

A Minimalist Approach to the Null Subject Parameter*

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Abstract

Null Subject Romance Languages are languages in which the V feature of T is necessarily strong. Taking so much for granted, and given the morphological characteristics of this kind of languages, all their properties follow: V raising deposits at T a set of [– interpretable] ϕ -features that are erased through covert raising by the [+interpretable] ϕ -features of the subject DP, either phonetically realized or *pro* (*pro*: a notational abbreviation for a set of features composed by the categorial feature D and ϕ -features). Inverted subject (DP) and null subject (*pro*) are, therefore, ν P internal subjects. The preverbal subject, in contrast, is a DP merged at T—therefore a non-argument—in a derivation with a *pro* as the internal subject. Starting from this basic proposal, the analysis of some new data points to the spurious character of Nominative Case in these languages and suggests that *pro* is only allowed in Spec, ν P.

Key words: Null Subject Languages, [–interpretable] V-features, derivational approach, *pro*, Nominative.

Resum. Un enfocament minimalista del paràmetre del subjecte nul

Les llengües de subjecte nul romàniques, com ara el català, l'espanyol i l'italià, són llengües que tenen el tret V de T necessàriament fort. Donant això per descomptat i ateses les característiques morfològiques de la concordança verbal d'aquest tipus de llengües, el conjunt de propietats que les caracteritzen se'n segueix automàticament: l'elevació de V diposita a T un joc de trets ϕ [–interpretable] que són esborrats, mitjançant trasllat no manifest, pels trets ϕ [+interpretable] de l'SD subjecte, fonèticament realitzat o *pro* (*pro*: una abreviatura notacional per a un conjunt de trets compost del tret categorial D i trets ϕ). Subjecte invertit (SD) i subjecte nul (*pro*) són, doncs, subjectes interns a l'Sv. El subjecte preverbal, en canvi, és un SD ajuntat a T—I, doncs, un no argument— en una derivació amb *pro* com subjecte intern. Aplicant aquesta proposta bàsica a l'anàlisi d'algunes dades empíriques noves, s'apunta el caràcter espuri del cas nominatiu en aquestes llengües i se suggereix que *pro* només és permès a l'Espec d'Sv.

Paraules clau: Llengües de Subjecte Nul, trets de V [–interpretable], enfocament derivacional, *pro*, nominatiu.

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1. Introduction

As far as I know, there is yet no truly minimalist proposal accounting for the basic properties displayed by Null Subject Languages (NSLs),¹ namely those stated in (1). Such a proposal should be able to combine two achievements: on the theory-internal side, it should not appeal to more than one Infl category and it should be strictly derivational; on the empirical side, it should account at least for the three properties in (1) without resort to any mechanism which is extraneous to the (human) language Computational System (CS_{HL}).

- (1) a. *Preverbal Subject*
 En Joan ballava.
 the Joan dance-PAST-3SG
 'Joan danced.'
- b. *Postverbal Subject*
 Ballava en Joan.
 dance-PAST-3SG the Joan
 'Joan danced.'
- c. *Null Subject*
 Ballava.
 dance-PAST-3SG/1SG
 'He/she/I danced.'

Let us begin by considering how the current accounts fail to achieve these two goals. On the one hand, it has to be pointed out that there is no proposal being able to explain the properties in (1), this failure being due either to omission —as in Barbosa (1997), Manzini & Savoia (1997), Ordóñez & Treviño (1999) and Pollock

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1. I want to point out that in this paper the expressions «subject», «preverbal subject», «Null Subject Parameter» etc. are used in a rather informal way, and that by «Null Subject» languages (NSLs) we intend those in which the non-realisation of the subject as a phonetically overt DP is possible because of verbal agreement. We therefore exclude Chinese-style NSLs, and include both NSLs with uniform agreement (NSLs_{UA}) —such as Catalan, Spanish or Italian— and NSLs with alternate agreement (NSLs_{AA}) —such as Arabic, Celtic languages, etc.

(1997)—, or to the conclusion that the properties in our triad (1a)–(1c) are not derivable from the mechanisms of CS_{HL} —as in Picallo (1998) and Donati & Tomaselli (1997). So, in Picallo (1998), since the subject preposing operation that would yield (1a) constitutes an economy violation when compared with (1b), it could not be the result of operations driven by CS_{HL} to satisfy feature checking, but the result of a discourse-driven operation.²

On the other hand, we are dealing with approaches which are neither completely nor truly derivational: there is often a mixture of representational and derivational criteria. So, for instance, when it is said that the preverbal subject is dislocated (in the sense of sentence-external), it remains a mystery how that kind of subject has been derived and, thus, whether it enters feature checking, if it has to. More generally, the lack of explicitness about the derivations underlying each construction extends to all the members of the triad.

Finally, it seems worth mentioning that in almost all the references on this topic appeal is made to more than one inflectional category. So, some of them posit AGRP and TP (Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou (1996, 1998), Benedicto (1993), Nash & Rouveret (1996), Platzack (1994), Donati & Tomaselli (1997)); and some others posit two IPs with different features (Manzini & Savoia (1997), Cardinaletti (1994, 1997)).

Taking seriously the state of affairs this survey shows, it appears as more than just expedient to pave the way for an account according to the minimalist guidelines cited above. In particular, I will develop a system in which the [–interpretable] features play a key role in the derivation.

In what follows, I will show that the trigger for the properties listed in (1a)–(1c) is the bunch of [–interpretable] ϕ -features of the tensed verb in NSLs (section 2). Then (section 3), I will present the basic guidelines of my proposal. One of its results (section 4) concerns the non-universality of the EPP, which I pursue, while arguing, however, against the current proposals according to which there is no Spec,T position in NSLs with Uniform Agreement (NSL_{UA})—see note 1. Against these views, a new set of data is presented which obliges us to be indulgent with the EPP in its classical version, this is to say, as obligatory presence of Spec,T. A meaningful and, until now, unnoticed contrast between English and

2. Picallo (1998) assumes that the same numeration underlies (1a) and (1b). As we will see (§ 4.1), it can be argued that this assumption is mistaken. Donati & Tomaselli (1997) conclude that neither the Extended Projection Principle (EPP), nor the Null Subject Parameter can be derived under the elementary mechanisms of CS_{HL} . The fact that their work crucially relies on two inflectional heads—a handicap to be avoided in the present proposal—allows us to leave it aside without having to deal with the arguments that lead them to such a conclusion. Nevertheless it must be noticed that Donati and Tomaselli aim at explaining the syntactic behaviour of subjects in English, French and German; pro-drop languages—our NSL_{UA} —, and VS languages such as Irish—an instance of NSL_{AA} .

Unlike all the proposals mentioned so far, Kato's (1999) does not incur any of these problems. But it assumes that verbal agreement is categorially a D(eterminer) and, as such, an independent lexical item which enters the derivation as a true argument. The problems with such an approach will be addressed later in the text (§ 2, 4.1).

Catalan is offered that shows it is mistaken to assume that, beyond the fact that English has no *pro*, in both languages there are preverbal subjects (arguments or expletives) of the same kind. In the following section (section 5), the basic proposal already sketched in section 3 is presented in a more explicit way and compared with the classical ones, namely those assuming that Spec,T is always filled. *Merge* with T (or above T) yielding the preverbal subject in NSLs is also examined. Finally (section 6), two almost unnoticed contrasts between preverbal and postverbal subjects lead me to explore two issues: the possibility that Nominative Case is spurious in NSLs, and the constrained distribution of *pro*, that would only appear in Spec,vP. Such an approach to Nominative Case yields a new insight into the concurrence of Partitive Case and agreement (with the verb) and makes it possible to establish a clear separation between clitics and agreement affixes.

