On the role of *n* in the derivation of rich agreement pro-drop and doubling

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Introduction Since Taraldsen (1978), Rizzi (1982), it has been assumed that the head bearing subject agreement in the Consistent Null Subject Languages (CNSL) is pronominal. Even though the implementations of this idea vary, most recent analyses posit that this head is +D. In some analyses, T is assumed to bear a D-feature (Manzini and Savoia 2002; Holmberg 2005; Roberts 2010, 2019; Panagiotidis 2002). In another line of analysis, person agreement is taken to be a D that heads a Big-DP, which may optionally contain a Doubling DP as a specifier (Ordónez and Treviño 1999; Kato 1999; Anagnostopoulou 2017). This Big-DP is merged as a subject argument inside vP and then D raises to the left of T, thus checking the EPP. When the specifier of the Big-DP is not projected, a null subject sentence is obtained; when it does project, the result is "free inversion". Indeed, there are striking parallelisms between clitic doubling (CD) and subject agreement in a CNSL. As noted by Ordónez and Treviño (1999), Spanish allows certain plural DPs to agree with either 1PL or 3PL (cf. *Los estudiantes tenemos/tienen mala memoria*). When the plural DP is associated with 1PL, an anaphor in an adjunct clause can only be bound with 1PL, not 3PL:

(1) *[Los estudiantes] salimos de la reunión despues de que *los/nos acusaram.
'We, the students, left the meeting after they accused us.'

The agreement morpheme is thus crucial for pronoun binding. The same paradigm can be found in clitic doubling:

(2) **(nos) acusaron [a los estudiantes]$_i$ despues de que hablasen de nosotros$_i$.*
(CL.1PL) accused [to the students]$_i$ after of that talk.PAST.SUBJ.3PL about us$_i$

The presence of D under T has the potential to capture the fact that, in most cases, null subjects (NS) in the CNSLs are individual denoting. However, NSs can also be weak indefinites:

(3) ¿Asistieron obispos? — No, no asistieron ø. 'Did bishops attend? — No, none attended.' (Laca 2013)

It is hard to see how D can be made compatible with a bare plural indefinite, be it overt or null. In fact, in the Spanish dialects that have Direct Object CD, non-specific indefinites cannot be doubled (Suñer 1988). The incompatibility between non-specific indefinites and Direct Object CD has been attributed to the [+definite] feature of the clitic and the interpretive requirements it imposes on the associate DP (Leonetti 2008). The pattern observed with dative CD is quite different, given that it doesn't obey the specificity restriction (cf. *No (le) hablé a nadie* 'I didn't talk to anyone.').This observation has led to the claim that dative clitics are agreement markers rather than determiners (Bleam 2000; Demonte 1995). Note, however, that dative clitics in Spanish may appear by themselves, without the doubler. Since Spanish doesn't have definite null objects, this agreement marker must be capable of somehow licensing an anaphoric silent argument, so indirect object clitics in Spanish exhibit a pattern that is very close to that of subject agreement in the CNSLs. They do not qualify as D heads and yet, as agreement heads, they are special in the sense that they are capable of licensing a null argument. This paper proposes an analysis of rich agreement pro-drop and dative doubling that doesn't rely on D. Instead, it explores the role of *n* in the derivation of null subject constructions and doubling.

Typological detour Barbosa (2019) examined the properties of two other types of pro-drop language, the partial NSLs and the discourse pro-drop languages, and argued that the same basic mechanism underlies pro-drop in these languages, namely null NP (property) anaphora,

as originally proposed by Tomioka (2003) for discourse pro-drop. The two sets of languages show a correlation between the occurrence of null arguments and the availability of a bare nominal in argument position. As suggested by Tomioka (2003) for Japanese, nP introduces a property that is pragmatically retrieved and is interpreted by general type shifting operations (Iota or Existential Closure). Ruda (2017) offers a similar analysis in her study of null objects in English, Hungarian and Polish. According to her, these minimally consist of a default, minimally specified null nominal — the same item that arguably appears as a complement of D in pronouns, the meaning of which is 'entity' (a property that is trivially true of any individual in the domain (Elbourne 2005)). Her proposal is that this proform reduces to the categorizing head n, lacking a root. With this much as background, we propose an analysis of rich agreement pro-drop that also relies on n (rather than D). In addition, we propose to apply Chung and Ladusaw (2003)'s approach to Multiple Linking in Chamorro to capture the kind of doubling under discussion.

Analysis From Koeneman and Zeijlstra (2022), we take the view that Subject Agr in the consistent NSLs is an independent morpheme (ϕ) and has inherently valued ϕ-features. Differently from them, we view the role of ϕ in light of the internal structure of pronouns as proposed by Déchaine and Wiltschko (2002). More concretely, we propose that ϕ as an independent morpheme must Merge with *n* in order to be fully interpreted. For the purposes of implementation, we adopt Chomsky (2020)'s notion of Workspace, which includes the Lexicon, as well as the suggestion that Head raising is an instance of Pair Merge interspersed with Set Merge (Hisa Kitahara, p.c.). Thus, the derivation of a null subject sentence in a CNSL will proceed as follows: **1.** *n* is first merged in argument position, vP internally: [$_{VP}$ *n* [$_{V\text{t}}$ v]]]. **2.** Next, v is pair merged with T (drawn from the Lexicon) forming <v,T>, and the resulting amalgam is set merged with vP: [$_{T}$ <v,T> [$_{vP}$ *n* [$_{v'}$ ~~v~~ ...]]]]. **3.** *n* is pair merged with ϕ (drawn from the Lexicon), yielding $< n, \phi >$. **4.** $< n, \phi >$ is then pair merged with <v,T>, thereby checking the EPP: [$_{TP}$ [$_{T}$ [$_{T}$ <v,T>] $< n, \phi >$] [$_{VP}$ ... ~~*n*~~ ...]].

Recall that the default meaning of n is the property 'entity'. We assume Chung and Ladusaw (2003)'s proposal that there are two ways of solving the type-mismatch that arises when a property denoting expression combines with a verbal predicate. *Specify* assimilates properties to entities by means of a type-shifting operation, a choice function that maps a property onto an entity that has the property. *Restrict* composes the property as a restrictive modifier of the predicate without changing the degree of unsaturation. Consider the first option. In this case,$< n, \phi >$ is interpreted at the C-I interface as an individual variable. This gives us the pronominal interpretation. When n composes with the predicate via Restrict, different options arise. **1.** The variable introduced by n is bound under Existential Closure. In this case, the result is a NS with an indefinite interpretation (cf. (3)). Crucially, this interpretation is available only in the plural. This restriction can be attributed to a general ban on bare singular nouns (as opposed to bare plurals) in argument position in the Romance NSLs. 2. Since Restrict doesn't change the degree of unsaturation of the predicate, the argument position it targets is free to compose with another noun phrase (a process labelled *Multiple Linking* in Chung and Ladusaw (2003)). The nominal is externally merged in Spec-vP and combines with the predicate by Function Application. This gives us 'free inversion'.

(4) [$_{\text{TP}}$ [$_{\text{T}}$ [$_{\text{T}}$ <v,T>] $< n, \phi >$] [$_{\text{vP}}$ DP [$_{\text{vP}}$ *n* [$_{\text{V}'}$ v]]]]

When the merged nominal is a bare plural, as in (3), Multiple Linking also applies. The difference is that the bare plural combines with the unsaturated verbal property via Restrict. The variable it introduces is bound under Existential Closure and we get a pure indefinite interpretation. A similar analysis can virtually be extended to Dative CD. By hypothesis, the dative clitic is a ϕ morpheme, while other kinds of doubling clitics involve D.