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 pronouns, but all proforms 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, said that Dan insulted him,’  
   b. Every girl, thinks John likes her.

*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 man₁ who gives his₁ paycheck to his₁ wife is wiser than a man₂ who gives it (= his₂ paycheck) to his₂ 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, they think t, will leave tomorrow.
(13)  
  a. * It seems John to be intelligent.  
  b. * I wonder who, it seems t, to be intelligent.  

**Strong Crossover**  
(14)  
  a. * He, thinks John, is intelligent.  
  b. * I wonder who, he, thinks t, 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, promises PRO, 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, expects PRO, to hurt himself.  
  b. * John,‘s mother expects PRO, to hurt himself.  
  c. * John, expects Mary to try PRO, 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.  \( \Rightarrow \) A-trace = R-expression  
  b. He was arrested he.  \( \Rightarrow \) A-trace = pronoun  
  c. John believes himself to be misunderstood himself.  \( \Rightarrow \) 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.  \( \Rightarrow \) Ā-trace = R-expression  
  b. Him I don’t think Mary saw him.  \( \Rightarrow \) Ā-trace = pronoun  
  b. Herself I don’t think Mary saw herself.  \( \Rightarrow \) 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, believes it to be likely that pictures of himself, are on sale.  
  b. * John, seems that it is likely t, 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. [Whose1, cousin]2 did you convince him1/*2/3 I had run over t2?
   b. Herself, I’m sure Gladys, doesn’t want to vote for t1.
   c. ? Him, John, says Mary loves t with all her heart.
   d. * John, he1, says Mary loves t1 with all her heart.
   e. * Which nurse, did Mike convince Jim and her, that you voted for t?
      (cp. Mike convinced Jim and her, that you voted for that nurse.)
   f. Who, did you give a picture of t1 to him1/*?
      (cp. You gave a picture of Claude, to him.)

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 PRO1 to be found t1.
   c. * (It is unfair) PRO1 to strike t1 that the problems are insoluble.
   d. * (It is unfair) PRO1 to seem to t1 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) IP
    pro [ ]
    I’
    ho [15G] ...
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

\[
I' \\
I^o \quad \text{VP} \\
\text{pro} \quad \text{...}
\]

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 would be arrested, but he, did ___.  
  b. * …but he, did think that John would be arrested.  
  c. …but he, did think that he, 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 [+pronominal] is not an option (though cf. also Fiengo & May 1994:213)

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

2.2 Pro-drop


\[(29)\] Ken-wa kuruma-o kat-ta Erika-mo [\(\text{DP}\) D° [\(\text{Sg} \text{kuruma-o}\) 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 Tomioaka’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)
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, does he think that they, saw ___?
(32) He thinks that they, saw some pictures of each other.
(33) Himself, John, really likes t.
(34) John, really likes himself.

→ Two wrinkles in the view that traces are copies:

(a) Copy-raising

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

  house makes black
  ‘We have money trouble.’
(40) Lakayi sanble [lii fe nwa ].
    house, seems it, makes black
    ‘It seems that we have money trouble.
(41) * Lakayi sanble [ Lakayi, 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. 
\[
\text{\textbf{DP}} \quad | \\
\text{\textbf{D}}' \\
\text{\textbf{D}} \\
\text{\textbf{NP}} \\
\text{Person 3} | \\
\text{Number Sg.} N' \\
\text{Gender Masc.} | \\
N \\
| \\
John
\]

b. Deletion
\[
\text{\textbf{DP}} \quad | \\
\text{\textbf{D}}' \\
\text{\textbf{D}} \\
\text{Person 3} \\
\text{Number Sg.} \\
\text{Gender Masc.}
\]

(46) Why No Vehicle Change To An Anaphor

a. 
\[
\text{\textbf{DP}} \quad | \\
\text{\textbf{D}}' \\
\text{\textbf{D}} \\
\text{\textbf{NP}} \\
\text{each} | \\
N' \\
| \\
N \\
| \\
\text{other}
\]

b. 
\[
\text{\textbf{DP}} \quad | \\
\text{\textbf{D}}' \\
\text{\textbf{D}} \\
\text{\textbf{NP}} \\
\text{Poss} | \\
N' \\
\text{Person I} | \\
\text{Number Pl} | \\
\text{Gender Neut} \\
\text{\textit{selves}}
\]
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) \[ \begin{array}{c}
   \text{T'} \\
   \text{T} \quad \text{VoiceP}
\end{array} \]

→ After deletion, you just have T''
   \[ \begin{array}{c}
   \text{T}, \text{ and so the licensor gets treated as a pro-form.}
\end{array} \]

**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

\[ \begin{array}{c}
   \text{DP} \\
   \mid \\
   \text{D'} \\
   \mid \\
   \text{D} \\
   \mid \\
   \text{[Person III]} \\
   \mid \\
   \text{There}
\end{array} \]
(52) Trace-Conversion  
Initial Structure:

```
   Voice'  
  /     \  
Voice  vP  
   / \   / \  
DP  v'  D' v  VP  
  / \   / \  
D' N' D' V  
  /   /   
N D NP visit 
  /   
Mary which N'  
   /    
N    
   /   
boy
```

(53) (After Wh-Copying)

```
VoiceP  
/   
DP  
/   
D'  
/   
D  
/   
D' N'  
/   
N  
/   
boy  
/   
which N'  
/   
D' v  
/   
D  
/   
D' N' D' V  
/   
N D NP visit 
/   
Mary which N'  
/   
N    
/   
boy
```
(54) (After NP-deletion of the lower copy)

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{VoiceP} \\
\downarrow \\
\text{DP} \\
\downarrow \\
\text{D'} \\
\downarrow \\
\text{Which} \\
\downarrow \\
\text{boy} \\
\ \ \\
\text{NP} \\
\downarrow \\
\text{N} \\
\downarrow \\
\text{Visit} \\
\downarrow \\
\text{Mary which}
\end{array}
\]

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

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{CP} \\
\downarrow \\
\text{DP} \\
\downarrow \\
\text{D'} \\
\downarrow \\
\text{Which} \\
\downarrow \\
\text{boy} \\
\ \ \\
\text{NP} \\
\downarrow \\
\text{N} \\
\downarrow \\
\text{Past} \\
\downarrow \\
\text{Visit} \\
\downarrow \\
\text{Mary which}
\end{array}
\]

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

5.1 The Essence of Elbourne’s Analysis:

(56) \(vP \rightarrow v \rightarrow \text{THEP}\)

(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.

References