To conclude this introduction, a warning note is in order. Given the limitations of this paper, it would be impossible to deal with two more issues that constitute, in fact, the background of my proposal. The first one, that I take for granted, is the left-dislocated status of preverbal subjects in NSLs (see Solà 1992, Ordóñez & Treviño 1999, Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou 1998), although in the account to be presented here it simply means that the preverbal subject is a non argument that, in a similar way to expletives, merges in a non- θ -position, in fact, often in the same position the θ -subject raises to in non-NSLs (see section 5). The second issue is that the purported evidence that *pro* is preverbal (in the sense that it appears in Spec,T) —see, for instance, Rizzi (1990), Cardinaletti (1994, 1997)— is much less compelling than it is usually assumed to be: parallelism between sentences with *pro* as subject and sentences with a lexical preverbal subject is also expected in a framework where lexical (and non focused) preverbal subjects are nothing but sentences with a null subject (*pro*) in θ -position and an (optionally added) left-dislocated subject, in fact a non-argument merged in a non- θ -position. With these two remarks in mind, we henceforth concentrate on the proposal to account for the properties in (1a)-(1c).³

2. The verbal ϕ -features in NSLs

The present proposal, as all those in the past concerning NSLs, relates the properties in (1) to the «richness»⁴ of verbal agreement. So far, therefore, nothing is new. Since Taraldsen (1980) and Rizzi (1982), all the proposals resort, in similar ways, to «rich agreement». In the REST framework (Chomsky, 1981), this guiding idea was fleshed out as INFL having the feature [+pronominal]. As far as I know, how-

3. I leave out of the present paper showing how the behaviour of copulative sentences in NSLs_{UA} can be considerably clarified within the framework advocated here. As is well known, this kind of construction shows agreement to the right:

(i) Sóc jo.
am I
'It's me.'

4. On how *richness* is to be understood, see Kato (1999), who systematises previous proposals.

ever, there is as yet no proposal in which the [–interpretable] verbal features (number, (gender), (person)), when so characterized, play the role they are assumed to play in the workings of NSLs, it is to say, in triggering displacement. Thus, Kato (1999) and Ordóñez & Treviño (1999), for instance, give argument status to the affix containing the [–interpretable] features of V, instead of considering it a reply of the [+interpretable] ϕ -features of the corresponding DP argument. In this way, the ϕ -features of V become, *ipso facto*, [+interpretable]. Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou (1998), and Pollock (1997) do not see the affix as an argument, but they also assume (although not explicitly) that the ϕ -features of V are [+interpretable]: they must indeed be when the affix is taken to belong to the category of pronouns, as they propose (see Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou 1998: 517). Since they consider the agreement affix a pronoun with ϕ -features, it turns out that V raising to T checks not only the V-feature of T but also the D-feature of T (EPP), i.e., the latter checking takes place by adjunction to the head (T) instead of substitution in Spec,T.

Independently of the empirical problems tied with such views —see §6—, it must be pointed out that on the theory-internal side it is indeed impossible to think of ϕ -features of V as [+interpretable]. The reason is that to achieve this interpretation one must reject the Strong Lexicalist Hypothesis (SLH), which seems to be inherent to Minimalist Program (MP). Indeed, according to SLH, the array of lexical choices provided by the numeration are lexical items already inflected that provide each choice with an unique category.⁵ This being so, there is no way to escape the conclusion that ϕ -features of V are [–interpretable]: to achieve the opposite conclusion it would be necessary to assume that these features are in an argument and this, in turn, would lead to introducing V and the agreement affix separately, which is just what the SLH prohibits.

There are, moreover, general grounds for casting doubts on the accounts that grant inflectional affixes (clitics are to be kept apart) the status of an argument. Were they arguments, it should be explained why Alternate Agreement (AA) languages (see note 1), as Arabic or Celtic ones, work as defined by Greenberg's Universal 33 and not conversely. Let us see why. Universal 33 states that «When number agreement between the noun and verb is suspended and the rule is based on order, the case is always one in which the verb is in the singular.» This statement, translated to our terms, amounts to saying that when the agreement between verb and subject is suspended, it is the verb that loses (all the) ϕ -features, whereas the ϕ -features of the subject DP remain unchanged. Note that if the inflectional affix was an argument, one could expect languages suspending the agreement between verb and subject the other way round, that is, having the verb with all the ϕ -features and the DP without. As an illustration, we should have languages with the pattern

5. Notice that for Pollock (1997), Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou (1998), etc., the verbal form would not only be V, but also D. This interpretation is, in my view, incompatible with the SLH, since it would make available to computation the lexical, categorial, inner parts of what in syntax counts as a single category —conceding it is legitimate, in the first place, to postulate the D category on the basis of mere ϕ -features.

Work-3PL the man meaning ‘The men work’, instead of the existing pattern in this kind of AA languages, namely *Work-Ø the men*. As far as I know, this behaviour is not attested across languages. We conclude, therefore, that the ϕ -features which enter into the subject verb agreement are primarily features of the DP subject (in which they are [+interpretable]) and, therefore, that it is the verb indeed that agrees with the subject, and not the subject with the verb, as ever stated in good traditional grammar.⁶

3. Towards a minimalist approach

Given the previous theory-internal considerations and this last empirical observation, it seems that one can take as well founded the main assumption of the present proposal, namely the [–interpretable] nature of the ϕ -features of V. Now, if V remains in the position in which it is merged initially, these features will not be able to attract the ϕ -features of SUBJ in the Spec,_vP basic position, simply because here SUBJ stands above V. It is then necessary that V raises overtly, as in fact it does in all NSLs.⁷ We then have a strong V feature of T and a set of [–interpretable] ϕ -features on the verb, raising along with it to T. What erases them?⁸ In the present proposal —where the preverbal subject, as we will show, is not a true argument—, erasure of such features has to be accomplished covertly by the ϕ -features of the so called postverbal subject (the true internal subject in the case of unergative or transitive verbs, or the DP sister to V in unaccusative verbs). Hence, such an

6. There is a certain idealisation in this argumentation, if we consider cases like:

- (i) *Ho hem preparat els ajudants.*
it-have-1PL prepared the assistants
‘We the assistant professors have prepared it.’
- (ii) *Els nens encara no ho sabeu.*
the children still not it-know-2PL
‘You children don’t know yet.’

or the examples in (18). In fact, in these examples there is more information in the verbal ending (extra person information) than in the triggering DP. Whatever the precise analysis for these cases, though, we can reasonably maintain the argument in the text, however qualified, on the grounds that a mismatch in number (V-plural / DP-singular) is never attested.

- 7. It can be taken as an empirical fact that in NSLs V raising is overt. This is shown by, among other facts, adverb distribution (*La Maria fa sovint la migdiada*, the Maria does often the siesta). Is that, though, what we should expect, considering the [\pm interpretable] status of the features entering the computation? It seems the answer is yes. Indeed, if we assume, as seems reasonable, that the V-feature of T is [+interpretable], a verb which has not raised overtly would be left with no [–interpretable] attractor to get raised covertly, so that its [–interpretable] ϕ -features could not possibly be erased and the derivation would crash at the C-I interface. It would follow, then, that the presence of verbal agreement in NSLs must be associated to a strong V-feature of T. Following this line of reasoning, we could even conclude that attributing strength to a/some features(s) is not anymore a mere stipulation, but rather a consequence of the interplay between the [\pm interpretable] features within the system. See footnote 19 for further information.
- 8. Chomsky (1998) attributes ϕ -features to T itself. See, however, the following discussion in the text and footnote 19.

erasure is driven by bare attraction of the ϕ -features of the DP, that adjoin to the $[_T V+\phi-T]$ head, without pied-piping of the DP.

I will now try to lay the foundations of the present account by showing the shortcomings of an alternative way of erasing the ϕ -features of V. This possibility, explored in Chomsky (1998), assumes that T is supplied itself with ϕ -features along with V and D/N-features. Then, depending on whether the V feature of T is (a) strong or (b) weak, we will have the following. If (a), the ϕ -features of V could be erased as free riders when V is attracted by the strong V-feature of T. Naturally, also the ϕ -features of T would be erased in this way. If (b), and if the D-feature of T is strong (EPP), the [-interpretable] ϕ -features of T would be erased by the corresponding [+interpretable] ϕ -features of DP, raised as free riders along with the DP attracted by the strong D-feature of T. The [-interpretable] ϕ -features of V would remain yet to be erased, and would have to raise as free riders along with the V feature, in an instance of pure feature-raising, without pied-piping of the whole category. Once in T-adjoined position, they would finally be erased by the ϕ -features of the DP in Spec,T.

