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Dialectal variations regarding the EPP

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When compared to General Spanish (GS), Dominican Spanish (DS) and the Dominican Spanish variety spoken in El Cibao (DSEC) exhibit a unexpected behavior regarding some properties typically associated with the null-subject parameter. This paper advances a cohesive attempt of explanation for some of these dialectal contrasts. Basically, it will be argued that the main difference between Dominican varieties and GS relies on the possibility of the former of assigning EPP-features to T-heads. Therefore, it is proposed that the remaining characteristics of these varieties are related to this parametrical choice.

1. Dominican Spanish facts

DS is a "forefront of linguistic innovation" (Toribio 2000: 317). Here, I will consider some of these innovative properties regarding the cluster of properties associated with the Null Subject Parameter.

As GS, DS and DSEC display phonologically empty referential subjects (1), free-inversion (2), and systematic violations of the that-trace filter (3).

(1) Fui a casa.
Went to home
'I went home'.

(2) Compré yo manzanas.
Bought I apples
'I bought apples'.

(3) ¿Quién dijiste que compró el libro?
Who said.you that bought the book
'Who did you say bought the book?'

However, the Dominican varieties also exhibit some additional properties. I will consider four.

First, DS and DSEC show a higher proportion of overt subject pronouns than any other Spanish variety. Otheguy et al. (2007) report the following percentages:

(4)

Country	*Overt Subjects*
Dominican Republic	41%
Puerto Rico	35%
Cuba	33%
Ecuador	27%
Colombia	24%
Mexico	19%

Cabrera (2007) compares the varieties spoken in El Cibao (DSEC) and Santo Domingo (DS):

(5)

	Overt subjects	*Null Subjects*
El Cibao	67.1%	32.9%
Santo Domingo	65.8%	34.2%

Martinez-Sanz (2011) provides detailed data for overt vs. covert pronouns.

(6)

Pronoun	*Null*	*Overt*
1.sg	39.7%	60.3%
2.sg (specific)	10.9%	89.1%
2.sg (non-specific)	21.8%	78.2%
3.sg (Specific)	28.8%	71.2%
3.sg (non-specific 'uno')	23.7%	76.3%
1.pl	73.8%	26.2%
2.pl	37.5%	62.5%
3.pl (specific)	49.1%	50.9%
3.pl (non-specific)	87.3%	12.7%
Total	**39.1%**	**60.9%**

Cabrera (2007) offers a comparison between several studies. Despite differences in methodology and aims, the tendency holds: percentages for DS and DSEC are always higher.

(7)

Study	*City*	*Overt Subjects*
de Prada (2009)	Valladolid, Spain	12%
Enríquez (1984)	Madrid, Spain	21%
Orozco & Guy (2008)	Barranquilla, Colombia	35%
Barrenechea & Alonso (1977)	Buenos Aires, Argentina	36%

Second, subject inversion in wh-questions is heavily constrained in DS and DSEC[1]. Thus, these varieties display almost invariably the order SV –an unacceptable word order in GS– in, for example, object questions.

(8) ¿Qué tú compraste?
What you buy
'What did you buy?'

In GS, subject inversion in interrogatives follows from the subject staying in its thematic position (cf. Uribe-Etxebarria 1992, among others), and not from T to C movement as in English.

(9) [$_{CP}$ Qué [$_{C'}$ C [$_{TP}$ compraste [$_{vP}$ tú [$_{v'}$ …]]]]]

Thus, the "simplest" explanation for (8) involves assuming that the subject moved to the Spec,T position (cf. Toribio 1993). This analysis is supported by the fact that subject pronouns can be separated from the verb by negation in interrogative sentences[2].

(10) ¿Por qué tú no se lo dijiste?
Why you not CL.DAT.3sg CL.ACC.3sg said
'Why did you not tell him/her/them?'

[1] The phenomenon is also attested in other Caribbean dialects, but it seems to be more systematic in the Santo Domingo varieties (cf. Cabrera 2007).

