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On Becoming A Pronoun

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CENTRAL THESIS OF THIS TALK

Pronouns are not featurally distinct from other types of DPs. Put differently, there is no feature [+pronominal]. Instead, pronouns are created derivationally, through a process of ellipsis (cf. Postal 1969): a pronoun is a D-head with a deleted NP.

SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

Cases of 'conversion to a pronoun' in vehicle change, pro-drop and traces.

EXTENSION OF THE ANALYSIS

Not just pro*nouns*, but all pro*forms* can/should be derived derivationally: pronominal properties of ellipsis sites.

Overview of the talk

1. A bit of pronominal history: the rise and fall of [±pronominal, ±anaphor]
2. Conversion to a pronoun
3. The analysis: deriving pronouns through ellipsis
4. Extension of the analysis: ellipsis sites as derivationally created proforms
5. Evaluating Elbourne's (2008) account of VP-ellipsis
6. Conclusions and summary

1. A bit of pronominal history: the rise and fall of [±pronominal, ±anaphor]

1.1 The traditional account

- the features [±pronominal, ±anaphor] in principle yield four categories of expressions:

(1) a. [-pronominal, +anaphor]
b. [+pronominal, -anaphor]
c. [-pronominal, -anaphor]
d. [+pronominal, +anaphor]

- as far as overt DPs are concerned, three of these four types are attested:

(2) a. [-pronominal, +anaphor]: reflexives and reciprocals
b. [+pronominal, -anaphor]: pronouns
c. [-pronominal, -anaphor]: proper names and full DPs
d. [+pronominal, +anaphor]: *(does not occur)*

Chomsky (1982): this same feature matrix can be used to categorize empty categories:

(3) a. [-pronominal, +anaphor]: A-trace
b. [+pronominal, -anaphor]: *pro*
c. [-pronominal, -anaphor]: Ā-trace
d. [+pronominal, +anaphor]: PRO

supporting evidence (I): A-traces as anaphors

locality

(4) a. John was killed t.
b. John killed himself.

(5) a. John is likely t to win.
b. John wants himself to win.

(6) a. * (It is unfair) John to seem t has won.
b. * John believes that himself has won.

no lowering

(7) a. * Himself thought John seems to be intelligent.
b. * (It is unfair) t to think John seems that it is raining.

supporting evidence (II): *pro* as a pronominal (Tomioka 2003)

referential

(8) a. Ken-wa Erika-o saso-tta. Dan-mo *pro* saso-tta. (Japanese)
Ken.TOP Erika.ACC invite.PERF Dan.also invite.PERF
'Ken invited Erika. Dan invited her, too.'
b. John looked at the girl and I looked at her too.

bound

(9) a. Dono gakusei-mo Dan-ga *pro* buzyokushi-ta to it-ta. (Japanese)
which student.even Dan.NOM insult.PERF COMP say.PERF
'Every student$_i$ said that Dan insulted him$_i$.'
b. Every girl$_i$ thinks John likes her$_i$.

donkey

(10) a. Dareka kita-ra kono-kagi-o *pro* watasite kudasai. (Japanese)
someone came.if this.key.ACC give please
'If someone comes, please give him this key.'
b. If a farmer owns a donkey, he feeds it.

paycheck

(11) a. Ken-wa zibun-no uti-o utta Erika-mo *pro* utta. (Japanese)
Ken.TOP self.GEN house.ACC sold Erika.also sold
'Ken sold his house and Mary sold her house too.'
b. A man$_1$ who gives his$_1$ paycheck to his$_1$ wife is wiser than a man$_2$ who gives it (= his$_2$ paycheck) to his$_2$ cat.

supporting evidence (III): Ā-trace as an R-expression

restriction to case-marked positions

(12) a. They think John will leave tomorrow.
b. I wonder who$_i$ they think t$_i$ will leave tomorrow.

(13) a. * It seems John to be intelligent.
b. * I wonder who$_i$ it seems t_i to be intelligent.

Strong Crossover
(14) a. * He$_i$ thinks John$_i$ is intelligent.
b. * I wonder who$_i$ he$_i$ thinks t_i is intelligent

supporting evidence (IV): PRO as a pronominal anaphor (Chomsky & Lasnik 1993)

no PRO in governed positions to which case is assigned
(15) a. * We found PRO.
b. * We found PRO incomprehensible.
c. * John$_i$ promises PRO$_i$ will attend class.

no PRO in governed positions to which no case is assigned
(16) a. * They expressed the belief PRO to be intelligent.
b. * We expected there to be found PRO.
c. * It was believed PRO to be intelligent.
d. * It seems PRO to be intelligent.
e. * John believes sincerely PRO to be clever.

