

The semantic and pragmatic restrictions on strong pronouns in Catalan: null, weak and strong versions

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Main goal

Studying the complex distribution of pronouns in null subject languages to reconsider the role of pragmatic factors underlying their distribution, particularly regarding contrast and topicality:

- (1) Vaig veure un home sospitós. #Ell/pro era alt.
PST.1SG see a man suspect he was tall
'I saw a suspect man. He was tall.'
- (2) a. Menja (#tu)!
eat you
'You, eat!'
b. A: Passa. B: No, passa #(tu).
pass not pass you
'A: Come in. B: No, YOU come in.'

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Contrast

If a strong pronoun alternates with a null/weak one, the former is contrastive:

- (3)
- a. En Jordi viu a Konstanz, però *pro* /**ell* treballa a Zúric.
the Jordi lives in Konstanz but he works in Zurich
'Jordi lives in Konstanz, but he works in Zurich.'
 - b. En Jordi viu a Konstanz, però *hi* parlo /*parlo *amb ell* per Skype.
the Jordi lives at Konstanz but LOC speak speak with him by Skype
'Jordi lives in Konstanz, but I speak with him by Skype.'
 - c. El cafè el pren amb sucre o sense?
the coffee him take with sugar or without
'Do you drink the coffee with or without sugar?'
 - d. El vaig trobar darrere *seu* /**d'ell*.
him PST.1sg find behind his /of-him
'I found him behind me.'

Contrast

The same in Spanish, but with a smaller set of alternations:

- (4)
- a. Jorge vive en Konstanz, pero *pro* /**él* trabaja en Zúrich.
Jordi lives in Konstanz but he works in Zurich
'Jorge lives in Konstanz, but he works in Zurich.'
 - b. Jorge vive en Konstanz, pero hablo *con él* por Skype.
Jorge lives at Konstanz but speak with him by Skype
'Jorge lives in Konstanz, but I speak with him by Skype.'
 - c. El café lo tomas con o sin azúcar?
the coffee him take with or without sugar
'Do you drink the coffee with or without sugar?'
 - d. Lo encontré detrás ??*suyo* /*de él*.
him found.1sg behind mine of he
'I found him behind him.'

Contrast

- (5) En Jordi i la Núria viuen a Zúric, però ***pro**/ **ella** treballa
 the Jordi and the.F Núria live in Zurich but she works
 a Konstanz.
 in Konstanz
 ‘Jordi and Núria live in Zurich, but she works in Konstanz.’
- (6) En Jordi i la Núria_i viuen a Zúric, però ***hi**_i parlo
 the Jordi and the.F Núria live in Zurich but LOC speak
 /parlo **amb ella**_i per Skype.
 spear with her by Skype
 ‘Jordi and Núria live in Zurich, but she works in Konstanz.’

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Contrast

- (5) En Jordi i la Núria viuen a Zúric, però ***pro**/ **ella** treballa
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 ‘Jordi and Núria live in Zurich, but she works in Konstanz.’

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Contrast

- (7) a. Dona-m'ho pro/ *tu.
give-to.me-it you
'Give it to me.'
- b. Dona-m'ho *pro/ tu.
give-to.me-it you
'YOU give it to me.'
- (8) a. A: Vine (*tu). B: Vine *(tu).
come you come you
'A: Come here. B: 'YOU come here.'
- b. A: Tenim vi? B: Digue-m'ho *(tu).
have wine tell-to.me-it you
'A: Do we have wine? B: 'YOU tell me.'

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Local antecedent

If a strong pronoun alternates with a null/weak one:

- null/weak pronouns take local antecedents
- strong pronouns take discourse antecedents

[Pic94]

- (9) L'Anna_i diu que en Pere_j creu que pro_{i/j} guanyarà.
the.F-Anna says that the Pere believes that win.FUT.3SG
'Anna says that Pere believes that he/she will win.'
- (10) L'Anna_i diu que en Pere_j creu que ella_{??i}/ell_{??j}
the.F Anna says that the Pere believes that
guanyarà.
win.FUT.3SG
'Anna says that Pere believes that he/she will win.'