So far, (b) — which could apply to languages like English— would yield the intended result, namely the erasure of the ϕ -features of V by means of the corresponding ones in the DP in Spec,T. Still, there would be an apparently superfluous operation: what would the checking (and erasure) of the ϕ -features of T be used for?

In contrast, in case (a) —which would apply to any language with overt V raising—, the result turns out to be unwelcome, independently of the strength of the D-feature of T, since, even in the case that D is strong, the Extension Condition requires that the raising of V precedes the overt raising of the DP subject, and so the checking (and erasure) of ϕ -features of V (and T, in fact) takes place in the configuration of adjunction to the head T. Indeed, this result is unsatisfactory not only with respect to the intended goal (only the features of a DP should be able to check the associated ϕ -features of V) but also with respect to the empirical evidence: by allowing erasure of ϕ -features of V by the ϕ -features of T, we should expect, contrary to fact, any feature mismatch between verb and subject to be possible.⁹

Given this empirical shortcoming, it seems that the assumption that T has its own ϕ -features must be turned down, and that we can keep to the idea that T has only V- and D/N-features. So ϕ -features would always be a property of lexical items. Upon reflection, positing ϕ -features for T is reminiscent of positing an AGR category, which, as is well known, was finally eliminated because it was not interpretable at the C-I interface and moreover consisted solely of ϕ -features and strength (see Chomsky, 1995, § 4.10). Furthermore, it should be noticed that, by eliminating the possibility of ϕ -features in T, case (b) behaves as desired: the ϕ features of DP will check (and erase) the associated ϕ -features of V without resort to the superfluous operation mentioned above.

9. See note 6.

One furthermore can speculate on the following lines: conceptually, it is not very elegant that [-interpretable] features are checked (and erased) by also [-interpretable] features. Keeping to the minimalist guideline according to which [-interpretable] features are responsible of displacement, it seems more desirable that [-interpretable] features attract [+ interpretable] associated features.¹⁰ In any case, the present proposal adheres this kind of view.

To summarize, the ϕ -features of V can only be erased by the features of a DP. In particular, in NSLs_{UA} these features are erased by the corresponding DP argument (either overt or *pro*) within ν P. So erasure is always accomplished by bare features, as an instance of head adjunction without pied-piping. In fact, this is straightaway suggested by (1b), i.e. by the possibility of a postverbal subject, and is required to derive the null subject (*pro*) sentences like (1c). In effect, on minimalist assumptions to raise *pro* overtly in an instance of substitution in Spec,T is not at all a sound move, since pied-piping applies only when it is required by the A-P interface. Keeping to minimalist guidelines, *pro* has to be considered a set of bare features, D and ϕ -features.

So far, the possibility of an expletive *pro* (pro_{EXPL}) has not been yet ruled out. Such an element, if existing, would have to merge in the inflectional phase, given its non-argument nature. That pro_{EXPL} does not exist will be argued for in the next section. Suppose now that this argumentation is correct. In this case, a sentence with a postverbal subject would yield an EPP violation (EPP understood as checking/erasure of D-feature of T by means of a DP in Spec,T); furthermore, at first glance it would seem that in this way we preclude (as Picallo 1998 does) the possibility that the bare workings of CS_{HL} can account for the double possibility concerning the subject position, either preverbal or postverbal. Without pro_{EXPL} the numeration underlying sentences with a postverbal subject would be left with the same lexical items as, in this framework, the numeration underlying sentences with a preverbal subject. And, what is worse, in fact one could never obtain a preverbal subject since, as sentences with postverbal subjects show, there is nothing compelling the subject to raise.

Nevertheless, such a defeating conclusion is not warranted. Let us see why. In the first place, the disappearance of pro_{EXPL} does not imply as a inescapable consequence that the numeration of a sentence with a preverbal subject must be identical to that feeding a sentence with a postverbal subject. To obtain two different numerations without resorting to pro_{EXPL} , it suffices to reinterpret, in minimalist terms, the empirically well grounded assumption that in NSLs the so called preverbal subject is in fact left-dislocated, thus associated to a sentence-internal *pro*,

10. Certainly, erasure of Case as a [-interpretable] feature both in nominal receivers (DP/NP) and in assigners (T for Nominative; V for Accusative —and other inherent Cases) does not fit this pattern. We could argue, then, that the essential point in our proposal is that there must be an asymmetry between the two members of the checking match, one option being that one such an asymmetry is [-interpretable]/[+interpretable]. Another option, relevant for Case, would be the Case-assigner/Case-receiver asymmetry. This way of preserving the asymmetry becomes impossible in Chomsky (1998), where structural Case in nominals is taken to be the reflection of a set of [-interpretable] ϕ -features.

whereas the postverbal subject is in its θ position. This reinterpretation could very easily adopt the following form: the preverbal subject is indeed a non argument DP merged above the θ domain, either in the Inflection phase (like a true expletive) or above, in the Complementizer phase (like a true left-dislocated element)—see footnote 19. If it is like an expletive, it has to have an associate that is the true argument. In this case, however, the associate is not lexical, but a *pro* occupying a θ position in vP . Notice that under this view a sentence with a preverbal subject must have a *pro* in the numeration, whereas a sentence with a postverbal subject cannot have any. Both *pro* (either associated with a preverbal subject or not—in a null subject sentence) and lexical postverbal subject appear in their θ position. To conclude this first rough approximation to the present proposal, it is worth noticing that it has a clear advantage over previous ones assuming the left-dislocated nature of preverbal subject in NSLs. In effect, unlike its predecessors, the present proposal need not resort to additional structure to state the non argumental nature of the preverbal subject. Under the derivational view of *MP*, this nature can be stated through the derivation itself.

In accordance with what we have just seen, it appears that it would have been the wrong move to conclude that the interplay between preverbal and postverbal subject in NSLs can not follow from the very workings of CS_{HL} . Moreover, it is in fact a surprising outcome that even in this framework the idea that the preverbal subject is somehow extraneous to CS_{HL} can be expressed. Upon careful consideration, we will see that although the preverbal subject enters the derivation as an expletive (when merged with T, at least) it does not fully work as such: an expletive has to check the D-feature of T, while our preverbal subject does not. The checking/erasure of the ϕ -features of V and of the categorial D/N-feature of T is always achieved covertly by the features of the DP/NP postverbal subject. In this connection, we have to bear in mind that when in the course of the derivation we derive T, nothing more is needed in NSLs: irrespective of the additional merging of our preverbal (expletive) subject, the derivation would converge. In light of this, it seems sensible to conclude that at this point, T (T^0) (in NSLs), has all the features required for the derivation to converge. And the ultimate reason for this conclusion is of course that in NSLs there is an argumental *pro*, as suggested by plenty of evidence. It is a nice result, as I have just said, that the optional nature of the preverbal subject can be accounted for by the very mechanisms of CS_{HL} .

It could be argued, however, that the argument just developed is fallacious because in NSLs not only the preverbal subject is optional but also the postverbal one. So it seems at first glance, at least for $NSLs_{UA}$. For $NSLs_{AA}$, instead, the argument stands, since in these languages the mere dropping of a postverbal subject would leave V deprived of ϕ -features (according to U33 of Greenberg) and thus unable to legitimate a null subject (*pro*). Should we conclude that the argument in the previous paragraph can apply only to $NSLs_{AA}$? Not at all: the argument, contrary to appearances, is also valid for $NSLs_{UA}$. It is a fact, which has gone unnoticed, that in $NSLs_{UA}$ a postverbal subject can not always be left out, whereas a preverbal one always can. More specifically, there are sentences that become ungrammatical when deprived of their postverbal subject, whereas nothing par-

allel ever happens when leaving out a preverbal subject. In that respect, consider the examples in (2)–(3). As you can see, the verbs are exactly the same, but only if the subject left out is postverbal, as in (2), a contrast in grammaticality arises. Although these data hold of Catalan throughout with the interpretation intended by the glosses, we will see that in Majorcan (a Catalan dialect we will be considering several data from), the sentence *Queda* (cf. (2a)/(3a)) is fine, but in a different interpretation: ‘S/he stays’.