[2] This fact is problematic for alternative approaches to SV order in interrogative sentences. So, for example, it does not find an explanation under the assumption that the preverbal subject in (6) is a clitic (cf. Lipski 1977).

Therefore, the sentence in (8) is supposed to involve a structure like (11).

(11) [$_{CP}$ Qué [$_{C'}$ C [$_{TP}$ tú$_i$ [$_{T'}$ compraste [$_{vP}$ *t*$_i$ [$_{v'}$ …]]]]]]

Third, overt pronouns in DS and DSEC do not behave as in GS regarding *Discourse Topic* and *Binding*. As Camacho (2013) observes, a sequence of overt pronominals as the one in (10) does not shift the topic in DS and DSEC.[3]

(12) Hay [unas muchachitas]$_i$ que están juntas conmigo, que *pro*$_i$/ellas$_i$ viven pa' fuera, entonces *pro*$_i$/ellas$_i$ vinieron a estudiar en la escuela del Pino…
'There are some girls that are together with me, that they live outside, so they came to study in the Pino School...'

Regarding binding, Martinez-Sanz points out that DS does not seem to obey the *Overt Pronoun Constraint* (OPC):

(13) *Overt Pronoun Constraint (Montalbetti 1984: 94)*
Overt pronouns cannot link to formal variables if the alternation overt/empty obtains.

(14) [Tio Papi]$_i$ murió tan feliz que *pro*$_i$ no sabe que él$_i$ murió.
Tio Papi died so happy that pro not know that he died
'Tio Papi$_i$ died so happy that he$_i$ didn't even know that he$_i$ died'.

In a nutshell, overt pronouns appear in positions where a null pronoun is expected, and they behave as null pronouns.

And fourth, DSEC has an optional non-referential expletive pronoun *ello*, "which is completely devoid of thematic content and force" (Toribio 2000: 321).

(15) *Existential construction in DSEC (Martínez-Sans 2011: 30)*
Vamos ahí que (*ello*) hay sillas.
Let's go there that are chairs
'Let's go there, because there are chairs'.

(16) *Impersonal construction in DSEC (Martínez-Sanz 2011: 30)*
(*Ello*) tiene que haber otro paso.
should that to be other path
'There must be another path'.

(17) *Met. Verb construction in DSEC (Bullock & Toribio 2009: 11)*
(*Ello*) no está lloviendo aquí pero allá sí.
not is raining here but there yes
'It is not raining here, but it is there'.

(18) *Unaccusative construction in DSEC (Bullock & Toribio 2009: 11)*
(*Ello*) vienen haitianos aquí.
come Haitians here
'Haitians use to come here'.

[3] The same effect can be obtained in GS and other languages by focalizing the overt pronoun:
(i) Juan$_i$ no sabe que ÉL$_i$ ganó el concurso
Juan not know that HE won the contest
'Juan$_i$ does not know that he$_i$ won the contest'.

As is well-known, there are no expletives in other dialects of Spanish.

(19)

	DSEC	GS
Llueve	YES	YES
Ello llueve	YES	NO

Crucially, *ello* does not behave as other "expletives" found in Romance varieties:

(20) *17th Century Spanish (Silva-Villar 1998:249)*
Ello has de casarte.
have-2sg to get-married
'You have to get married'.

(21) *European Portuguese (Silva-Villar 1998: 249)*
Ele muitos estudantes vieram à festa
many students came-3pl to-the party
'Many students came to the party'.

These expletives are usually analyzed as elements in the left periphery of the sentence (e.g., Silva-Villar 1998), so it would be tempting to analyze *ello* in the same way in order to derive its optionality. However, as Martínez-Sanz (2011) points out, there is a crucial difference between DSEC and the Romance varieties in (20) and (21) regarding *Transitive Expletive Constructions*.