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Local antecedent

If no alternation is possible, the strong pronoun can take a local antecedent.

[Pic94]

- (11) La Maria_i diu que [pro hi anem sense ella_i].
 the.F Maria says that LOC go.1PL without she
 ‘Maria is saying that we go there without her.’

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Bound readings

- (12) Everybody_i says that he_{i/j} is very happy.

[Mon84, Rig88]: if a strong pronoun alternates with a null/weak one, the former cannot be bound.

- (13) Tothom_i diu que pro_{i/j} / ell_{*i/j} està molt content.
 everybody says that / he is very happy
 ‘Everybody says that he is very happy.’

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Bound readings

But if no alternation is possible, the strong pronoun can be bound.

- (14) Nadie desea que el director hable con él.
nobody wants that the director speak with he
'Nobody wants the director to speak with him.'
- (15) Cada membre del consell_i sap que la reunió no
each member of-the council knows that the.F meeting not
pot començar sense ell_{i/j}.
can begin without he
'Every member of the council knows that the meeting cannot
begin without him.'

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Backward anaphora

Backward anaphora is possible with null/weak subjects, but impossible with strong ones: [Luj85, Fer89]

- (16) a. Quan pro_i/ *ella_i estudia, la Maria_i fuma.
when she studies the.F Mary smokes
'When she studies, Mary smokes.'
- b. Cuando pro_i/ *él_i trabaja, Juan_i no bebe.
when he works, John not drinks
'When he works, John does not drink.'
- (17) a. Quan pro_i/ *él_i estudia, la Maria_i fuma.
when he studies the.F Mary smokes
'When she studies, Mary smokes.'
- b. Cuando pro_i/ *él_i trabaja, Juan_i no bebe.
when he works, John not drinks
'When he works, John does not drink.'

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Backward anaphora

If only strong pronouns are possible, backward anaphora becomes possible:

- (18) a. Quan estudio sense ella_i, la Maria_i s'enfada.
 when study without she the.F Mary REFL-gets.angry
 'When I study without her, Mary gets angry.'
- b. Cuando trabajo con él_i, Juan_i no bebe.
 when work with he John not drinks
 'When I work with him, John does not drink.'

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Avoid pronoun principle

Preference scale

null/weak pronoun (→ possessive pronoun) → strong pronoun

Even though implicitly, this principle introduces a competition in syntax, for it must compare **alternative representations**.

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Grice's implicatures

An implicature is an **unexpressed reasonable inference** from an utterance by means of **context knowledge** and **tacit communication norms**.

Grice, H. Paul. 1989 [1967]. Logic and conversation. In Grice, H. Paul. *Studies in the way of words*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press. 22-40.

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Grice's implicatures

Cooperative principle

Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged.

Conversational Maxims

- Maxim of quantity
- Maxim of quality
- Maxim of relation
- Maxim of manner

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Scalar implicatures

● Maxim of Quantity:

- Make your contribution as informative as is required for the current purposes of the talk exchange in which you are engaged.
- Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

(19) a. How many children do you have?
b. Two. \rightsquigarrow I don't have more than two.

(20) a. Did she did her homework and wash the dishes?
b. She did her homework. \rightsquigarrow She didn't wash the dishes.

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Scalar implicatures

Some Horn scales from [Lev83, 134] (see also [Hor72, Hor84, Hor14, Hir85, Lev00])

- \langle all, most, many, some, few \rangle
- \langle and, or \rangle
- \langle n, . . . , 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 \rangle
- \langle excellent, good \rangle
- \langle hot, warm \rangle
- \langle always, often, sometimes \rangle
- \langle necessarily p, p, possibly p \rangle
- \langle must, should, may \rangle

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Scalar implicatures

- (21) A: What time is it? B: Some guests have already left.
 a. It must be late. [conversational implicature]
 b. Not all the guests have left. [scalar implicature]
- (22) A: Where is Mary? B: Some guests have already left.
 a. She may/must have left. [conversational implicature]
 b. Not all the guests have left. [scalar implicature]

