

Word order, pro and expletives in Romance: a comparative minimalist analysis

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1. Introduction

1.1 Aims of the talk

Explain the data in (1) and (2)

(1) Italian

a. Gianni mangia una mela.
 G. eats an apple
 'G. eats an apple.'

b. Mangia una mela.
 eats an apple.
 'He/she/it eats an apple.'

c. Piove.
 rains
 'It rains.'

Spanish

a.' Juan come una manzana.
 J. eats an apple
 'J. eats an apple.'

b.' Come una manzana.
 eats an apple
 'He/she/it eats an apple.'

c.' Llueve.
 rains
 'It rains'

French

a." Jean mange une pomme.
 J. eats an apple
 'J. eats an apple.'

b." *Mange une pomme.
 eats an apple
 'He/she/it eats an apple.'

c." *Pleut.
 rains
 'It rains.'

Il/elle eats an apple.
 he/she eats an apple.
 'He/she/it eats an apple.'

Il pleut.
 It rains
 'It rains.'

(2) Spanish

- a. Llegaron varias personas.
Arrived.PL some people
'There arrived some people.'
- b. Llegó Juan / el profesor.
Arrived.SG Juan /the professor
'Juan/ The professor arrived.'
- c. Comió Juan la/una manzana.
Ate Juan the / an apple
'Juan ate the/an apple.'

Italian

- a.' Arrivarono alcune persone.
Arrived.PL some people
'There arrived some people.'
- b.' Arrivò Gianni / il professore.
Arrived.SG Gianni /the professor
'Gianni /The professor arrived.'
- c.' *?Mangiò Gianni una/la mela.
Ate Gianni an / the apple
'Gianni ate the/an apple.'
(Italian VSO only with focalized subject)

French

- a." Il arriva plusieurs personnes.
EXPL. arrived.SG some people.
'There arrived some people.'
- b." *Il arriva Jean / le professeur.
EXPL. arrived Jean / the professor
'There arrived Jean / the professor.'
- c." *Il mangea Jean une / la pomme
EXPL. ate Jean an / the apple
'There ate Jean an/the apple.'

- Spanish and Italian allow null-subjects, where French has obligatory overt subjects (full DP, pronouns or expletives).
 - In Spanish and Italian the unaccusative verb agrees with the postverbal subject, whereas in French the verb agrees with the preverbal expletive.
 - VS(O) order is allowed
 - in French only with unaccusative verbs,
 - in Spanish with transitive and unaccusative verbs,
 - in Italian with unaccusatives, but restricted to strongly focalized S with transitive verbs.
 - Unlike French, Spanish and Italian show no definiteness effects on the subject with unaccusative verbs (existential constructions).
- Try to explain these data by
 - the existence of [EPP] features (maybe universal in T and as an option in other heads (e.g. v^o))
 - the existence of expletive *pro*, which comes in various language specific versions (as an alternative to Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou 1998, 2001, 2007); cf. Mensching & Remberger (in press).
 - the general framework of Chomsky (2000 ss.) (phase theory and inheritance of T from C and V from v not yet integrated)

1.2 Preliminary remarks: “Optional” features in recent minimalism

Chomsky 1995: Features like number of nouns are not intrinsic but are added before the LI enters the numeration (Chomsky 1995:231, Zwart 1997:170: variable features)

“[t]he value of intrinsic features is fixed, the value of variable features is determined arbitrarily as the lexical item enters the numeration. In each case, the feature value enters into feature checking relations.” (Zwart 1997:170-171).

How can this notion be adapted to (Chomsky 2000 et seq.)?

→ Several types of variable features

Type 1: variable features that act as probes, i.e. their values are fixed during the derivation.

Type 2: variable features, the values are fixed according to the context of the utterance before the derivation. (e.g. value of number-feature of nouns)

Type 3: Optional [EPP]-features, stipulated by Chomsky (2001a) in order to explain object shift-constructions. (Each phase head can have an optional EPP-feature in order to move an element to the phase edge).

Consequence: *pro* has features of type 2, because it can represent any person depending on context.

(3) Lex: *pro*, D
[Pers=X]
[Num=Y]
[Gen=Z]

Question: How can these features be distinguished from features of type 1 (probes)?

Assumption: If the features are not valued before the derivation, they remain variable and can act as probes in a relevant configuration (Mensching 2007, Mensching & Remberger in press). → non-referential (i.e. expletive) *pro*.