(non-arbitrary) PRO needs a local c-commanding antecedent
(17) a. John$_i$ expects PRO$_i$ to hurt himself.
b. * John$_i$'s mother expects PRO$_i$ to hurt himself.
c. * John$_i$ expects Mary to try PRO$_i$ to be clever.

1.2 Problems for the traditional account

1.2.1 The copy theory of movement

Chomsky (1993): syntactic movement doesn't leave traces, but rather full copies of the moved element

→ this means (a) that A-traces are not necessarily anaphors:

(18) a. This man was arrested ~~this man~~. → A-trace = R-expression
b. He was arrested ~~he~~. → A-trace = pronoun
c. John believes himself to be misunderstood ~~himself~~. → A-trace = anaphor

→ and (b) that Ā-traces are not necessarily R-expressions

(19) a. That man I don't think Mary saw ~~that man~~. → Ā-trace = R-expression
b. Him I don't think Mary saw ~~him~~. → Ā-trace = pronoun
b. Herself I don't think Mary saw ~~herself~~. → Ā-trace = anaphor

1.2.2 Anaphors vs. superraising

→ while anaphors can be bound across an intervening expletive subject (Chomsky & Lasnik 1993), A-movement cannot cross such an intervening expletive

(20) a. John$_i$ believes it to be likely that pictures of himself$_i$ are on sale.
b. * John$_i$ seems that it is likely t_i to win.

1.2.3 pro vs. overt pronouns

→ on closer inspection, there is no complete correspondence between the readings of *pro* and the readings overt pronouns can get

(21) a. Ken-wa kuruma-o kat-ta Erika-mo *pro* ka-tta.
Ken.TOP car.ACC buy.PERF Erika.also buy.PERF
'Ken bought a car. Erika bought a car too.'
b. ≠ Ken bought a car. Erika bought it too.

1.2.4 Strong Crossover revisited (Postal 2004)

Postal (2004): SCO cannot be reduced to Principle C

(22) a. [Whose$_1$ cousin]$_2$ did you convince him$_{*1/*2/3}$ I had run over t_2?
b. Herself$_i$ I'm sure Gladys$_i$ doesn't want to vote for t_i.
c. ? Him$_i$, John$_i$ says Mary loves t_i with all her heart.
d. * John$_i$, he$_i$ says Mary loves t_i with all her heart.
e. * Which nurse$_i$ did Mike convince Jim and her$_i$ that you voted for t_i?
(cp. Mike convinced Jim and her$_i$ that you voted for that nurse$_i$.)
f. Who$_i$ did you give a picture of t_i to him$_{i/*j}$?
(cp. You gave a picture of Claude$_i$ to him$_i$.)

1.2.5 PRO in governed positions

Chomsky & Lasnik (1993): just like overt DPs, PRO is able to undergo subject-to-object raising in passives, but it cannot raise from a case- to a non-case-position

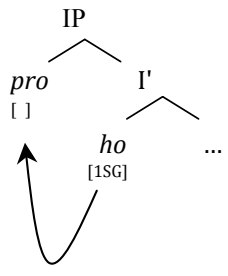
(23) a. * We never expected there to be found PRO.
b. We never expected PRO$_i$ to be found t_i.
c. * (It is unfair) PRO$_i$ to strike t_i that the problems are insoluble.
d. * (It is unfair) PRO$_i$ to seem to t_i that the problems are insoluble.

1.2.6 pro vs. Agree

GB-theory of *pro*: *pro* is a pronominal which is inherently unspecified for phi-features → it is the inflectional head that provides *pro* with content (cf. e.g. Rizzi 1986):

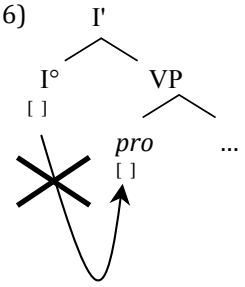
(24) *pro* ho parlato a tuo fratello (Italian)
have.1SG spoken to your brother
'I have spoken with your brother.'

(25)



Problem: under an Agree-based analysis of agreement, I° is merged with a set of unvalued phi-features; it probes its c-command domain for a matching set of valued phi-features → if *pro* is unspecified for phi-features, it is not a suitable Goal for I° and the derivation crashes

(26)



1.3 Conclusion

While the [±pronominal, ±anaphor]-distinction at first sight seemed to offer an adequate classification of empty categories, it has turned out to be both empirically and theoretically flawed.

