Null pronouns in English particle verb constructions

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Outline

- Figure retention particle verb constructions in English show evidence of null pronouns.
- These null pronouns are predicted by a small-clause-type analysis of particle verbs.
- The restricted distribution of null pronouns in English gives us an avenue to better understand null pronouns in general.

Background

- Particle Verbs (PVs) are common within Germanic languages.
- English PV Have the form **V Prt** and undergo particle shift.
- (1) Particle Shift
 - a. Declan turned down the music.
 - b. Declan **turned** the music **down**.
- ■PVs have two competing analyses

(2) Complex Head VP

(3) Small Clause VP V SC



V SC Prt Obi

Ground Promotion and Figure Retention

- GROUND PROMOTION(McIntyre, 2007)/FIGURE RETENTION(Milway, 2013) PVs comprise a small class based on the argument structure alternation they exhibit.
- These PVs are related to Verb + Spatial PP constructions.
- (4) **V + Full PP**Alex *rinsed* [Figure the dust] *out* of [Ground the pot].
- (5) **Ground Promotion**Alex *rinsed out* [Ground the pot].
 Alex *rinsed* [Ground the pot] out.
- (6) Figure Retention Alex rinsed out [Figure the dust]. Alex rinsed [Figure the dust] out.

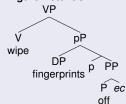
Null Grounds vs Absent Figures

- (7) Figure retention Null ground
 - a. Whenever Jim wears his blazer, [he wipes the fingerprints off.] **Interpretation:** He wipes the fingerprints off **his blazer**.
 - Whenever Karen uses the carafe, [she rinses the oatmeal out.]
 Interpretation: She rinses the oatmeal out of the carafe.
- (8) Ground promotion Absent figure
 - a. Whenever Sheila sees fingerprints, [she brushes her blazer off.]
 Interpretation: She brushes something off her blazer.
 Not:She brushes fingerprints off her blazer.
 - b. Whenever Tom finds oatmeal, [he rinses the coffee pot out]
 Interpretation: He rinses something out of the coffee pot.

 Not: He rinses oatmeal out of the coffee pot.
- Compare this to the interpretation of pronouns.
- (9) Pronoun object Corefers with antecedent
 - a. Whenever Ellie sees a chair, she fights it. **Interpretation:** She fights the chair.
 - b. Whevever Oliver sees a plant, he eats it. **Interpretation:** He eats the plant.
- (10) No Object Stereotypical reading
 - a. Whenever Ellie sees a chair, she fights.
 Interpretation: She fights
 Not: *She fights the chair.
 - b. Whevever Oliver sees a plant, he eats.
 Interpretation: He eats (something)
 Not: *He eats the plant.
- Null grounds can also can also be donkey-anaphors
- (11) Every butler holding a glass is wiping off the fingerprints.
- The null ground is predicted by a small clause analysis. (modified from Svenonius, 2003)
- (12) a. Ground Promotion



b. Figure Retention



Why Null Grounds?

- ■The structure assumed here and shown in (12-b) predicts that ground arguments are obligatory.
- It offers no particular insight into why the null ground correlates with a PV construction.
- ■There are no apparent restrictions on the types of ground arguments can be elided.
- ■There seems to be no difference in the contextual/pragmatic requirements of null grounds compared to pronouns.
- Particle shift and the null object, then, must depend on properties of the particles/prepositions off and out.
- off and out are the only prepositional words in English that encode a SOURCEPATH
- (13) [off] = Source(on(x))
- Ground argument DPs require additional functional structure to be interpreted (K) spatially (Svenonius, 2010; Zwarts and Winter, 2000).
- (14) a. $K \leftrightarrow of$
 - b. $KP \leftrightarrow there$
- ■K may play some part in the presence of null grounds.
- Null arguments are not restricted to grounds cross-linguistically. How can the English phenomenon generalize?

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