

An Account of N-Drop

Empirical Evidence and Analysis

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1 Introduction

- N-drop is a productive process in Spanish allowing a DP to lack an overt noun
- Three major types - D-AP, D-RC, and D-PP
 - (1) Quiero la falda negra y la [] amarilla
want.1SG the skirt black and the yellow
'I want the black skirt and the yellow (one)'
 - (2) El ordenador que funciona y el [] que no funciona
the computer that works and the that NEG works
'The computer that works and the (one) that does not work'
 - (3) El reloj de Martín y el [] de Marisol
the watch of Martín and the of Marisol
'Martín's watch and Marisol's'
- Another construction, Dem-XP has been treated as N-drop by some of the literature (it is better analyzed as NP Ellipsis)
 - (4) Ese coche para Marta y este [] para Lourdes
that car for Marta and this for Lourdes
'That car for Marta and this (one) for Lourdes'
- What I'll be talking about today:
 - The environments of N-drop in some more detail
 - Brief overview of some previous accounts of N-drop
 - Some further facts about the construction
 - How much actually drops?
 - My *pro* analysis

2 The Environments of N-drop

- D-AP is the most common type cited in the literature
- D-PP type N-drop can only occur where the PP is headed by *de* ‘of’
 - (5) *El coche para Marta y el [] **para** Lourdes
the car for Marta and the for Lourdes
 - (6) *La llamada a Ignacio y la [] **a** Paco
the call to Ignacio and the to Paco
- Dem-XP is grammatical with a non-*de* PP, or even with no post-gap modifier at all
 - (7) Ese coche para Marta y este [] **para** Lourdes
that car for Marta and this for Lourdes
‘That car for Marta and this (one) for Lourdes’
 - (8) Ese coche para Marta y este []
that car for Marta and this
‘That car for Marta and this (one)’

3 Previous Accounts

- Traditional descriptive grammars call N-drop ‘nominalization’
 - Problem: N-drop works with PPs and relative clauses - we don’t want to say that those can nominalize, too
 - Problem: The supposedly nominalized adjectives don’t behave like nouns - they can be modified by adverbs, but not by adjectives
- An ECP approach - Contreras (1989), Lobeck (1986), Bosque (1986)
 - This approach focuses only on N-drop of type D-AP
 - Contreras: The N-drop gap must be governed by an X⁰ category
 - Lobeck and Bosque: Specifiers can serve as proper governors
 - But: This would require stipulating that while the specifier of AP, PP, and VP cannot be governors in English, SpecNP can (idiosyncratically) be a proper governor in Spanish, but not English
 - Proposed solution (Bosque): Spanish has ‘richer’ number and gender morphology than English
 - Problem: Why don’t all languages with ‘richer’ number/gender morphology allow N-drop?
- An Approach to D-PP and D-RC - Kester and Sleeman (2002)
 - The key is the ‘modifier phrase’ - the stuff that comes after the gap

- N-drop is allowed because of a checking relation between the null nominal element and a functional head
- Relies heavily on Kayne’s (1994) Antisymmetry Theory
- Speculate that Dem-XP is more ‘lenient’ because demonstratives are ‘stronger’ than the ‘semantically weak’ definite article
- Acquisition studies (e.g. Montes 1987, Snyder et al. 2001) have shown that DP-internal agreement morphology is acquired significantly earlier than N-drop - therefore agreement morphology cannot be the sole element necessary for acquisition of N-drop