(22) *17th Century Spanish (Silva-Villar 1998:256)*
Ello yo no sé por qué mi padre no
I not know why my father not
me llamó la torda o la papagaya.
me called the thrush or the parrot
'I don't know why I was not called either thrush or parrot by my father'.

(23) *European Portuguese (Silva-Villar 1998: 256)*
Ele os lobos andan com fame
the wolves go with hunger
'Wolves are hungry'.

However, DSEC speakers do not accept this kind of construction: preverbal subjects and *ello* are in a complementary distribution.

(24) *Dominican Spanish (Martínez Sanz 2011: 65, attributed to Toribio p.c.)*
*Ello yo no sé por qué mi papá me puso Almeida.
I not know why my dad me called Almeida
'I don't know why my dad named me Almeida'.

This pattern strongly suggest that *ello* occupies the Spec,T position and that it is a real expletive.

The table in (25) summarizes the generalizations/conclusions of this first section.

(25) *DS and DSEC: their behavior*

a.	Overt to Null subjects ratio:	Higher than "usual"
b.	Position of the subject in wh-interrogatives:	Spec,TP
c.	Overt & Covert subject pronouns:	Free Distribution
d.	Overt & Covert subject expletives (DSEC only):	Free Distribution

2. Deleting Null Subjects in General Spanish

I will follow several scholars in proposing that null-subjects are pronouns deleted under an "identity" relation with T (cf. Sheehan 2007, Saab 2009, and particularly Roberts 2010). The idea is that they form a movement-like chain at PF (and not at LF).

Let's begin with some assumptions. Somewhat adopting Rizzi's (1982) and Roberts & Holmberg's (2010) insights, I will assume that the availability of pronoun-like T heads is an important component of the Null Subject Parameter:

(26) *The Null Subject Parameter*
Does T bear both Definiteness [D] and Referential [R_α] features?

Second, I assume the following featural content for pronouns:

(27) a. *Strong pronoun:* {D, φ, R_β}
b. *Weak pronoun:* {D, φ}

Weak pronouns' referentiality is encoded in T's [R_α]. Strong pronouns' (emphatic and contrastive) referentiality is encoded in the pronoun as a feature [R_β].

Subject weak pronouns are merged in Spec,v, where they receive θ-role.

(28) $[_{TP}\ T_{\{T,\ D,\ R\alpha\}}\ [_{vP}\ D_{\{D,\ \varphi\}}\ \ldots]]$

T needs to valuate its φ-features. Thus, there is an Agree relation between T and D. Since T is non-defective, it is going to assign a feature to D, the T-feature (namely, nominative Case).

(29) $[_{TP}\ T_{\{T,\ D,\ R\alpha,\ \varphi\}}\ [_{vP}\ D_{\{D,\ \varphi,\ T\}}\ \ldots]]$

There is no EPP-related movement to Spec,T[4]. Null Subjects in Spanish (and consistent null subject languages) are postverbal (see Barbosa 2009 for an explicit and similar proposal).

In (29), all the properties of the null pronoun are already encoded in the T head. Such an scenario seems to be mandatory in order to comply with the *Condition on Recoverability of Deletion* (cf. Chomsky 1964).

(30) *Condition on Recoverability of Deletion*
An element may be deleted (i.e., not pronounced) if it is totally determined by a structurally related syntactic constituent.

Under Copy Theory (Chomsky 1993), chains are assumed to be collections of syntactic objects in a "Sameness" relation. I propose the following sketchy definition of Sameness[5]:

(31) *Sameness*
Two elements A and B in a Probe-Goal relation are the same if
(a) A c-commands B, and
(b) the set of features of B is included in the set of features of A (i.e., the set of features of B is a subset of the set of features of A).