2. Conversion to a pronoun

2.1 Vehicle change (Fiengo & May 1994, Vanden Wyngaerd & Zwart 1991)

(27) a. We didn't think that John$_i$ would be arrested, but he$_i$ did ___.
b. * …but he$_i$ did think that John$_i$ would be arrested.
c. …but he$_i$ did think that he$_i$ would be arrested.

→ in terms of the [±pronominal, ±anaphor]-distinction, this would imply that the feature [+pronominal] would be added to *John* inside the ellipsis site

however: such an account would leave unexplained why addition of the feature [+anaphor] is not an option (though cf. also Fiengo & May 1994:213)

(28) a. * We liked [John and Sally]$_I$, but they$_i$ didn't ___.
b. * …but they$_i$ didn't like [John and Sally]$_i$.
c. …but they$_i$ didn't like themselves$_i$.

2.2 Pro-drop

Tomioka (2003): pro-drop (of the East-Asian type, but cf. Roberts 2007, Holmberg 2005 for ellipsis accounts of Agreement-driven pro-drop) involves NP-ellipsis of a determinerless DP (cf. also Kim 1999)

(29) Ken-wa kuruma-o kat-ta Erika-mo [$_{DP}$ D° ~~[$_{NP}$ kuruma-o]~~ ka-tta.
Ken.TOP car.ACC buy.PERF Erika.also car.ACC buy.PERF
'Ken bought a car. Erika bought a car too.'

→ while we are sympathetic to Tomioka's line of analysis, it too leaves open the question of why *pro* never doesn't get an anaphoric reading (data from Neeleman & Szendrői to appear cf. also Kim 1999:275)

(30) Taroo-ga *(zibun-o) semeta.
Taroo.NOM self.ACC blamed
'Taroo blamed himself.'

2.3 Traces

recall: Chomsky's argument that conceptually, traces should be viewed as copies, since that obviates the need for reconstruction.

(31) Which pictures of each other$_i$ does he think that they$_i$ saw___?
(32) He thinks that they$_i$ saw some pictures of each other$_i$.
(33) Himself$_i$ John$_i$ really likes t$_i$.
(34) John$_i$ really likes himself$_i$.

→ Two wrinkles in the view that traces are copies:

(a) Copy-raising

(35) The shit's gonna hit the fan.
(36) The shit$_i$ looks like it$_i$'s gonna hit the fan.
(37) * The shit$_i$ looks like the shit$_i$'s gonna hit the fan.
(38) There looks like there's gonna be a problem.

(39) Lakay fe nwa (Haitian Creole, Ura (1994) – examples from Deprez (1992))
house makes black
'We have money trouble.'
(40) Lakay$_i$ sanble [li$_i$ fe nwa].
house$_i$ seems it$_i$ makes black
'It seems that we have money trouble.
(41) * Lakay$_i$ sanble [Lakay$_i$ fe nwa]. *(our guess)*

(b) Trace-conversion (Fox 2002)

(42) Which boy Mary visited ~~which boy~~?
Paraphrase: Which is the boy, x, such that Mary visited the boy x?

(43) Trace–Conversion
a. Variable-Insertion: (Det) Pred → (Det) [Pred λy (y=x)]
b. Determiner Replacement: (Det) [Pred λy (y=x)] → the [Pred λy (y=x)]

however: Evidence from ellipsis that the trace has to be interpreted as a pronoun, rather than just a definite description

(44) Hazelnuts I like, but pistachios I don't.

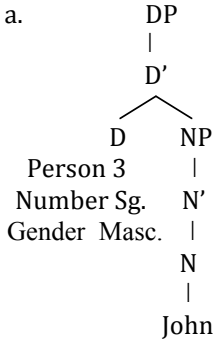
2.4 Conclusion

There are a number of contexts in which a phrase is base-generated as a non-pronominal, but gets converted to a pronoun in the course of the derivation. Such cases seem to strongly support a derivational analysis of pronouns.

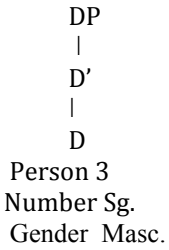
3. The analysis: deriving pronouns through ellipsis

sample derivation: vehicle change

(45) a.

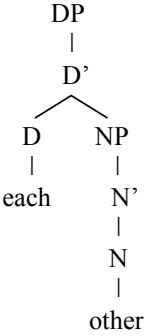


b. Deletion



(46) Why No Vehicle Change To An Anaphor

a.