- (2) a. *Queda* *(en Pere).
 be-left-PRES-3SG the Pere
 ‘Peter is left.’
- b. *Hi ha* *(en Pere).
 THERE- have-PRES-3SG the Pere
 ‘There is Peter.’
- c. *Eres* *(tu).
 be-PAST-2SG you
 ‘It was you.’
- (3) a. (en Pere) **queda*.
 the Pere be-left-PRES-3SG
- b. (en Pere) **hi ha*.
 the Pere THERE-have-PRES-3SG
- c. (tu) **eres*.
 you be-PAST-2 SG

To conclude this section, it must be noticed that the examples brought forward are not entirely unknown. The contrast between (2b) and (3b), for instance, has been analysed in the literature and the case we see in (2c)/(3c) is a residue of the well-known fact that agreement in copulative constructions of the kind illustrated by *It’s me* is to the right in NSL. Nevertheless, it has to be stressed that in any case they have not been analysed from the point of view we are considering. So, it is well known that bare NP subjects (of unaccusative verbs) either have to appear in postverbal position or, if in preverbal position, have to be focused.¹¹ The data presented here, however, are more surprising, since these examples involve only (definite) DPs which, despite being so, can yield a licit output only in postverbal position. How could these facts be accounted for? According to the present framework, the reason for the contrast is clear: preverbal (non focused) subjects are non argumental DPs that do not enter checking operations themselves, whereas postverbal (non dislocated) subjects do. If that is correct, we can easily understand what is going on in (2) vs. (3). In effect, despite the absolute coincidence in terms of overt lexical items in (2) and (3), only those with overt postverbal subject provide the computation with the features needed for convergence. We will return in § 6 to this kind of contrasts.

11. For a review of the distribution and properties of bare NPs, see Bosque (1996). On copulative sentences in NSLs see Longobardi (1987) i Moro (1997).

4. The EPP feature of T is not universal

Chomsky (1995) characterizes the EPP as a strong D-feature of T and, therefore, as a feature that has to be checked in the overt syntax. In the *MP*, two ways are contemplated of achieving this checking: movement of a DP in the θ -domain (Move) (this DP must eventually be the external argument of a transitive/unergative verb or the internal argument of an unaccusative verb), or direct merge of a expletive with T (Merge). In both cases, though, checking involves realising Spec,T.

4.1. Two ways of challenging the obligatoriness of Spec,T

The assumption that the EPP, as defined above, is universal implies that in NSLs sentences with a postverbal subject must have a null expletive (pro_{EXPL}) in Spec,T. This assumption, though, has been challenged. Thus, Picallo (1998) argues that a null expletive could not be part of a numeration since this would violate an economy principle — formulated in the *MP* (Chomsky, 1995: 294)— that requires that « α enters the numeration only if it has an effect on output.» At first sight, it would appear that such an element does not have any effect on either PF or LF.

However, the same principle could be invoked in support of the existence of pro_{EXPL} , since the presence vs. absence of pro_{EXPL} in the numeration has an obvious effect on the numeration: the referential subject is postverbal with pro_{EXPL} , and preverbal without.¹² In conclusion, appeal to the above-mentioned economy principle does not necessarily lead to challenging the universal status of the EPP, intended as requiring the obligatory realisation of Spec,T.

A different line of reasoning can be found in several recent proposals (Pollock 1997, Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou 1998, Ordóñez & Treviño 1999) whose goal is also to dispense with the obligatory realisation of Spec,T in NSLs, and which nevertheless claim that the EPP is universal. Such a result would be, without further elaboration, simply contradictory. Now, all of these proposals are based on the premise, not contemplated in Chomsky (1995), that the EPP can be satisfied, in overt syntax, by the ϕ -features of the verbal form. Apart from this common assumption, these proposals achieve this result in different ways: some assume that the ϕ -features of the verb are true arguments (Ordóñez & Treviño 1999, Kato 1999) while others do not (Pollock 1997, Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou 1998). As for the former, we saw in the preceding section that such an approach lacks both internal and external motivation. The latter, however, do not fare much better: V raising checks not only the EPP feature, but also Nominative Case —V contains a [+pronominal] part, D, that has Nominative Case—, so that it remains unclear how the DP postverbal subject can be licensed as an argument, since it would not have to enter any checking relation and thus would not form a chain —see footnote 39.

In conclusion, it seems that neither the line of argumentation in Picallo (1998) nor the view that ϕ -features of the verb are able to satisfy the strong D-feature of

12. The vagueness of the expression «an effect on output» allows for these opposite interpretations, either banning or requiring pro_{EXPL} .

T provide strong enough motivation for suppressing Spec,T. From this, though, we should not conclude that eliminating Spec,T cannot be motivated. What seems clear is that this result can not be achieved by transferring argumental status and/or the strong D-feature of T to the ϕ -features of the verb. As for Picallo's (1998) proposal, the very weakness of the initial reasoning for eliminating pro_{EXPL} (which disregards the different output, both at PF and at LF, induced by its presence or absence) has the virtue of pointing to the necessity of having two different numerations to derive (1a) and (1b). This is precisely the proposal sketched in the preceding section, which nevertheless dispenses with pro_{EXPL} . Without an expletive pro , how can we achieve two different numerations underlying (1a) and (1b). As discussed, the hypothesis is that the numeration underlying (1a) contains a referential (argumental) pro , while the one underlying (1b) does not. This is roughly the proposal in Platzack (1994), even if it is formulated in terms of AGR and is not subject to the strictures of Chomsky (1995: Ch4).

Now, the crucial point that remains to be proved is that the double numeration required to distinguish (1a) from (1b) is not the one crucially involving pro_{EXPL} for (1b), but rather the one crucially involving argumental pro for (1a). In order to show the superiority of the latter view, we now proceed to provide evidence for the empirical inadequacy of pro_{EXPL} .

4.2. Against null expletives

It seems an almost inescapable conclusion that null expletive pro_{EXPL} (as the preverbal correlate of a non-dislocated postverbal subject) is solely motivated by theory-internal criteria, in view of the empirical facts enumerated in (4) and respectively illustrated in (5). Even more, one can argue that the postulation of such an entity is abusive, since, as shown in (4) and (5), it does not predict the standard properties of the existing overt expletives: expletives in NSLs would by far exceed the well-known restrictions on lexical expletives, which, putting aside the case where they are the correlate of a sentence (*it/il* in constructions like *it seems that.../il semble que...*), are only compatible with nominals in the 3rd person (the *zero person*, strictly speaking), whether they agree with their associate, as in the case of English *there* or German *es* — (*there/es*, $V_{3SG/PL}$, *associate*_{3SG/PL})—, or not —(*it/il*, V_{3SG} , *associate*_{3SG/PL})—.

- (4) *Null expletives:*
- a. induce no definiteness effect.
 - b. do not, nevertheless, licence postverbal indefinite subjects with transitive (and unaccusative) verbs.
 - c. are not restricted to unaccusative constructions.
 - d. are compatible with lexical subjects in the 1st and 2nd person.
- (5)
- a. Vindran els professors.
come-FUT the professors
 - b. *Ho saben candidats. / *Badallaven vells.
it-know candidates Yawned old-people
'There are candidates who know it'/'There were old people yawning.'

- c. Ho saben el candidats. / Badallaven els vells.
 it-know the candidates / yawned the old-people
- d. Vindrem nosaltres.
 FUT-come-1PL we

In this line of reasoning, one could still argue it is legitimate to postulate *pro*_{EXPL} in those contexts where corresponding lexical expletives are indeed possible. But not even this move seems tenable. Consider the following couple of sentences:

- (6) a. Three men remained in the room.
 b. There remained three men in the room.