2. Relating expletives and word order (cf. Mensching & Remberger in press)

Minimalist implementation of an old idea (Rizzi 1982): expletive *pro*

(4)	Lexicon of	<u>Spanish/Italian</u>	<u>French</u>
		∅ [T] [Pers.=X] [Num.=Y] [EPP] [HAF]	∅ [T] [Pers.=X] [Num.=Y] [EPP] [HAF]
		∅ _{pro} [D] [Pers=X] [Num=Y]	<i>il</i> [D]

Some Basic derivations:

- (5) a. [TP *pro* mangia [vP ~~*pro*~~ mangia [VP mangia una mela]]]
 b. [TP *pro* piove [VP piove]]]
 b. [TP *il* pleut [VP pleut]]]

(6) Basic word order patterns in Spanish

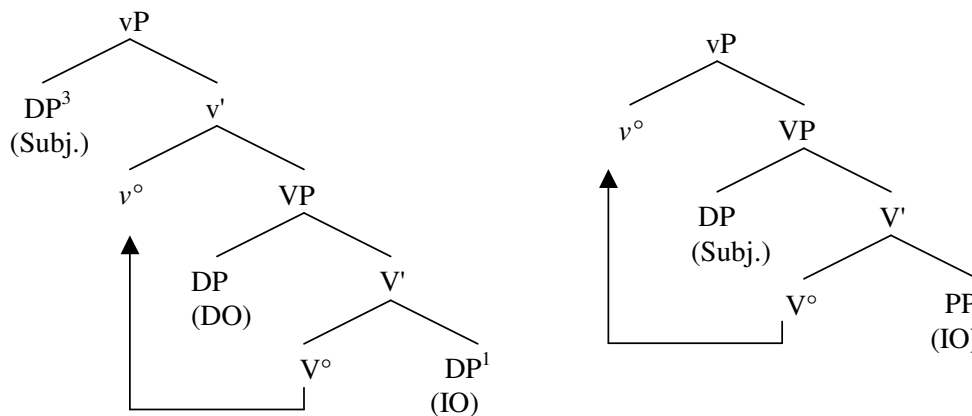
- a. Juan come una manzana. SVO
 J. eats an apple
 'J. eats an apple'
 b. Come una manzana. VO
 eats an apple
 'He/she/it eats an apple.'
 c. Come Juan una manzana. VSO
 eats J. an apple
 'J. eats an apple.'

Expletive *pro*:

- (7) a. [TP *pro* come [vP Juan ~~come~~ [VP ~~come~~ una manzana]]]

Why does Italian and French not standardly allow this structure with transitive verbs?
 (but essentially only with unaccusative verbs, cf. (2))?

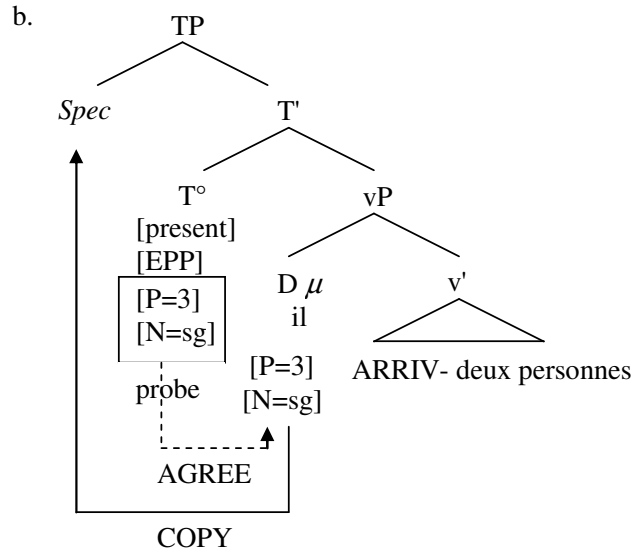
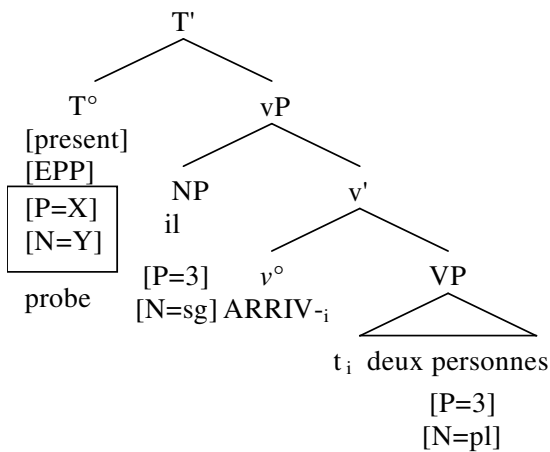
- (8) a. vP of transitive verbs b. vP of an unaccusative verb like *to go*



