Extraposition, Syntactic Doubling and CED effects

Marco Nicolis (nicolis@gmail.com) Georgetown University

Background: Iatridou and Embick (1997) (I & E henceforth) show that pro contrasts with overt “it type” expletives in its inability to have a C/IP as a linguistic antecedent. The extraposition examples in (1) (from I & E (1997:60)) illustrate the point for English vs. Greek. I & E further show that a class of predicates which take pro\textsubscript{expl} as subject (dubbed PRED2), do not conform to the pattern in (1) and allow for grammatical sentences structurally similar to (1b), such as (2); similar facts hold in all pro-drop languages.

Proposal: I propose that in cases like (1b), (2b-d), pro is generated “together” with the extraposed clause inside a BigDP, in a doubling configuration (see Belletti (2005), Cecchetto (1999)). pro is subsequently subextracted from the BigDP and moved to the preverbal subject position (see (3). “it type” expletives are not generated in a doubling configuration, but rather first merged in subject position in [Spec, T].

Analysis: This movement approach to expletive pro in extraposition structures leads one to predict that the locality constraints typically observed in conjunction with subextractions should characterize this case too. For example, in German (and other Germanic languages) the was…für (‘what…for’) split structure, where was (‘what’) is subextracted from an original constituent containing both was and für, is only grammatical if subextraction occurs out of object position. Hence the was…für (‘what…for’) split can only occur out of direct objects, subjects of passive verbs, subjects of Unaccusatives (4a), but it crucially cannot occur out of subjects of intransitives (4b). This follows straightforwardly from Huang’s CED (or any modern reformulation of that idea). I propose that the contrast between (1) and (2) is amenable to the same explanation: if pro is subextracted out of a ‘Big DP’ in object position, no CED violation arises (see (2b-d) where both verbs (to seem and to be) are unaccusative), in contrast to (1b) where the non-unaccusative convince is used. In the latter case the Big DP is therefore an adjunct (or whatever corresponds to that in a theory which adjunction is dispensed with, e.g. Kayne (1994)), not a complement; as such subextraction out of it violates the CED. Since overt expletives are grammatical in similar contexts (e.g. (1b)), I conclude that they are not generated in a doubling configuration with the extraposed clause, but they are rather first merged in Spec, T. An important confirmation of the correctness of this hypothesis comes from Dutch, where both expletive pro and expletive het (’it’) are possible in extraposition contexts in both object (6c-d) and subject position (5a-b) (data (5) through (7) from Bennis (1986)). Extraction from the extraposed clause in (5c-d) is only possible in the het-less version (see (6)). Bennis proposes that since the object position is filled by het in (6b), the extraposed CP is an adjunct and extraction therefore violates the CED. In (6a) there is no het and therefore the extraposed CP is generated in object position. No CED violation arises. Notice that the same contrast also emerges with expletive het vs. expletive pro in subject position (7). This follows immediately from my analysis: pro and the extraposed clause are generated together in object position in (7a), and pro is then subextracted, along the lines of (3). It type expletives cannot be generated in a doubling configuration; the only possibility for (7b) is then to generate the expletive in object position and the extraposed clause in an adjunct position. However, extraction out of it will give rise to a CED violation, on a par with (7b).

Extensions: Belletti (2005) proposes that postverbal subjects in Italian are generated in a doubling configuration: the BigDP contains pro and the subject; pro is subsequently moved to Spec, T. However, no asymmetry between verbal classes emerges; a postverbal subject is grammatical with both an unaccusative (8a) and an unergative verb (8b). Why is (8b) grammatical? Following various recent works, I assume that the Big DP subject in (8b) is not in an adjunct position, as traditionally assumed, but it is
rather generated in [Spec, v] and moved to a right peripheral Focus position (see Belletti (2005), Cecchetto (1999)). From this position, a licit extraction domain, _pro_ is successfully subextracted.

(1) a. It convinced Mary to buy us a car that we were often late
b. *_pro_ epise tin Maria na mas ayɔrası aftokini to/tı araʃame poles fores
   convince the Mary MOD us buy car that be-late-1PL many times
   ‘It convinced Maria to buy us a car that we were often late’
(2) a. It seemed impolite that we arrived late
   b. _pro_ fanye ayenepu fiasame araɣe
   c. It is a shame that John will leave
   d. _pro_ ine dropi pu o Kostas Tha fijı
   ‘It seemed impolite that we arrived late’
   ‘It is a shame that Kostas will leave’
(3) [T … [vP [BigDP _pro [CP …]]]
(4) a. Was sind für Leute angekommen?
   What are for people arrived
   ‘What kind of people have arrived?’
b. *Was haben für Leute gearbeitet?
   What have for people worked
   ‘What kind of people have worked?’
(5) a. ... dat (het) duidelijk is dat Jan ziek is
   ...that (it) clear is that Jan sick is
   ...dat ik (het) haat dat Jan ziek is
   ...that I it hate that Jan sick is
   b. ...dat (het) gebleken is dat Jan ziek is
   ...that (it) appeared is that Jan sick is
   ‘What do you regret that he said?’
(6) a. *Wat is het gebleken dat Jan gezegd heeft?
   What is yesterday appeared that Jan said has
   ‘What is yesterday appeared that Jan said has’
b. Wat is het gebleken dat Jan gezegd heeft?
   ‘What is yesterday appeared that Jan said has’
(7) a. *Wat betreurde jij dat hij gezegd had?
   What regretted you that he said had
   ‘What regretted you that he said had’
b. Wat betreurde jij het dat hij gezegd had?
   ‘What regretted you it that he said had’
(8) a. _pro_ È arrivato Gianni
   ‘Gianni has arrived’
b. _pro_ Ha telefonato Gianni
   ‘Gianni has telephoned’

References