Under this definition, T and D in (29) form a non-trivial chain CH = (T, D). And as in any chain, only one of the links must be pronounced. There are two alternatives, then:

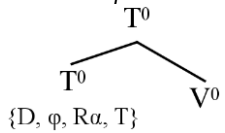
(32) *Possible realizations for the chain CH = (T, D)*
a. CH = (T, ~~D~~) ["DELETING" THE PRONOUN AND PRONOUNCING T]
b. CH = (~~T~~, D) ["DELETING" T AND PRONOUNCING THE PRONOUN]

The alternative in (32b), however, violates a PF principle: As is well known, in Spanish it is not possible spelling-out the verbal root without any inflection.

(33) a. cant-o, cant-ábamos, cant-ar, cant-arás
Sing- PRES.1sg., sing-PAST.1pl, sing-INF, sing-FUT.2sg
b. *cant

The restriction in (33) may be derived by assuming any of two independently proposed PF conditions:

(34) *Structure of the T node due V-to-T movement*



(35) *Excorporation Filter (Baker 1988: 73)*
A trace can never be non-exhaustively dominated by a zero-level category (i.e., there are no traces inside words).

(36) *Subword Deletion Corollary (adapted from Saab 2009: 375)*
No Subword can be subject to non-insertion if the Morphological Word that contains it is not subject to non-insertion (I-assigned).

So, it seems that PF conditions may override the principles of chain realization, as Franks (1998), Boskovic (2002), Bobaljik (2002) and Nunes (2004), among others, previously observed.

As a consequence of (35) or (36), pronouns in a Sameness relation with T heads are predicted to be silent[6].

3. Applying the system to DS and DSEC

Let's review the conclusion from the first section:

(37) *DS and DSEC: their behavior*

a.	Overt to Null subjects ratio:	Higher than "usual"
b.	Position of the subject in wh-interrogatives:	Spec,TP
c.	Overt & Covert subject pronouns:	Free Distribution
d.	Overt & Covert subject expletives (DSEC only):	Free Distribution

[4] I am using "EPP" as a convenient term to refer to whatever property in T heads triggering movement of a DP.

[5] See the appendix for a more principled definition.

[6] This system also allows explaining cases where *pro* is preverbal (i.e., occupies the Spec,T position). These are typical cases where full agreement requires a Spec-Head relation (e.g., Ancona variety of Italian). In these scenarios, an uninterpretable/unvalued Referentiality feature [$_u$R] requires c-commanding the T head to be checked/valued. Once checked/valued, the identity relation may hold:
(i) $[_{TP}\ D_{\{D,\ \varphi,\ T,R\alpha\}}\ [_{T'}\ T_{\{T,\ D,\ R\alpha,\ \varphi\}}\ \ldots]]$
Once a chain is formed, (35) or (36) determine that T must be pronounced and D deleted.

Regarding (37a), I will propose that the high amount of overt subjects *follows from systematic instances of non-deleted null subjects in DS and DSEC*. In other words, the high proportion of overt subject pronouns is due null subjects are receiving phonological representation.

Concerning (37b), the lack of subject-inversion in wh-questions and other contexts strongly suggests that the DS and DSEC allow T-heads to carry EPP-features. In other words, DS and DSEC are slowly changing into non-pro-drop languages. However, T heads do not carry EPP-features systematically yet, since both varieties allow free inversion (2) and violations of the that-trace filter (3).

In line with Toribio (2000), then, it will be advanced that DS and DSEC speakers have "two grammars". Or, in a more microparametrical sense, they can assign a T head with two different and opposing parametric values: EPP "on" and EPP "off".