4 Further Facts

- Lobeck (1995) lays out a general schema for several types of ellipsis
- Test 1: Is flanking material required? Yes
 - (9) a. *Quiero la falda negra y la []
want.1SG the skirt black and the
 - b. *El ordenador que funciona y el []
the computer that works and the
 - c. *El reloj de Martín y el []
the watch of Martín and the
- Test 2: Can the antecedent be outside a coordinate or subordinate structure the gap is in? Yes
 - (10) A María no le gustan los paraguas, pero estaba lloviendo y María llevó
to María NEG 3SG like the umbrellas but was raining and María brought
el [] negro
the black
‘María doesn’t like umbrellas, but it was raining and she brought the black (one)’
 - (11) Jaime leyó la carta de Marta, pero cree que la [] de Lourdes es mejor
Jaime read the letter from Marta but thinks that the of Lourdes is better
‘Jaime read the letter from Marta, but he thinks that Lourdes’ (one) is better’
- Test 3: Can the gap precede the antecedent? Yes, in some cases
 - Gap can precede antecedent if BAC is obeyed
 - (12) Porque no le gustan las [] rojas, Marta compró las flores azules
because NEG 3SG like the red, Marta bought the flowers blue
‘Because she does not like the red (ones), Marta bought the blue flowers’
 - Gap can also precede antecedent in a few other cases, in violation of BAC

- (13) A Marta le gustan los [] rojos, y por eso compró los flores azules
 to Marta 3SG like the red, and for this bought the flowers blue
 ‘Marta does not like the red (ones), so she bought the blue flowers’

- Test 4: Must the empty category be exactly a phrase? No

- (14) La [NP [N caja] de lapices] y la [] de crayones
 the box of pencils and the of crayons
 ‘The box and pencils and the (one) of crayons’

- (15) La [NP [caja de lapices] redonda] y la [] cuadrada
 the.FSG box of pencils.MPL round.FSG and the.FSG square.FSG
 ‘The round box of pencils and the square (box of pencils)’

- N-drop can get its antecedent from context - ‘pragmatic control’ (Hankamer and Sag 1976)

- (16) [There is a table with two shirts on it - one red and the other blue]

Prefiero la [] roja
 prefer.1SG the red

‘I prefer the red (shirt)’

- The antecedent and the gap can be on opposite sides of an island (e.g. complement clause island)

- (17) *¿A cuál/qué mujer no crees el rumor de que José gritó?
 to which/what woman NEG believe the rumor of that José yelled
 ‘*Which/What woman did you not believe the rumor that José yelled at (her)?’

- (18) La aduanera alta no cree el rumor de que la [] baja gritó a un
 The customs.agent tall NEG believes the rumor of that the short yelled at a
 pasajero
 passenger
 ‘The tall customs agent doesn’t believe the rumor that the short (one) yelled at a passenger’

- N-drop can violate the Coordinate Structure Constraint

- (19) *¿Que compró Lourdes y Marta vió el pingüino?
 what bought Lourdes and Marta saw the penguin
 ‘*What did Lourdes buy and Marta saw the penguin?’

- (20) El tigre blanco no duerme, pero el pingüno y el [] amarillo duermen
 the tiger white NEG sleep but the penguin and the yellow sleep
 ‘The white tiger isn’t sleeping, but the penguin and the yellow (one) are sleeping’

- N-drop is very lenient about how similar the elements surrounding the gap and the antecedent must be (parallelism)

(21) Tengo la camisa **negra**, y creo que es roja la [] **que tiene**
 have.1SG the shirt black and think.1SG that is red the that has
Lourdes
 Lourdes
 ‘I have the black shirt, and I think that the (one) Lourdes has is red’

- Compare this with gapping:

(22) a. I ordered waffles, and Gaius ~~ordered~~ an omelette
 b. *I ordered waffles, and Gaius ~~ordered~~ the waitress to bring him a fork

5 How Much Drops?

- The name ‘N-drop’ leads one to think that just an N can drop, but the gap may be interpreted as more than just an N (with the right context)
- An adjective can also elide along with the N:

(23) [There are two short lectures happening today]
 La [conferencia corta] en el aula y la [] de la otra sala
 the lecture short in the lecture-hall and the in the other room
 ‘The short lecture in the lecture hall and the *short* (one) in the other room’

- Interpretations can be forced where the gap seems to stand in for complements or adjuncts in addition to the N:

(24) El [estudiante] de fonología [de Japón] y el [] de sintaxis
 the student of phonology of Japan and the of syntax
 ‘The phonology student from Japan and the syntax student (from Japan)’

(25) El [estudiante] alto [de fonología] y el [] bajo
 the student tall of phonology of Japan and the short
 ‘The phonology student from Japan and the short (phonology) student’

