OVERT vs. NULL SUBJECTS
IN NONFINITE CONSTRUCTIONS OF COLOMBIAN SPANISH
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As in the Caribbean varieties of Spanish, in Colombian Spanish (CS) overt subjects tend to appear in preverbal position in non-finite constructions. The aim of this presentation is to discuss non-finite clauses where the subject is not overt.

According to the standard theory (Chomsky 1981, 1982; Rizzi 1982, 1986; and Lasnik & Uriagereka 1988, Miller 2002 and references therein), overt subjects are licensed by finite INFL/T, while controlled PRO is licensed in the absence of finite INFL/T.

There are three descriptive claims underlying the type of approaches (See Szabolcsi 2009, Rigau 1995):

a) Infinitival complements cannot hold overt (nominative) subjects.
b) In control constructions controlled overt pronouns are not licensed.
c) No null referentially free subjects in infinitives.

Counter-evidence for these claims has been already observed in the literature (cf. Duguine 2013, Livitz 2011, Horsntein 1999, 2001). Here I show that the overt and null subjects in CS infinitival adjunct clauses exemplify three systematic patterns of exceptions to these generalizations. I have established this classification based on a set of tests distinguishing Obligatory Control (OC) vs. Non Obligatory Control (NOC) (cf. Hornstein 1999, Landau 2013 and Sichel 2010).

(1) 
María i dejó de trabajar [sin [Rosa/ ella/ pro] decir nada].
‘Maria stopped working without (Rosa/ her) saying anything.’

(2) 
Juan i sería feliz [al [José/ él/ PRO] dejar la casa].
‘Juan be would be happy when he left/ leaving the house.

(3) 
Juan i se fue [para [él/ PRO] estar feliz].
‘Juan left in order for him to be happy.’

The purpose of this study is to provide a conceptual and theoretical characterization of the overt and null subjects of the three types of infinitives. In so doing, we adopt Duguine’s (2013) analysis of pro-drop according to which Spanish null arguments (NA) are elided DPs, like in Japanese-type languages (Saito 2007, Takahashi 2014). In her analysis, Duguine posits that a NA can yield not only pronominal but also anaphoric readings which cannot be explained in terms of pro, but with DP ellipsis. I show that a similar phenomenon occurs in Sin-infinitives (e.g. María; dejó de trabajar sin [su jefe] decirle nada. Y Rosa también dejó de trabajar sin [el] decirle nada. And Rosa also stopped working without her (own) boss saying nothing to her’). Moreover, this interpretation can be also displayed by the NA of Para-infinitives. My proposal is to extend this analysis to all null arguments of CS nonfinite constructions. More specifically, I want to investigate if we can get rid of both primitives pro and PRO through DP ellipsis.

I argue that the alternation of overt and null subjects in Sin-infinitives can be reduced to a single argument which shares the same NOC interpretative properties but differ phonologically. I propose that the OC arguments in Para-infinitives be analyzed in the same fashion (See McFadden & Sundaresan 2018 for a similar discussion). Conversely, Al-infinitives should be analyzed differently, since both arguments differ not only phonologically but also semantically.

To conclude, DP ellipsis automatically accounts for the NA of the infinitival Sin and Para, but cannot directly explain Al-infinitives. I will close the talk with a discussion of the possible solutions for the latter case.
SELECTED REFERENCES