It turns out that in English,¹³ (6b) can not be interpreted agentively, i.e., in the sense that three men decided to remain. In (6a), instead, two interpretations are available: both the merely quantificational interpretation ('There were three men left in the room) and the agentive one ('Three men stayed in the room). Interestingly, in Majorcan the verb *quedar* ('stay', '(there) be left'), provides clear evidence that the situation is the opposite: (7a) can only be interpreted agentively, while (7b), has the two readings observed in (6a). For Barcelonan (which we take here as representative of other Catalan dialects, as well as of Spanish), the facts are also interesting: the preverbal (non-focused) option does not exist: in order to express (7a), one has to resort to the pronominal form of the verb: *La Maria *(es) quedava a l'hospital/ Molts estudiants *(es) quedaven aquí al juny*. We must point out that these facts are independent of whether the subject is a DP or a quantified indefinite nominal expression (the latter the only option available for English postverbal subjects).

- (7) a. Na Maria quedava a s'hospital.
 the Maria stayed/*was-left in the-hospital
 Molts (d')estudiants quedaven aquí al juny.
 many (of-)students stayed/*were-left here in-the june
- b. Quedava na Maria a s'hospital.
 stayed/was-left the Maria in the-hospital
 Quedaven molts (d')estudiants aquí al juny.
 stayed/*were-left many (of-)students here in-the june

This pattern in (7) is repeated with the verb *faltar* ('be missing', 'be-absent') (the facts are now uniform for all Catalan, beyond Majorcan): (8a) can only receive the agentive interpretation ('be deliberately absent', e.g. 'from a meeting'); (8b), in contrast, can receive both the stative-quantificational ('be missing') and the agentive interpretation.

13. The contrast between the two sentences in (6) is established in Levin & Rappaport (1995:152), who trace this observation back to Kirsner (1973) as the first to note and treat these data.

- (8) a. Abans en Joan faltava.
 before the Joan was-absent/*was-missing
 Abans molts estudiants faltaven.¹⁴
 before many students were-absent/*were-missing
- b. Abans faltava en Joan.
 before was-absent/was-missing the Joan
 Abans faltaven molts estudiants.
 before were-absent/were-missing many students

Confronted with these facts, it would be impossible to derive (6a) in the same way as (7a)/(8a), and (6b) in the same way as (7b)/(8b). Correspondingly, it would be empirically inadequate to assume that postverbal subjects are always associated to a null expletive, and that (6a), with a preverbal subject, is the same as (7a)/(8a) (recall that (6a) has the two possible readings, while (7a)/(8a) only have the agentive reading). How could this be interpreted within the framework advocated here? Considering English first, the fact that a nominal postverbal subject associated to a preverbal expletive is only legitimate in unaccusative constructions gives us a clue of what is going on. With this in mind, and assuming that Majorcan *quedar*—as well as *faltar*—and English *remain*¹⁵ are lexically ambiguous¹⁶ between unaccusative and unergative, the puzzle begins to dissolve. Let us first of all point out that these facts support the (vP-)internal origin of the preverbal subject only for English,¹⁷ where the preverbal subject would receive the agentive or stative-quantificational reading depending on whether it has raised from the Spec,vP position or from the V-sister position, respectively; in Majorcan (and in Catalan generally with the verb *faltar*) the preverbal subject can not have raised from within the vP, since, if so, the two readings available within the vP should be preserved, contrary to fact.

There is strong motivation for assuming that movement should preserve both interpretations: focused preverbal subjects allow for both interpretations too. Consider Majorcan *Na MARIA queda* (The MARIA stays/is-left), which is ambiguous, as is *MOLTS ESTUDIANTS falten* (MANY STUDENTS are-absent/are-missing). To make sense of these facts, we just have to appeal to the classical assimilation of focus structures to operator-variable structures and to assume that preverbal focus is an instance of movement that creates these structures overtly, exactly as in the case of *wh*-movement. And, in fact, *Qui queda?* (Majorcan: who stays/is-

14. Preverbal focused subjects (i.e., with prosodic emphasis) display the same ambiguity as postverbal subjects, an issue we will address directly.
15. We could add Italian *rimanere*, which as far as I know, behaves like *quedar* and unlike *remain*, as expected.
16. In my view, the fact that Spanish and non-Majorcan Catalan have two verbs, a non-pronominal one for the unaccusative version and a pronominal one for the unergative version, constitutes evidence for lexical ambiguity.
17. The facts also support the idea that, in English, internal subjects are [+anaphoric] while in NSLs they are [-anaphoric], proposed by Jaume Solà (1992). In fact, the general theoretical interpretation defended here is quite close in spirit to Solà's proposal.

left) and *Qui falta?* (who is-absent/is-missing) allow both the agentive and the quantificational reading.

We have reached the following situation: only focused preverbal subjects would be moved from vP -internal positions; non-focused preverbal subjects, instead, can not be originated within vP . This result, which seems to account for the differences between English and Catalan (the latter generalizable, in principle, to the other Romance NSLs), faces an inescapable problem on the theoretical side: it apparently leaves us with operator-variable (thus operator-argument) structures where the argument would not form a Case/ θ -role chain, simply because there would be no Nominative Case.¹⁸ Despite the «seriousness» of this problem, we do not seem to be in a position to draw back. Notice that, given the derivational model we are assuming, and for the verbs under consideration, if a focused/*wh* subject is ambiguous, the same should be true for the orthodox immediate step, namely the step where the subject has raised from either of the internal θ -positions to check Nominative Case in Spec,T. The facts, however, stubbornly contradict this possibility: sentences with non-focused preverbal subjects are never ambiguous¹⁹ and only yield the agentive interpretation. And, furthermore, as predicted by the present proposal, the null-subject counterparts to these sentences (*Falten*, be-absent/*be-missing-3PL; *Falta*, be-absent/*be-missing-3PL; *Faltem*, be-absent/*be-missing-1PL, etc.) are interpretatively like those with preverbal non-focused subject, which naturally falls out from the view that a preverbal subject is generated without movement and associated to a *pro* in the relevant θ -position. Which θ -position? From the sentences we are considering, we seem to infer it can only be Spec, vP . In section 6, both results —absence of Nominative Case (§ 6.1, § 6.3) and confinement of *pro* to Spec vP (§ 6.2)— will be given independent motivation. As for Nominative Case, the proposal will be to eliminate it entirely from the syntax of NSLs_{UA}.

We have to bear in mind, though, that if our close scrutiny of the thus far unnoticed contrast between English and Catalan has lead us that far, we have not gone further than consolidating what we had already concluded on more conceptual grounds by our scrutiny of the minimalist approach in the preceding sections. Once internally and externally motivated, then, the present approach should be provided with a formulation of the essential lines of account for such «exotic» results on Nominative Case and *pro*-position.

18. Recall that that some extra mechanisms resorted to in the Government and Binding framework (such as government by INFL of a VP-adjoined postverbal subject) are not available within a minimalist perspective.
19. This holds even for negative expressions: in Majorcan, a sentence like *Ningú queda* (nobody stays/*is-left; 'Nobody stays' / '*There is nobody left') can only be interpreted agentively (it is, of course, ill-formed in Barcelonan, where it has to be rendered *Ningú es queda*); while *No queda ningú* (not stays/is-left nobody; 'Nobody stays' / 'There is nobody left') has both the agentive and the stative-quantificational interpretations (only the latter in Barcelonan). As usual, focusing the preverbal *ningú* restores the ambiguity. From these facts, we need not infer that *ningú* merges with T in exactly the same way as any nominal or pronominal DP (*En Joan*, the Joan; *nosaltres*, we). Fully assimilating preverbal *ningú* with other preverbal DPs would leave us without any explanation for well-known contrasts, such as the following:

5. A minimalist approach to the Null Subject Parameter

The purpose of this section is to characterize, as succinctly as possible, the essential plot of the hypothesis defended here, so as to compare it with the essential plot of the (by now classical) proposal, according to which NSLs are just like English, except for the possibility of postverbal subjects and the availability of a phonetically null pronoun.²⁰ In order to establish the comparison more clearly, I will make use of a minimally formalised presentation.