- Is this actually more than just the N dropping, or are we getting a pragmatic effect
 - *Kontrast* (Rooth 1992, Vallduví and Vilkkuna 1998) - similar to ‘focus’, includes contrastiveness. If an expression *a* is *contrastive*, a membership set $M=\{\dots,a,\dots\}$ is generated
 - Set M is determined both contextually and ontologically

(26) [We have been talking about SciFi TV shows we don’t like]
 STAR TREK, I hate

(27) $M(26)=\{\text{Star Trek, Battlestar Galactica, Lost in Space...}\}$

- So, the membership set M generated by (24) might be:

(28) $M(24)=\{\text{The syntax student from Japan, the syntax student from Mexico, the phonology student from Finland...}\}$

6 Analysis

6.1 In Favor of a *pro* Analysis

- N-drop behaves quite similarly to overt pronouns - we would expect this if *pro* were involved
- In both overt pronouns and N-drop, the antecedent and the gap can be quite far apart - even separated by islands and utterance boundaries
- Both overt pronouns and N-drop can get their antecedent from the physical context (pragmatic control), rather than overt lexical material (syntactic control)
- Both overt pronouns and N-drop allow the antecedent to follow the gap, if the BAC is obeyed
- The gap is interpreted as what might be considered a non-constituent, at least in the antecedent - this makes a deletion approach hard to hold (I follow Zagana's (2002) picture of the Spanish DP)
- We know that *pro* comes in different sizes (e.g. Lobeck's (1995) NPE, VPE, and sluicing)

6.2 On *de*-PPs

- *de*-PPs, but not other PPs
- Perhaps because *de* is a 'false' P (Brucart and Gràcia 1986, Torrego 1987, Ormazabal 1991, Ticio 2003, Ticio 2005)
- This would mean that the *de*-PP is actually a *de*-DP
- This distinction is what allows for the difference between *de* and other Ps