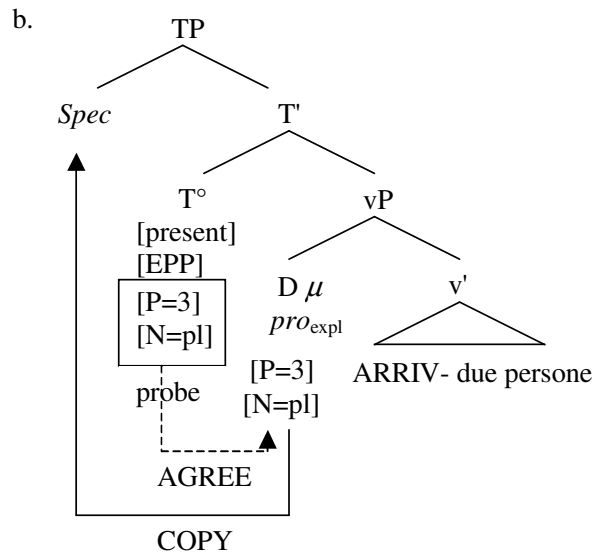
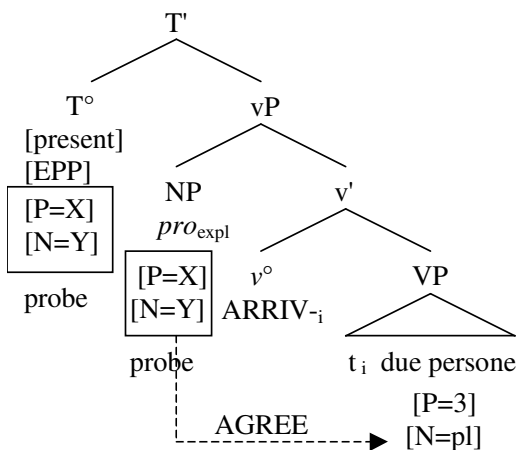
Basic idea: Low merge of expletive in French and Italian

(For low merge of expletive see, Rizzi & Shlonsky (2007), Moro (1997), Kallulli (2008), Epstein & Seely (2006), Hoekstra & Mulder (1990), Zwart (1992), den Dikken (1995), Groat (1999), Sabel (2000), Richards (2004), López (2008), Richards (2009)).

French
(9) a.



Italian
(10) a.



Spanish: High merge of expletive ==> [spec, vP] the subject can generally stay in situ.

Why should this be? ==> Case of the expletive:

Excursus: Do expletives have Case?

For case: Belletti (1988), Groat (1995, 1999), Lasnik (1999), Epstein & Seely (2006).

Against case: E.g. Chomsky (1995 et seq.).

Both:

- For Cardinaletti (1997), there are languages with expletives that need case and others which have expletives with no case requirement. Also cf. Bayer & Suchsland (1997).-
- Groat (1995) assumes that English *there* bears Case but lacks phi-features, whereas English *it* the latter has both (3rd person singular) phi-features and a Case feature. Groat's approach is based on early minimalism (Chomsky 1995). In our approach (recent minimalism), the lack of phi-features is not a complete lack, but only a lack of values, as in (3).

Iwakura (2002) (as quoted by Kirby 2002:15):

Englisch expletive *there* appears in typical Case positions:

- (i) a. We expect there to be someone in the room.
 b. *It is expected there to be someone in the room .

For Italian and French, expletive *pro* is an element that has an unvalued case feature.

Spanish: Expletive *pro* has no case feature.
 Consequence: It cannot be inserted into [spec,vP]

What prohibits VSO in Italian/French?

In order to derive VSO, an empty expletive must be introduced into [spec,TP].

Since Italian expletive *pro* and French *il* need case, they cannot be inserted higher than T.

Open questions: - Why is VSO possible in Italian with focussed subjects?
 - How is VOS to be explained

Final formalization

(11)	Lexicon of	Spanish	<u>Italian</u>	<u>French</u>
		∅ [v] _{unacc.} [HAF]	∅ [v] _{unacc.} [EPP] [HAF]	
		∅ _{pro} [D] [Pers=X] [Num=Y]		<i>il</i> [D] [Pers=3] [Num=sg]

(12)	Lexicon of	Spanish	<u>Italian</u>	<u>French</u>
		∅ _{pro} [D] [Pers=X] [Num=Y] ([Case = Z])	∅ _{pro} [D] [Pers=X] [Num=Y] Case=Z]	<i>il</i> [D] [Pers=3] [Num=sg] Case=Z]

3. Further support: Some arguments in favour of expletive *pro* and its parametrization

3.1 Evidence for the existence of empty expletives in Papiamentu (Veenstra 2008)

- Expletive *pro* is problematic, because, from a minimalist point of view, each element in the numeration should have an effect either on LF or on PF.