5.1. Two conceptions. A comparison

The idea I am putting forward, as implemented in the framework of Chomsky (1995), would be the following:

- (9) a. *Preverbal subj.* [_{TP} DP [_T 0_{max} FF_S – V+φ –T] [_{vP} *pro*_S t_v ...]]
 Ex.: En Joan ballava.
 the Joan danced
- b. *Postverbal subj.* [_{TP} [_T 0_{max} FF_S – V+φ –T] [_{vP} DP_S t_v ...]]
 Ex.: Ballava en Joan.
 danced the Joan

-
- (i) a. **Que en Pere ho sap?*
 WH the Peter it-knows
 ‘Does Peter know?’
- b. *Que ningú ho sap?*
 WH nobody it-knows
 ‘Doesn’t anybody know?’
- (ii) a. **Ja en Pere ho sap.*
 already the Peter it-knows
 ‘Peter already knows’
- b. *Ja ningú ho sap.*
 already nobody it-knows
 ‘Nobody knows anymore.’

In view of this facts, I would propose that in *Ningú queda* (nobody stays/*is-left) or *Ningú falta* (Nobody is-absent/*is-left) preverbal *ningú*, like the above mentioned DPs, is directly adjoined to a root node of the sentence (hence the only agentive reading of the preverbal position), but, unlike DPs, it would not be adjoined to T, but to NEGation, which would be universally lower than T, according to the evidence from languages where negation is not a verbal clitic. Admittedly, this amounts to saying that strong V-features of T fail to be checked. I would say, however, that, in accordance with the discussion in section 3 (and footnote 7), checking only requires that the verb must be outside the vP (θ-domain), and move into the checking domain, so that merge with NEG would satisfy this requirement. If this reasoning is on the right track (which would need much more careful examination), we should further refine the idea that NSLs have a strong V-feature in T. Tentatively, we could assume that in NSLs the first inflectional category above vP has a strong V-feature. Notice that such a solution is in accordance with the philosophy of the MP, in the sense that requirements must be satisfied locally and in the most economical way.

20. Here I will ignore V-movement.

- c. *Null Subj.* $[_{TP} \quad [_T \text{Omax FF}_S - V + \phi - T] [_{vP} \text{pro}_S \text{t}_v \dots]]$
 Ex.: Ballava.
 danced
 [FF: Formal Features]

We appeal to *Merge* to derive the preverbal subject, and to *Procrastinate*, hence to *Move F(eatures)*, to derive both the postverbal subject and the (also postverbal) null subject. Let us now compare (9) with the ‘English-like’ version (10):

- (10) a. $[_{TP} \text{subject}_i \quad [_T \text{V} [_{vP} \text{t}_i \text{t}_v]]]$
 b. $[_{TP} \text{pro}_{EXPL} \quad [_T \text{V} [_{vP} \text{DP} \text{t}_v]]]$
 c. $[_{TP} \text{pro}_i \quad [_{vP} \text{t}_i \dots]]$
 [traces, indices and bars are a notational convention herein as in (9)]

Now, even if we were to make the assumption (which nevertheless can be proved to be clearly false) that the empirical side does not favour either option, the favoured option from the point of view of the computational operations required to derive the triad would no doubt be the one defended here, namely (9). Let us see why. In (10), both the preverbal subject and the null subject (here taken to be preverbal) require the application of *Move* in overt syntax, an operation that is complex and hence «last resort» —in Chomsky (1998)²¹ it is the result of combining the two other possible operations *Merge* and *Agree*—, while it can be dispensed with in (9). The only movement in (9) is merely one of features (*Move F*), satisfying *Procrastinate* —in Chomsky (1998) *Move F* becomes *Agree*, without movement of any kind.

5.2. *Merge*

The proposal in (9) introduces an occurrence of *Merge* involving a DP which, despite not being an expletive, is purely *merged* with T. This application of *Merge* has the following properties: a) it does not violate any requirement, since the DP is non-argumental; it therefore complies with Chomsky’s (1995, 1998: (6)) point that «pure merge [merge which is not part of *move*] in θ position is required of (and restricted to) arguments»; b) it is preferable because it renders unnecessary the more complex option *Move*; c) it establishes a relation with its correlate *pro* which is not part of the checking mechanisms proper; actually, neither the one nor the other contains any [–interpretable] features, which in Chomsky’s (1998) terms is a necessary condition for a checking relation to be established —we are now assuming that eliminating Nominative Case in $\text{NSL}_{S_{UA}}$ is the right move. This would reasonably provide an account for the fact that this DP is always an optional addendum as far as strictly computational operations are concerned; d) it captures the well known differences between preverbal subjects in NSLs and English-style lan-

21. I have chosen to use the theoretical machinery in Chomsky (1995: Chap. 4), since the proposal in Chomsky (1998) is not well-defined as it stands. See Rosselló (1999).

guages, by attributing them to the derivation and not to the representation. Against a certain classical representational view that held that the preverbal subject is dislocated, outside C'/CP, the derivational view proposed here allows us to dispense with superfluous structure, since the preverbal subject in (1a) would occupy the same position as the English subject;²² e) it opens up new lines for the understanding of properties and phenomena that have proved resistant to treatments that assume that the preverbal DP in (1a) is obtained by movement. So, for instance, (i) inversion effects in interrogatives —a still unsolved topic for NSLs_{UA}— could be dealt with as a case of relativized minimality; (ii) more satisfactory paths could open up to deal with cases of «approximate» agreement (*Els lingüistes no sabem res* —the linguists not know-1PL nothing 'We linguists do not know anything—; *Els estudiants ho fem tot nosaltres* —the students it-do-1PL everything we 'We estudents do everything ourselves'—; *(Nosaltres) ho fem tot les dones* —(we) it-do-1PL everything the women '(Among us) we women do everything'—) and to shed light on the control and binding behaviour illustrated in examples like *Els joves ho aconseguireu sense esforçar-vos/*se gaire* —the young it-achieve-FUT-2PL without to-strain-yourselfes/*themselves much 'You the young will achieve it without much effort—; (iii) a well founded explanation could be provided for Greenberg's universal 33 (hence for the characteristic pattern in NSLs_{UA}): the preverbal subject cooccurs with maximally specified verbal agreement, precisely the agreement that shows up with null-subject sentences in those languages; this would follow if this «subject», unlike postverbal ones, is a DP merged with a sentence containing a phonetically empty pronoun; and finally (iv) it provides a better understanding for the «loss» of interpretations (or even of grammaticality, in some cases) triggered by preverbal (as opposed to postverbal) subject position in certain constructions (involving a copulative verb—see (2c) vs. (3c); o an unaccusative verb—see (2a) vs. (3a)). In what follows, I will only minimally develop part of this last point, which was already introduced in sections 3 and 4.

6. Impossible preverbal (or null) subjects

In § 3 and 4.2 we had occasion to see that preverbal non focused subjects (or null subjects) enjoy less freedom of appearance than postverbal (or focused/*wh* preverbal) ones (see (2), (3), (7) and (8)). To start with, such a situation is incompatible with the idea that the preverbal subject is an Sv-internal subject that has moved (an almost inescapable analysis in a framework assuming the Sv-Internal Subject Hypothesis)²³. The data, however, have taken us much further. Specifically, the

22. Merge can take place in higher or lower positions, though. See note 19.

23. There are approaches that do not challenge this point, which simply follows from adopting the Internal Subject Hypothesis, and still hold the view that the postverbal subject as an inverted subject. How? By deriving it from a preverbal subject. In this kind of approach (Kato 1999) there is a preverbal subject originating as an Sv-internal subject; and there is an overt postverbal subject which is the result of inverting the derived preverbal subject. Besides the self-evident complication, the problem is that this framework also predicts, contrary to fact, that between a preverbal and a postverbal subject there cannot be any more differences than those relative to information packaging.

identical behaviour, in all such cases, of postverbal subjects and focused/*wh* preverbal leads us to an obvious conclusion: if focusing of the preverbal subject is the only strategy for preserving the postverbal reading of the subject, then Nominative Case cannot be available for the variable bound by the focus/*wh* operator if, in accordance with the orthodox view, the Nominative Case position is the preverbal subject position. To take an example, we could not expect that a couple of Majorcan sentences like *Qui queda?* ('Who stays?' / 'Who is left?') and *Na MARIA queda* ('MARIA stays' / 'Maria is left.') could have the stative-quantificational reading ('Who is left?', 'MARIA is left!'), besides the agentive one ('Who stays?' 'MARIA stays!') —which in Barcelonan involves a pronominal verb: *Qui es queda?*, *La MARIA es queda!*—, while the stative-quantificational reading does not obtain in *Na Maria queda* ('Maria stays' / *'Maria is left.'), which can be interpreted only agentively —and is simply impossible in Barcelonan: **La Maria queda*.