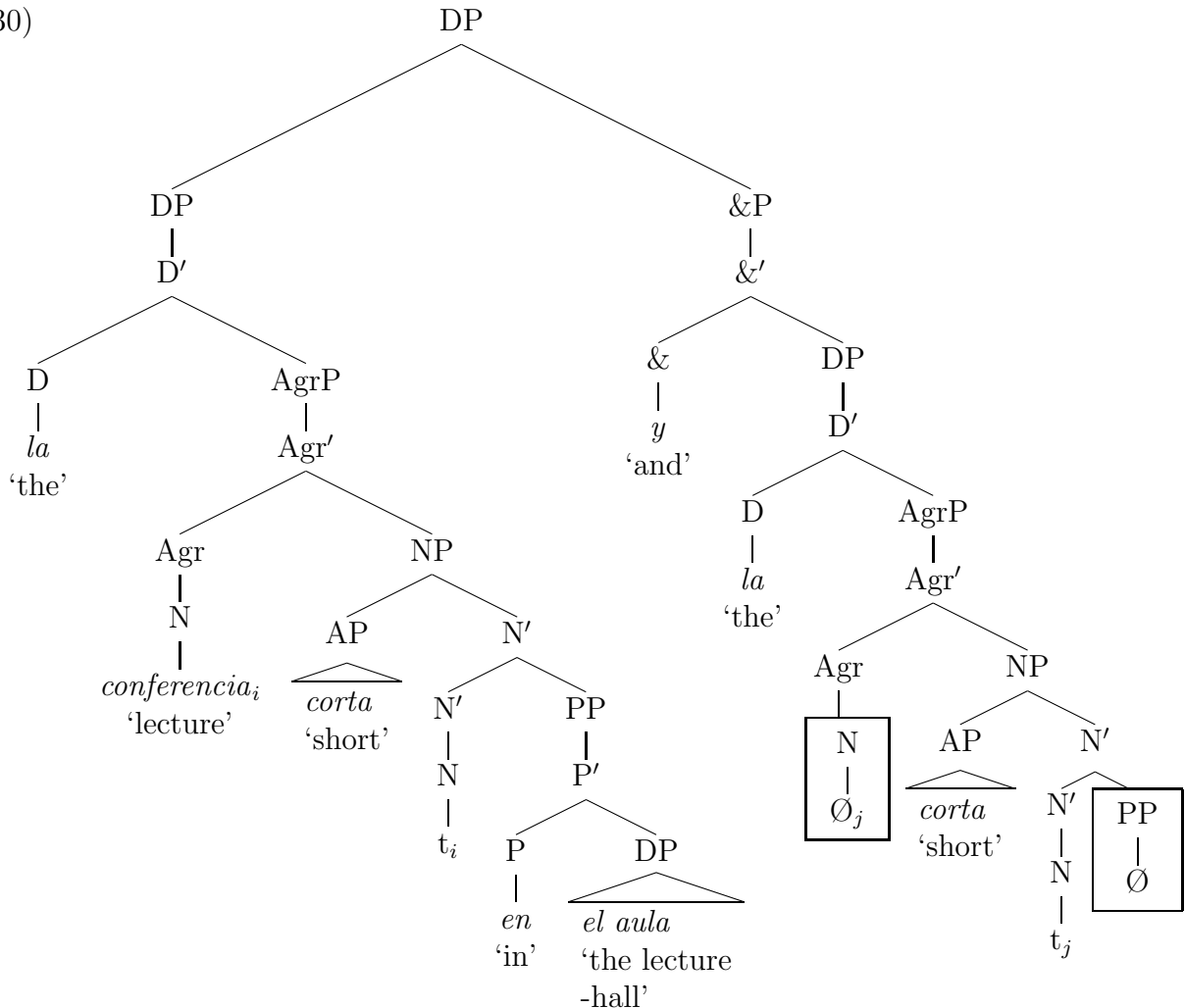
6.3 More on Non-Constituency

(29) [A sign in front of the speaker indicates that there will be two lectures in the same room later today - one long, and one short]

La [conferencia] corta [en el aula] y la [] larga
 the lecture short in the lecture-hall and the long

'The short lecture in the lecture hall and the long (one) [in the lecture hall]'

(30)

