [+pronominal], which results in partial pro-drop. By allowing certain affixes to be [+pronominal], Koenenman is able to account for differences in the availability of pro within a single language. In his chapter on imperatives in Dutch, Bennis relates the optionality of subjects in these clauses to a unique property of imperative constructions, namely that the subject is always second person. If the inflection on the verb carries more uninterpretable ϕ -features, the insertion of a subject is needed to delete them under Agree. Under Bennis' Minimalist analysis, it is possible to explain for minor, but nevertheless significant, differences within the class of Dutch imperatives.

It is interesting to see how these authors account for the availability of pro in various ways. However, it remains unclear to what extent their proposals can be applied to other languages and language types. Jelinek, Baker, Alexiadou and Speas generalize over a large number of languages, but fail to account for pro-drop phenomena in non pro-drop languages. By contrast, Koenenman and Bennis account for instances of pro in particular languages, but it is difficult to see how their proposals can be extended to other languages.

In generative theories of pro-drop, a distinction is made between the formal licensing of pro and the interpretive licensing of pro (cf. Rizzi, 1986). Both types of licensing are discussed throughout the book. With respect to formal licensing, Poletto proposes that in many Romance languages, formal licensing was not restricted to spec-head agreement. In earlier stages these languages also allowed formal licensing of pro when governed by a strong C°. Poletto calls this asymmetrical pro-drop, remnants of which can still be found in the agreement paradigms of several Northern Italian dialects. Speas argues for a different perspective on formal licensing, in which an overt pronoun is not necessary if a strong affix fills AgrP. If the affix is weak it is unable to fill AgrP by itself, and an overt subject in Spec, AgrP is required.

As for interpretive licensing, Cabredo Hofherr questions whether the classification of pro proposed by Rizzi (1986) is actually able to account for the distribution of pro within languages. She argues for a distinction between deictic pro, anaphoric pro and non-anaphoric pro rather than for a distinction between referential pro, quasi-argumental pro and expletive pro. Instead of identification by the ϕ -features [person] and [number], she proposes a different classification of ϕ -features. In a similar vein, Zwitserlood and Van Gijn demonstrate that

person and number do not play a role in the identification of pro in Sign Language of the Netherlands. Rather, they argue for the existence of a ϕ -feature [location] that identifies pro.

As we have demonstrated above, the authors have different views on the occurrence of pro. Nine different approaches towards pro-drop give the reader a good idea of how pro-drop phenomena may be accounted for. Unfortunately, the authors reach little consensus, and the book does not lead to a general theory of pro-drop. In their introductory chapter, the editors try to integrate the nine different accounts by proposing a single parameter for pro-drop with several decision levels. However, it remains to be seen whether their proposal is able to capture all pro-drop phenomena discussed in the book. Moreover, it is a rather odd decision of the editors to include their own theory in the introductory chapter. It would have been more appropriate to include it in a chapter of its own, possibly as a concluding chapter.

Given the wide range of languages and language types that are discussed and the various perspectives on pro-drop taken, the book is of considerable value to linguists interested in pro-drop, especially those working within the generative framework. In this respect, 'Arguments and Agreements' will certainly contribute to the theoretical discussion of pro-drop.

References

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