Just as in GS, when the EPP is "off", deletion of null subjects is predicted:

(38) $[_{TP}\ T_{\{T,\ D,\ R\alpha,\ \varphi\}}\ [_{vP}\ D_{\{D,\ \varphi,\ T\}}\ \ldots]]$

(39) CH = (T, ~~D~~) ["DELETING" THE PRONOUN AND PRONOUNCING T]

However, if the EPP is "on", a different scenario arises:

(40) $[_{TP}\ D_{\{D,\ \varphi,\ T\}}\ [_{T'}\ T_{\{T,\ D,\ R\alpha,\ \varphi\}}\ [_{vP}\ D_{\{D,\ \varphi\}}\ \ldots]]]$

Since the features on the T head are not contained in the higher occurrence of the weak pronoun, Sameness is not satisfied. Therefore, two chains are formed:

(41) $CH_1 = (D_{\{D,\ \varphi,\ T\}})$; $CH_2 = (T_{\{T,\ D,\ R\alpha,\ \varphi\}},\ D_{\{D,\ \varphi\}})$

Both chains receive phonological representation independently. Since the element in the chain CH_1 carries φ-features, a D-feature and Case, it is spelled-out as a pronoun.

Thus, free distribution for overt and covert pronouns is explained as a matter of PF: PF fails at identifying as "the same" a weak pronoun and a T head, so both are pronounced separately.

The "two grammars" theory combined with a deletion analysis of null subjects also explains straightforwardly the presence of overt expletives in DSEC. Notice that *DSEC is the variety with the highest proportion of overt subject pronouns* (cf. 5). Under the present analysis, this means that it is the closest variety to a pure non-pro-drop setting. Therefore, development of impoverished pronominal forms with the only purpose of satisfying the EPP is somehow unsurprising.

Either if expletive pronouns are generated somewhere below T and undergo movement to Spec,T or if they are base generated in Spec,T, they cannot enter in an identity relation with T according to (31).

(42) $[_{TP}\ D_{\{D,\ \varphi\text{-def},\ T\}}\ [_{T'}\ T_{\{T,\ D,\ R\alpha,\ \varphi\}}\ \ldots]]$

(43) $CH_1 = (D_{\{D,\ \varphi\text{-def},\ T\}})$; $CH_2 = (T_{\{T,\ D,\ R\alpha,\ \varphi\}},\ \ldots)$

Since expletives are φ-defective, they cannot be overtly realized as a full pronoun. Therefore, the neuter form *ello* is spelled-out.

4. Concluding remarks

It has been shown that a single parametric choice, having an EPP-feature on T heads, allow deriving several properties of DS and DSEC. This kind of cascade-like explanation requires assuming that consistent null subject languages also consist of two other parametric choices: (i) T heads should carry "pronominal" features and V-to-T movement must be available in the language. Interestingly, both alternatives have also been independently postulated as "core" components of consistent null subject languages.

5. Appendix: on Sameness/Non-Distinctiveness

According to Copy Theory there are no movement operations in language. The displacement property is explained in terms of collections of non-distinct elements in the syntactic structure being interpreted as "the same" element.

(44) John was kissed ~~John~~.

Thus, Non-Distinctiveness is maybe the most important property of movement dependencies under Copy Theory…

The problem is how can we define it.

One prominent view assumes that Non-Distinctiveness follows somehow from the Copy operation (cf. Chomsky 1995, Nunes 1995, 2004). Thus, if syntactic objects are assumed to carry some kind of distinctiveness markings, their copies will also carry the same index.

(45) a. *Derivational step α*
K = $[_{TP}$ was $[_{VP}$ kissed $John_1]]$
b. *Copy*
K = $[_{TP}$ was $[_{VP}$ kissed $John_1]]$
L = $John_1$
c. *Derivational step α+1*
$[_{TP}\ John_1\ [_{T'}$ was $[_{VP}$ kissed $John_1]]]$

Let's call this one the *Derivational Definition* of Non-Distinctiveness (DD). Basically, it involves marking as "the same" two elements during the derivation.

This solution has been object of several criticisms during the years, basically because of its violation of the *Inclusiveness Condition* (cf. Chomsky 1995).

What I propose here is redefining Non-Distinctiveness. My definition is different in two aspects: (i) it is a principled definition of Non-Distinctiveness (i.e., it is based on independent grammatical principles); and (ii) it makes different predictions, mainly because it extends the empirical domain of Copy Theory beyond movement dependencies.