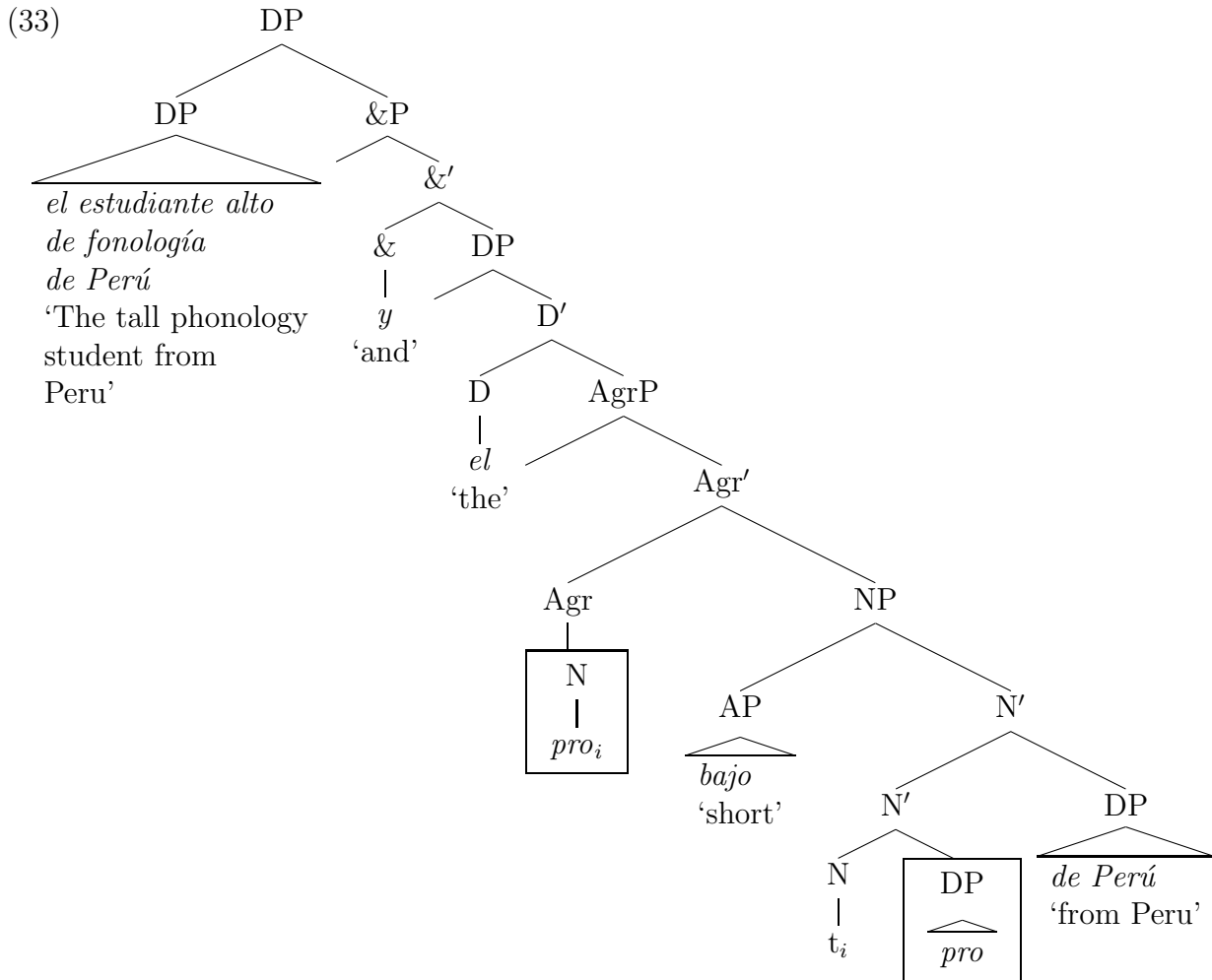


- Gapping affects non-constituents, but very little else can do so

(31) Who told Sharon about the two natural phenomena?
 Lee told Sharon about the eclipse, and Bill ~~told Sharon~~ about the tornado

- One possible solution to non-constituency: multiple *pros* per gap
 - Stipulate that the second *pro* is dependent on the first - perhaps by saying that a second *pro* in N-drop within the NP, requires a *pro* in Agr, or the second *pro* is only licit if it is in a tree where the N⁰ in its same minimal DP is filled by *pro*
 - This solution is not ideal, but is better than non-constituent deletion

(32) El estudiante alto de fonología de Japón y el [] bajo de Perú
 the student tall of phonology of Japan and the short of Peru
 'The tall phonology student from Japan and the short (phonology) student from Peru'



- A better solution: *pro* plasticity and kontrast
 - Pronouns are ‘plastic’ - there are multiple possible ways to interpret them

(34) Mary bought a suitcase from France, and I bought *one* too

- We can call on kontrast, as outlined before, to generate a membership set from the context, which would include, e.g., all contextually salient students (with where they are from and what they study, etc), and then select the correct one

6.4 The Flanking Material Requirement

- One possible solution is to appeal to PF - the definite article is a clitic, and must attach to overt material at PF. The restrictions on flanking material are based, in part, on what is in the same phase as the D (Ticio 2005)
- A better solution is to appeal to kontrast - if the discourse function of N-drop is to highlight the kontrastiveness of the modifiers, then it is the flanking material is that carries kontrast, which therefore need to be overt

7 Conclusion

- Previous accounts of N-drop didn't capture all of the facts (especially with respect to non-D-AP N-drop)
- We now know that N-drop doesn't pattern like other types of ellipsis
- A *pro* approach, in combination with either multiple *pros* or kontrast account for all the data as well as non-constituency concerns
- N-drop is a misleading name
 - 'Drop' implies that there was structural material there in the first place, but a *pro* analysis suggests otherwise
 - The gap is (at least interpreted as) more than just an N
- New name: DP-internal *pro* (open to suggestions!)

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