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Contrast as an implicature

[Kai11] analysis of weak/strong pronouns in Dutch (see also [CS99, Hua00]):

- (23) a. [I know that Emma scratched Willemijn. But who did Marjolein scratch?]
 b. Zij/#Ze heeft Claartje gekrabd.
she_{strong}/she_{weak} had Claartje scratched
 'She scratched Claartje.'
- (24) a. [I know that Emma tickled Willemijn. And what else?]
 b. #Zij/Ze heeft Claartje gekrabd.
she_{strong}/she_{weak} had Claartje scratched
 'She scratched Claartje.'

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Contrast as an implicature

- the choice of overt/null or strong/weak generates an implicature of contrast

(25) Vaig veure un home sospitós. *pro/#*Ell era alt.
 PST.1SG see a man suspect he was tall
 'I saw a suspect man. He was tall.'

(26) Vaig veure una parella. *#pro/*Ell era alt.
 PST.1SG see a couple he was tall
 'I saw a couple. He was tall.'

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Contrast as an implicature

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 'I saw a couple. He was tall.'

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Contrast as an implicature

- the choice of overt/null or strong/weak generates an implicature of contrast

(27) Vaig veure un home sospitós. (#A ell) ja el
 PST.1SG see a man suspect to him already him
 coneixia.

knew

‘I saw a suspect man. Him, I already knew.’

(28) Vaig veure una parella. #(A ell) ja el coneixia.
 PST.1SG see a.F couple to him already him knew

‘I saw a couple. Him, I already knew.’

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Contrast as an implicature

- where no option exists, no contrast implicature is generated

(29) Vaig veure un home sospitós. Tothom es va
 PST.1SG see a man suspect everybody SELF PST.3SG
 girar cap a ell.

turn toward to he

‘I saw a suspect man. Everybody turn his head toward him.’

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The issue I

Codification of background in Catalan and Spanish [PMV13] (from Catalan and Spanish translations of Chester Himes' *The big gold dream*):

- (30) a. –I no hi va fer mai res, **vostè**?
and not LOC PST.3SG do never nothing you
- b. –¿Y tampoco hizo usted nada?
and neither did you nothing
'And you didn't do anything about it.'

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The issue

- (31) a. L'has vist, **tu**?
him-have seen you
- b. ¿Lo has visto?
him have seen
'Did you see it?'
- (32) a. Que ho sabia **jo**, que eren polis?
that it knew I that were cops
- b. –¿Y cómo podía saber que era la policia?
and how could know that was the.F police
'How did I know you was the cops?'

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The issue

Which is the role of these right-dislocated pronouns?
According to [EV09, VM13], they are not tails (contra [Val92, Bru09]).

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Hypothesis

The role of these pronouns is introducing the point of view of the speaker in the update of the common ground [Sta02] or the commitment space [Kri15]

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Neuter question

(33) Did you buy the bread?

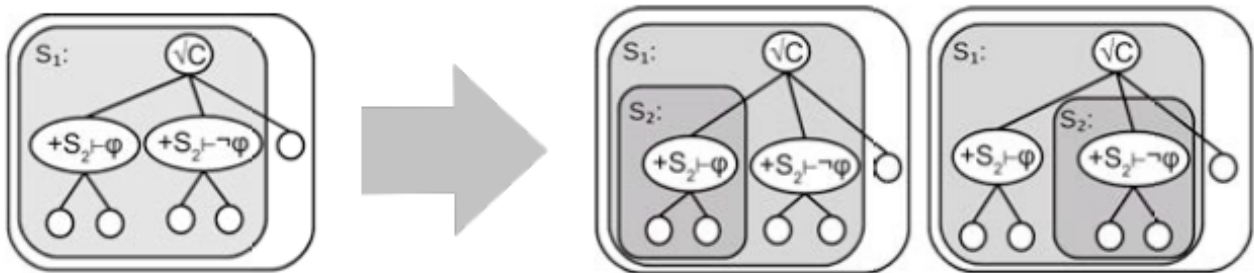


Figure 1: Bipolar question and answer according to [Kri15].

