

Licensing Argument Drop in Cape Verdean Creole

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The investigation of pro-drop phenomena in creole languages has been for the past two decades a fruitful area of research in creolistics leading to interesting debates regarding their pro-drop status (see DeGraff, 1993; Déprez, 1994; Meyerhoff, 2000, Baptista, 2002; Costa & Pratas, 2012; Alexandre et al., 2012; Nicolis, 2005). Some creoles have been subject to contradictory analyses. Cape Verdean Creole (CVC) specifically has been argued to be pro-drop/semi-pro-drop (Baptista, 2002), non-pro-drop (Costa and Fernandes, 2012) or semi-pro-drop (Alexandre et al., 2012). Baptista's argument for considering it a pro-drop/semi-pro-drop language is that the language exhibits both null expletives and null arguments and she considered clitic pronouns, when present, as the spell out of agreement features in AGR, leaving the subject position empty. Costa and Pratas' (2012) argument in favor of the non-pro-drop status is based on the proposal that *pro* is only available in CVC as a bound variable that must be licensed and identified by a quantified or *wh*-antecedent. Finally, Alexandre et al.'s argument for a semi-pro-drop status has to do with the observation that in addition to null expletives, the language also allows embedded null subjects. In this paper, we propose an alternative, minimalist approach to the issue reconciling the previous analyses on CVC and showing that independently from any reference to parameters, it is possible to account for the observable data by having recourse to third factor principles instead. We argue that previous analyses of CVC have erroneously taken into account *agreement* as the crucial diagnostic of pro-drop phenomena, this criterion leading to contradictory conclusions on the pro-drop status of CVC.

We report in this paper on a wide range of data exemplifying argument drop in the 1st, 2nd or 3rd person. For instance, the example in (1) illustrates argument drop in the first person, in a root clause. (1) *Kuzé ki [mi N]_i ta fazeba? Riason spontânia. Ipótze? ...ipótze... Ken ki da nhos...? Ken ki da nhos kel fruta la? Pamo ki nhos ta kume? Undi ki staba k'es sestu ki staba lisiin? Kel-li e un di kes... Ker dizer, pro_i tenta kestiona-s pa odja, O, nton na pior di ipótze, pro_i bai pa riba d'es ku purada...*

'What would [I]_i do? Spontaneous reaction. For instance? ... instance... Who gave to you? Who gave you those pieces of fruit? Why are you eating? Where were these baskets that were right here? This is one of them... meaning, *pro_i* would try to question them to see, or, in the worst case scenario, *pro_i* would beat them up.'

We partially adopt Frascarelli's (2007) analysis linking argument drop to aboutness-shift topics and Sirguðsson's (2012) account of C-edge linking. This analysis stipulates that any overt and silent definite argument must match at least one C/edge linker in the local C-domain; such linkers are Topic features and speech participant features such as speaker and hearer. This analysis of null subjects in CVC reconciles former accounts while accounting for the entire set of observable data.