Notice that there is no way to escape this conclusion. It would not be legitimate to assume that *wh* movement of the subject takes place from the θ -merge basic position²⁴ and that then covert checking of Nominative Case applies to the trace (copy). To be precise, this escape-strategy would not be such since it would only be applicable to the instances where it would not be necessary (checking could also apply overtly, economy considerations aside): it would apply *only* in cases where the purported preverbal Nominative Case position is in fact associated to the *wh* reading. The reason for this limitation is this: covert raising to merge DP features with the T inflective head places these checking features in a structural position which must have essentially the same properties as the [Spec, T] position. And this leads again to the wrong prediction that if we get the non-agentive reading of *Qui queda?* we should also get it for *Na Maria queda*.

Now, this conclusion follows from the view that assimilates covert movement of DP/NP features to overt movement of DP/NP, which is precisely the position taken by Chomsky (1995: § 4.4.4), in consistence with his background assumption that the Spec,T position is formed by either a subject DP raised from the vP-internal θ -position, or by merge of an expletive. If we keep to this assumption, the assimilation is conceptually plausible and empirically tenable. What is not tenable, however, is the assumption itself, namely that the only way to form a Spec,T is the one contemplated in Chomsky (1995):

(11) Spec of T is created by raised DP or an expletive merged with T.

If (11) was not the only option, further possibilities could be explored to get Nominative Case in sentences of the kind *Qui queda?* and *La MARIA queda* in the stative-quantificational interpretation, so as to preserve the idea that an argument is a non-trivial Chain (Case, θ). Let us see why (11) cannot be the only option.

24. It is most remarkable and symptomatic that from a variety of data and of independent theoretical constructs (the Empty Category Principle in the Government and Binding period and the Checking theory in the *MP* derivational approach) one is forced to the conclusion that *wh* extraction in NSLs takes place from a postverbal position.

If (11) was the only option, it would be legitimate to assimilate, in the way suggested above, the position of adjunction to the T head with the Spec,T position, and therefore a postverbal subject (always associated to an expletive in Spec,T) should have the same properties as a preverbal subject, since the features of the expletive-associate (the postverbal subject) would merge with T covertly. In my view, this assumption is directly challenged by the pairs (2)-(3) and (7)-(8). And, if we go further to test the possibilities for the subject to act as a controller—the test used by Chomsky (1995)—, it does not seem to me tenable that in NSLs the preverbal or postverbal subject position does not make a difference: control is possible in (12) while it sounds unnatural in (13):

- (12) a. En Pere ve per controlar.
the Peter comes to control
b. Un pacient ha entrat per mirar.
a patient has come-in to look
- (13) a. ^{?*}En vénen dos per fer el sopar(, de cuiners).²⁵
EN-come two to make the dinner (of cooks)
b. ^{?*}No n'entra gaire a mirar l'exposició (, de gent).
not EN-come-in many to look-at the-exhibition (of people)
c. ^{?*}N'han arribat un munt per estudiar el tema (, d'experts).
EN-have arrived a lot to study the topic (of-experts)

Contrary to the uniform evaluation that has been given in the *MP* to Cardinaletti's examples adduced by Chomsky (1995: 274), my view is that it makes a difference whether the postverbal subject involves extraction of clitic *en* (it. *ne*) or it stays in full. In the latter case, in fact, the examples sound less unnatural:

- (14) a. Vénen dos cuiners professionals per fer el sopar.
come two cooks professional to make the dinner
b. No entra gaire gent a mirar l'exposició.
not come-in many people to look-at the-exhibition
c. Ha(n) arribat un munt d'experts per estudiar el tema.
have arrived a lot of experts to study the topic

In this connection, the following pair—from Majorcan—is also very illuminating:

25. One can devise even more deviant examples. In a sentence like *No n'hi ha prou/gaires per fer el sopar* (not EN-THERE-have enough/many to make the dinner 'There are not enough/many of them to make the dinner'), the clitic *en* cannot be the controller of the subject in the purpose clause, which can only have an arbitrary reading. *En*, in such sentences, points to another referent (guests, kind of food, etc.) which can be interpreted as a prerequisite for the action expressed in the purpose sentence.

- (15) a. No en queda cap per visitar (de pacient)/ (?*de metge).
 not EN-is-left/*stays any to visit (of patient)/ (?*of doctor)
 ‘(As for patients) none is left to be visited.’
 *‘(As for doctors), none stays to do their visits.’
- b. No queda cap pacient/ cap metge per visitar.
 not is-left/stays any patient / any doctor to visit
 ‘No patient is left to be visited’
 ‘No doctor stays to do their visits.’

In (15a), where extraction of clitic *en* renders the unaccusative structure the only option for the main clause, the only available interpretation is the stative-quantificational one, and subject control of the infinitive becomes impossible: the main clause argument is interpreted as coreferent with the object of the infinitive, so that *en* is interpreted as «patient» and not «doctor», as shown by its dislocated correlate—on the pragmatically unmarked reading.

In (15b), instead, where clitic *en* is not extracted, the main clause structure is ambiguous: on the stative-quantificational reading, it behaves as in (15a), with *cap pacient* as the pragmatically appropriate option for the V sister position; on the agentive (‘stay’) reading of *quedar*, instead, subject control of the infinitive becomes available, the infinitival verb being used intransitively. In this case, of course, the pragmatically preferred interpretation chooses *cap metge* as subject for unergative *quedar* (‘stay’). This behaviour is not idiosyncratic of Majorcan, as evidenced by the ambiguity of standard Catalan sentences like *Abans faltaves tu i ara falto jo* (‘Before, YOU were missing/absent and now I am’), *Ja no falta ningú* (‘Nobody is missing/absent anymore’), *Ara falta la Maria* (Now MARIA is missing/absent’). Let us now consider the contrast in (16):

- (16) a. (Dos individus) *han vingut per veure.
 (Two guys) have come to see
- b. Han vingut dos individus per veure.
 Have come two guys to see
 ‘Two guys have come to be seen.’

From (16a) it can be inferred that a preverbal or null subject is unable to provide the content of the obligatory object of *veure* ‘see’ (in Catalan, the stative intransitive interpretation of *veure*—namely ‘be able to see’—requires the clitic *hi*: *veure-hi*) and thus that control is obligatory: the preverbal (or null) subject cannot fail to be a controller. This is not the case, instead, with (16b), where *dos individus* can be the antecedent of the infinitive object.²⁶ We have, in sum, a further example of differential behaviour depending on the presence of a preverbal or a postverbal subject, namely a further counterexample to assimilating one to the other under (11).

26. The status of (16b) is claimed to be dubious by a reviewer of this paper. The contrast between (16a) and (16b) holds, in any case.

The position defended here is well known: (11) is not the only possibility for creating Spec,T. Specifically, NSLs can create it by merging with T a DP correlated with the *pro* element, which stays in Spec, ν P position. From this standpoint, new paths open up to us to explore new possibilities on how Nominative Case can be obtained—remember that this possibility is linked to the non-universality of (11). It also remains to be argued for that the position for *pro* is Spec of ν P. In what follows, we will try to tie up these two issues (Nominative Case and *pro* position) and, correspondingly, make sense to the above data, going beyond the mere assumption that the preverbal subject position is obtained by direct merge with T.

Consider the sentences in (17) (where the verb *quedar* is intended in the Majorcan use: ‘be left’/‘stay’).