Solution: Expletive *pro* has effects on LF and PF

- low position of subject (effect on PF)

Lok V S

(13) Riba e isla aki ta biba un million hende.
LOK DET island here ASP live DET million people
'On the island live a million people.'

V S Lok

(14) Ta biba un million hende riba e isla aki.
ASP live DET million people LOK DET island here.
'A million people live on the island.'

- definiteness effect (effect on LF)

(15)a. A zona un bos.
ASP sound DET.INDEF voice
'There sounds a voice.'

(15)b. *Di repente a zona e bos
suddenly ASP sound DET.DEF voice
'Suddenly a voice sounds.'

- ➔ - No V-to-T in Papiamentu, due to base generation of aspect-marker in the inflectional domain. (Kouwenberg & Lefebvre 2005)
- only explanation: expletive *pro*

3.2 Support from infinitive constructions with specified subjects (Alboiu 2009)

- With respect to expletive *pro*, Romanian in Alboiu's account behaves essentially like Spanish (in our account). This is desired, since both have regular VSO order.

- In Alboiu's account, expletive *pro* can act as a probe and nominative case assigner.

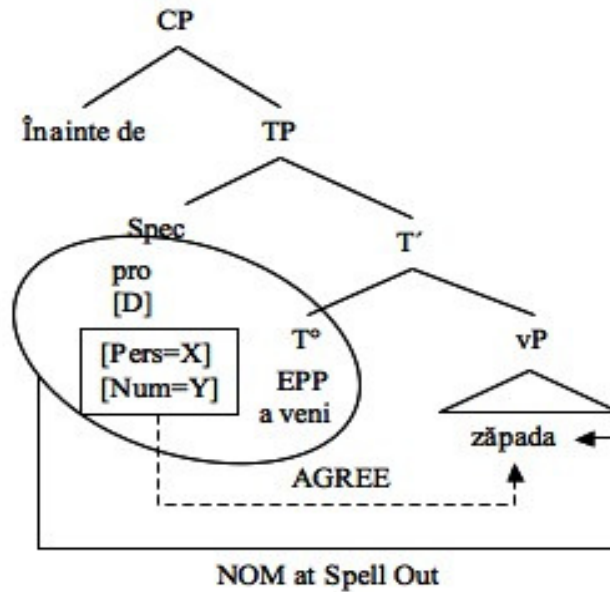
==> In such languages, infinitives with nominative subjects are possible (these are, in fact, rather characteristic for both Spanish and Romanian).

(16) a. [Înainte de a veni zăpada] a bătut un vânt puternic.
[Before of to come snow-the] has beaten a wind terrible
'Before the snow came a terrible wind was blowing.'

b. [_{CP} Înainte [_{TP} *pro*_{expl.} [_{T°} de a veni [_{VP} zăpada]]]]

(17) a. Antes de caer la nieve, hizo un viento espantoso.
Before fall.Inf the snow, made a wind terrible
'Before the snow came a terrible wind was blowing.'

(18)



“The main empirical claim here is that uninflected phasal domains permit NOM subjects only in languages with null expletives.” (Alboiu 2009)

But (problem?): Italian has expletive *pro* (in our account) but crucially no nominative subjects in infinitive constructions (with the exception of Aux-to-Comp).

- (19) *Prima di cadere la neve, arrivò un forte vento.
Before fall.Inf the snow, came a strong wind.
'Before the snow came a terrible wind was blowing.'

This is predicted in our account due to the low position and the case requirement of *pro*!

- Other papers quoted by Alboiu (supporting the idea of expletive *pro*): Alboiu 2004, 2007, Cardinaletti 2004, Rezac 2004, Rizzi & Shlonski 2005, Torrego 1998.

4. Summary and Outlook

Two types of expletive *pro* in Romance:

- type 1: merged in a high position ([specTP]) (Spanish and Romanian)
- type 2: merged in a low position ([specvP], maybe because this type has *uCase* (Italian))

French *il* (overt expletive) behaves like *pro_{expl}* type 2, but has valued phi-features (3rd sing).

This parametrization of expletives explains three properties at the same time:

- 1.- The possibility of (rather regular) VSO order with transitive verbs in Spanish and Romanian, in contrast to Italian and French.
- 2.- The agreement facts (Spanish, Italian vs. French).
- 3.- (If Alboiu 2009 is right about the Case-assigning force of *pro*): Infinitive constructions with postverbal nominative subjects in Spanish and Romanian, in contrast to Italian and French.

Further consequences:

- If we are right, VOS in Romance and Italian VOS with focalized subject are not a subject-in-situ constructions and need other explanations (proposed in the literature, such as movement to a low focus position, remnant movement etc.)

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