

Pro-drop, E-type pronoun, and Agreement

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A number of key observations have been made regarding pro-drop. In the GB era, it was observed that rich agreement licenses pro-drop (Taraldsen 1978, Rizzi 1986). Huang (1991) and Otani & Whitman (1991) noted that some cases of “pro-drop” cannot involve pro because they involve an indefinite expression that allows sloppy interpretation. Oku (1998) argued that these cases of indefinite pronouns are an instance of argument ellipsis instead of pro-drop. He also showed that argument ellipsis does not occur if there is agreement (also Saito 2007); if there is agreement the gap must be pro, as noted in the studies from the GB era. Recently, Duguine (2014) has proposed a unified approach by arguing that all cases of pro-drop are argument ellipsis; she shows that even under agreement, a gap could allow sloppy interpretation, contrary to Oku’s original observation. In this paper I will propose a version of a unified approach in which all instances of “pro-drop” in fact involve pro, thus taking us back to the approach in the GB era. I will argue, following Oikonomou (2014), that an E-type pronoun is responsible for the sloppy interpretation. As I will show, the language that most readily allows the sloppy interpretation via E-type pronoun is a language that does not have agreement, and does not have a determiner. Japanese falls into this class. A language that has agreement and determiner is the most difficult, though not impossible as Duguine showed; Greek and Spanish are examples of this. In between are languages that have agreement but not determiner. I will argue that Chinese, Malayalam and Turkish fall into this mid-range category.