Following Halle & Marantz (1993), it is assumed a *Late Insertion* model of grammar. Thus, syntactic terminals are taken to be just sets of features, each of them being a pair *attribute-value*, where the attribute denotes a *feature-class* (e.g., Category or Gender) and the value denotes a member of such a class (e.g., V, N, or MASC, FEM).

(46) *Syntactic feature*
<Att,Val>

However, it seems that this assumption is not necessary for the interfaces: features at PF and LF are interpreted as instructions based on *privative* values that make no use of attributes (e.g., the noun *dogs* is interpreted as a plurality of entities without reference to the *Number* class). Therefore, a syntactic terminal consisting on the features $\{<Att_1,\alpha>,<Att_2,\beta>\}$ will be interpreted at PF and LF simply as the set $\{\alpha,\beta\}$.

(47) *Syntactic feature interpreted at the interfaces*
{Val}

As an extension of this idea, a valueless feature <Att,__> will lack a representation at the interfaces, being *uninterpretable*. Thus, a syntactic terminal with the features {<Att_1,α>,<Att_2,β>,<Att_3,__>} will be interpreted as the set {α,β}.

Chomsky (2000, 2001): the operation Agree relates a Probe carrying an unvalued feature <Att_1,__> with an *active* Goal carrying a valued version of the same feature <Att_1,α>; the activity of the Goal is determined by an unvalued feature that will get satisfied after Agree

(48) a. $[_{TP}\ T_{\{<\varphi,\_>,\ \ldots\}}\ [_{VP}$ kissed John$_{\{<\varphi,3sg>,\ <\kappa,_>,\ \ldots\}}]]$
b. $[_{TP}$ John$_{\{<\varphi,3sg>,\ <\kappa,T>,\ \ldots\}}\ [_{T'}$ was$_{\{<\varphi,3sg>,\ \ldots\}}\ [_{VP}$ kissed John$_{\{<\varphi,3sg>,\ <\kappa,_>,\ \ldots\}}]]]$
c. $[_{TP}$ John$_{\{3sg,\ T,\ \ldots\}}\ [_{T'}$ was$_{\{3s,\ \ldots\}}\ [_{VP}$ kissed John$_{\{3sg,\ \ldots\}}]]]$

The same kind of mechanism will be assumed for A-bar type of dependencies.

Notice that there is an *inclusion* relation between the occurrences of *John*: the set {3sg} is a subset of {3sg,T} (John$_{\{3sg\}} \subseteq$ John$_{\{T,3sg\}}$)). Such a relation will arise systematically for every new copy of a constituent (even if $XP_{\{\ldots\}} = XP_{\{\ldots\}}$, the general case for cyclic movement), so it may be capitalized to define an interface mechanism to recognize non-distinct elements:

(49) *Non-Distinctiveness*
Two constituents α and β are "the same" if:
a. α c-commands β,
b. the features of β are a subset of the features of α,
c. there is no δ between α and β being a proper subset of α or a proper superset of β.

This definition is based on (i) c-command (we cannot do anything without that), (ii) the Last Resort condition (encoded in (49b)) and (iii) a Locality consideration (49c). Thus, no "weird" mechanism is invoked.

This relation is transitive: if A and B are non-distinct, and B and C are non-distinct, then A and C are non-distinct.

The definition in (49) allows distinguishing, for example, two different chains in (50).

(50) $[_{TP}$ John$_{\{nom,\ \ldots\}}\ [_{vP}$ John$_{\{\ldots\}}$ said that $[_{TP}$ John$_{\{nom,\ \ldots\}}$ was $[_{VP}$ kissed John$_{\{\ldots\}}]]]]$

(51) CH1 = (John$_{\{nom,\ \ldots\}}$, John$_{\{\ldots\}}$); CH2 = (John$_{\{nom,\ \ldots\}}$, John$_{\{\ldots\}}$)

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