Biased question

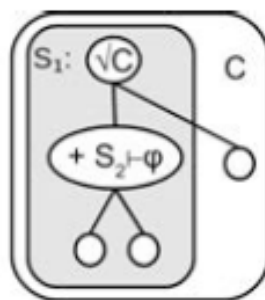


Figure 2: Monopolar (biased) question according to [Kri15].

(34) –Que ets mut, tu?
 Q are mute you
 ‘You’re a dummy, eh?’

Biased question

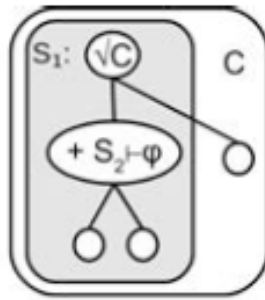


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- (34) –Que ets mut, tu?
 Q are mute you
 ‘You’re a dummy, eh?’

Biased question

- (35) –I no hi va fer mai res, vostè?
 ‘And you didn’t do anything about it,” he said sarcastically.
- (36) –Cago en dena! —exclamà en Sugar, de mala bava—. ¿I no se’n va al llit, vostè?
 “Hell,” Sugar said evilly. “Why don’t you go to bed.”
- (37) –El Profeta ha dit que havia tingut un èxtasi —li informà el sergent—. S’ho creu, vostè?
 “The prophet said you had a religious trance,” he informed her.
 “Do you believe that?”

Rhetoric question

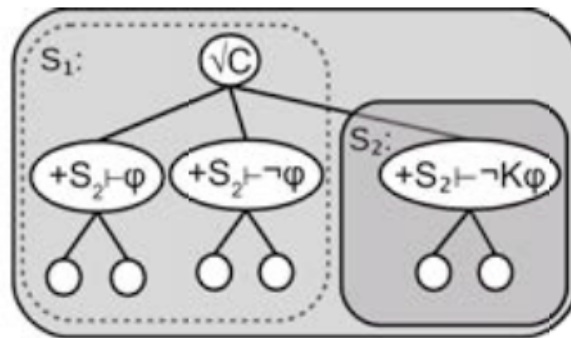


Figure 3: Rejection of a bipolar question according to [Kri15].

- (38) –Que ho sabia jo, que eren polis? –féu ella–.
 ‘How did I know you was the cops?’ she said.

Rhetoric question

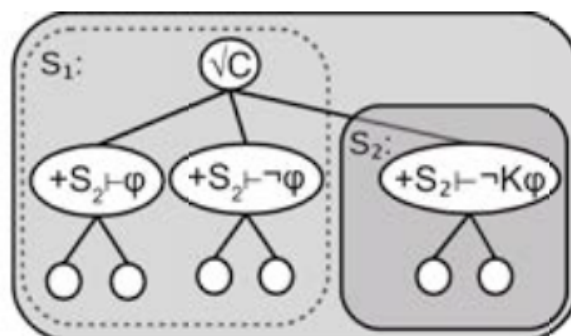


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 ‘How did I know you was the cops?’ she said.

Rhetoric question

[“Where did Dummy go?” he asked.]

(39) –Que ho sé, jo?

Q it know I
‘How do I know?’

(40) –Oh, aquest sobre! [. . .] I com ho sé, jo, que és seu?






‘Oh, that envelope! [. . .] How do I know it belongs to you?’

Conclusions

- Strong pronouns in null subject languages are typically contrastive, but as an implicature derived from the strong vs. null/weak alternation.
- When no alternation exists, no contrast arises.
- Strong pronouns may also play a role in common ground management, marking the degree of commitment of the speaker with the QUD.
- Hence, the distribution of strong pronouns cannot be simply explained on syntactic grounds, but asks for an analysis involving the interface between syntax, information structure and pragmatics.

Vielen Dank!

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