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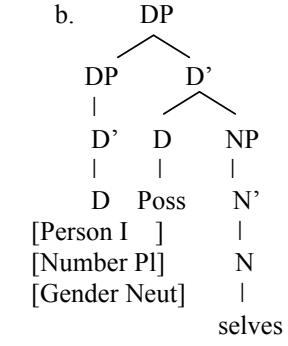
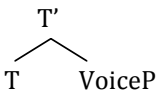


4. Extension of the analysis: ellipsis sites as derivationally created proforms

(47) John likes to clean, although his parents don't want him to____, and Fred likes to cook, although his parents don't_____, either.
(Intended meaning: John likes to clean, although his parents don't want him to clean, and Fred likes to cook, although his parents don't want him to cook, either.)

our analysis: Deletion, which is optional, occurs at point that the configuration occurs, in which you have a functional head and a complement. When the complement deletes, the functional head becomes a pro-form.

example: VP-ellipsis, if we take it to be VoiceP-ellipsis:

(48)


→ After deletion, you just have T'
|
T, and so the licensor gets treated as a pro-form.

Licensing

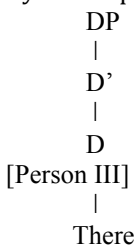
(49) * First fire began pouring out of the building, and then smoke began.

(50) * John would prefer that I leave, and Bill would prefer that I _____too.

Assumption: Principle of Projection Activation (Koopman (2000)- A projection is activated if its head or specifier position occupies lexical material at some point in the derivation.

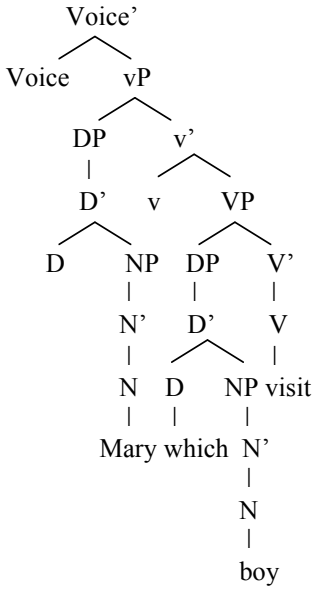
Some Sample Derivations:

(51) Why The Expletive Remains A Pure Copy In Copy-Raising

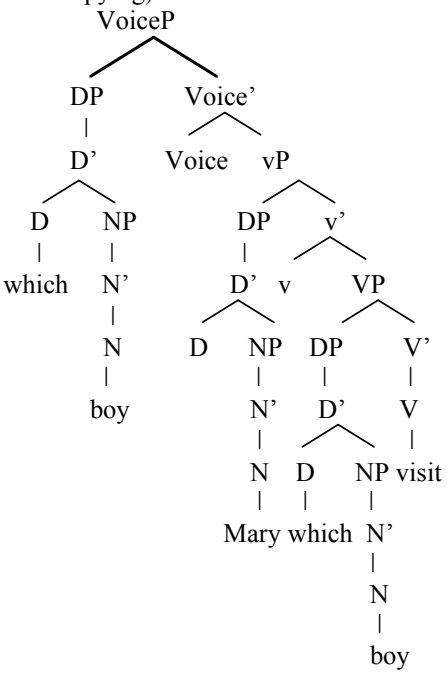


(52) Trace-Conversion

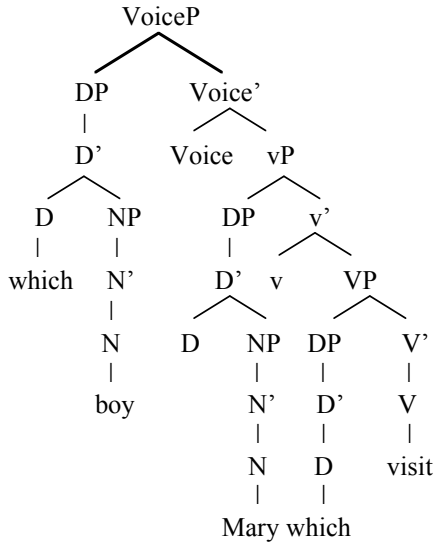
Initial Structure:



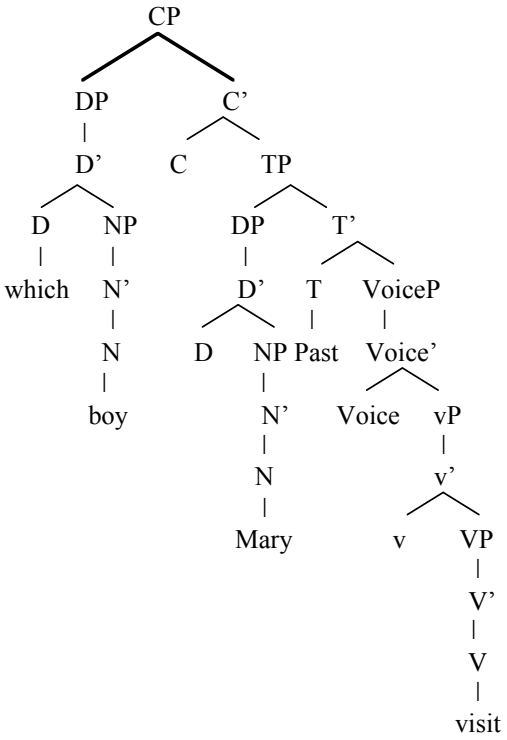
(53) (After Wh-Copying)



(54) (After NP-deletion of the lower copy)



(55) (Finally, DP-deletion of the lower links of the chain when the head is in [Spec, CP], after operator-variable interpretation):



5. Evaluating Elbourne's (2008) account of VP-ellipsis

5.1 The Essence of Elbourne's Analysis:

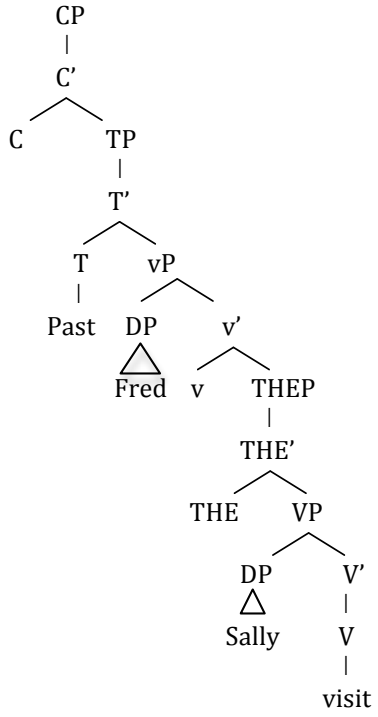
(56) vP → v THEP

(57) "We stipulate that THEPs are unpronounced. VP-ellipsis, then, consists of optionally letting little v take THEP as its sister; the VPs in THEP cannot be pronounced and are thus subject to a constraint on recoverability." (Elbourne 2008:202).

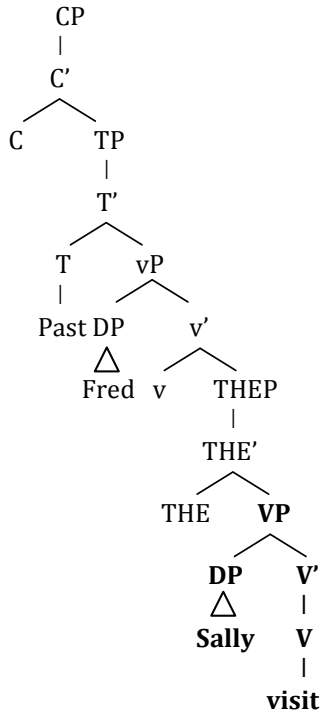
Sample:

(58) John visited Sally, and Fred did, too.

(59) Initial Structure of *Fred did*



(60) After PF-Deletion (Bolding Indicates Non-Pronunciation)



5.2 The Problems

5.2.1 Disparities Between Silent THE and overt "the" wrt extraction and NPI-licensing

May's (1977) observations that NPIs can't be licensed from outside of a definite NP:

(61) a. * John doesn't believe the claim that Cecil has any fingers.
b. * Sam never buys the book which has any torn pages.

Parallel: definite DPs, unlike indefinites, don't allow wh-extraction:

(62) * Who did you see the picture of___?

(63) Who did you see pictures of___?

5.2.2 Can't Generalize to Fox's Trace-Conversion Method

6. Conclusions and summary

A. Pronouns are not primitives of the theory, but (derivationally) derived entities.

B. Inclusiveness is supported, in that we have shown the viability of eschewing rules which change one syntactic feature value into another, by accounting for why some instances of conversion of a binding-theoretic type into another are possible, while others are not.

C. Traces can be shown to be basically copies.

D. Deletion must be allowed to occur in the syntax, so that it can feed the binding principles, and cannot simply occur at PF.

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