- (17) a. Quedes tu. / Faltes tu.
 stay/are-left you are-absent/are-missing you
- a'. Queda na Maria. / Falta la Maria.
 stays/is-left the Maria is-absent/is-missing the Maria
- b. Tu quedes. / Tu faltes.
 you stay/*are-left you are-absent/*are-missing
- b'. Na Maria queda. / La Maria falta.
 the Maria stays/*is-left the Maria is-absent/*is-missing
- c. Quedes. / Faltes.
 stay-2SG/*are-left-2SG are-absent-2SG/*are-missing-2SG

The sentences in (17a/a') are ambiguous—they allow both the stative-quantificational (unaccusative) reading and the agentive (unergative) reading—, while those in (17b/b'), with a non-focused preverbal subject only allow the agentive (unergative) reading. The latter situation is also true of (17c). What is to be emphasised is that in (17a/a') the unaccusative interpretation is not linked to the occurrence of clitic *en* extraction on the postverbal subject, nor even to the quantificational or bare-NP status of the postverbal subject: the unaccusative interpretation is possible with any DP, even a pronominal one, provided it is phonetically overt.

In a way, the result is again surprising: why should a null subject (*pro*) not be able to licence the unaccusative interpretation, while a overt pronominal subject is? Should we perhaps appeal to an extragrammatical factor, to the effect that the unaccusative interpretation should be necessarily associated to focus interpretation on the argument? This is unlikely: a sentence like *En queden* (EN-are-left ‘Some are left’) is perfectly well-formed, and it only has the unaccusative interpretation, without any focusing on the argument.²⁷

Let us see if we can do any progress on the side of Case theory, which is the other unsolved problem we are left with. If the unaccusative interpretation stems from

27. It does not seem of any help to attribute to lexical pronouns a special and exclusive status—as in Rigau (1987), who treats them as quantifiers in A' position—in order explain the facts in (17). The reason is that here lexical pronouns behave like nominal DPs—(17a) behaves like (17a') and (17b) behaves like (17b').

the V-sister position, while the unergative one stems from the Spec,vP position, we could possibly appeal to the incompatibility of the former position with Nominative Case, which is required by *pro* in (17c). Now, this does not seem a sensible option when the sentences in (17a) themselves are unaccusative—in one of their interpretations—and their subjects feature in Nominative Case, at least apparently. If resorting to Nominative Case is of no use to explain the contrast between (17a/a')—with two readings—and (17c)—with only the stative-quantificational reading—and, besides, the only plausible means of checking Nominative Case throughout (17) is to be covert raising of the DP features to T (which, in fact, are independently required by the ϕ -features of V in T), it is tempting to explore what would happen if in NSLs_{UA} we dispense with Nominative Case throughout. Since it would be a more economical option, to the extent that we dispense with one (apparently superfluous) mechanism, that of Nominative Case checking, it seems worth of consideration.

6.1. On the spurious character of Nominative Case in NSLs_{UA}

Once considered seriously, elimination of Nominative Case in NSLs_{UA} seems desirable. It would appear that Nominative Case is superfluous in a language where the [-interpretable] ϕ -features of the finite verb raised to T will always attract the features of the postverbal subject, whether an overt DP or *pro*. In other words, in a NSL Nominative Case is not necessary, while in languages like English Nominative Case is a necessary resource in addition to the EPP feature (or strong D-feature of T). It is, in effect, necessary since in constructions with a postverbal subject, which is the associate of a pure expletive (such as *there*), the only means of systematically achieving a convergent derivation is assuming that the expletive consists solely of the categorial feature D and that the associate, instead, comes equipped with ϕ -features and Nominative Case—both necessary.²⁸

If, instead, there are no expletives, and V raised to T has [-interpretable] ϕ -features, Nominative Case would become redundant, since raising of the formal features of the postverbal subject and, consequently, subject agreement are guaranteed. At a more conceptual level, eliminating Nominative Case in NSLs_{UA} is a desirable move too. Nominative Case is the expression of a Spec-head agreement relation. Now, if the relation between X and a DP (with FF₁) in Spec of X is equivalent to the relation [_XFF₁-X] (in the case of pure feature checking without pied-piping), «real» (morphologically realized) agreement in ϕ -features (as in *Venim nosaltres/pro*—come-1PL we/*pro*—, *Vénen els nens/pro*—come3PL the children/*pro*—, *Ho dius tu/pro*—it-say2SG you/*pro*) can be considered an implementation of this abstract realization in its most economical format, namely pure feature checking by adjunction to the T head without pied-piping ([_TFF₁-T]).

One further virtue of this view is that it does not do any violence (it rather lends support) to the idea that an argument always forms a non-trivial chain with its head

28. See the corresponding argumentation in Chomsky (1995: § 4.5.3)

in a checking position with [–interpretable] feature(s) —in the case under consideration the ϕ -features of V— and its foot in a θ -position. Finally, it is to be pointed out that mere ϕ -feature raising gives the same effect as the EPP in a covert way: raising of D/N²⁹ to T.³⁰ More speculatively, it could be the case that, rather than the EPP —in Chomsky’s (1995) formulation—, what was obligatory was the transmission of predication to the inflectional stretch. Now, such a transmission can be achieved both in the configuration [_{TP} DP T] (standard EPP) and in the configuration [_T FF_{D/N} T].

Without Nominative Case, sentences like *Qui queda* (who stays/is-left) and *Na MARIA queda* (The MARIA stays/is-left) can be derived by direct movement of the *qui/focus* operator. This movement can be originated either in the Spec,vP position (unergative reading) or in the sister-of-V position (unaccusative reading). The operator-variable (operator-argument) configuration would be derived in two steps: first, by overt raising we get the operator; second, by covert raising of the ϕ -features of the copy to the [–interpretable] ϕ -features of the verb, we get the argument.

Interestingly, there is some independent evidence in support of dispensing with Nominative Case in NSLs. We will consider it after completing the analysis of the sentences in (17) and dealing in particular with the issue of the interpretation of (17c).

6.2. On the position of the null subject (*pro*)

Following the conclusion reached in the preceding section, in the examples in (17) there is no Nominative Case. Let us consider how the corresponding derivations would proceed at the relevant stage. In (17a/a’) the double interpretation is obtained depending on which the θ -position is for the argument (*la/na Maria / tu*): if it is Spec,vP, the interpretation is agentive —in Barcelonan, as pointed out, this requires the pronominal form of the verb, *quedar-se*; if it is the V-complement position, the interpretation is stative-quantificational. As for the feature-checking mechanism, there should be no problem: ϕ -features of V covertly attract the ϕ -features of the argument, whether in one or the other position.

The cases in (17b/b’) and (17c) should in principle be analogous to those in (17a/a’), the only difference being that now it is *pro* —a Caseless amalgam of the categorial feature D- and ϕ -features (person, number, gender)— that must check the ϕ -features of V in T.³¹ We are faced, however, with the already noted contrast:

29. If the orthodox EPP amounts to the strong D-feature of T, the version defended here would not be completely equivalent: on the basis of sentences like *Passen coses* (happen things), *Falta cafè* (is-lacking coffee) (see also the analysis of (20a), (20c)), it can be perfectly argued that it is an N (NP) and not a D (DP) that erases the number features of the raised verb (in these cases, third person can be considered a *non-person*).
30. Or to an inflectional (checking) category higher to that of θ -merge. See footnote 19.
31. It is to be pointed out that these data do not seem to be explainable from approaches that consider agreement as an argument (or at least a determiner), such as Ordóñez & Treviño (1999), Kato (1999), Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou (1998) etc. They all seem to predict a uniform behaviour throughout (17), since agreement does not vary at all across the different cases in (17).

both (17b/b') and (17c) can only have the agentive interpretation, that we associate with the Spec, vP position. Does this mean that *pro* can only yield convergent derivations in this position? That's what we should infer. Let us consider what would happen otherwise. A sentence like *Els nens miren* (the children watch, 'The children are watching'), which contains a verb that does not obligatorily carry Accusative Case (and so can yield an absolute, intransitive interpretation), should be ambiguous between this absolute interpretation and the one yielded by the sentence *Els nens són mirats* (the children are watched),³² contrary to fact. The problem that arises if the distribution of *pro* is not restricted is that we would have no means to know whether it is present or absent in a given derivation.

In a word, a *pro*, exclusively consisting of [+interpretable] features from the point of view of the C-I system, but phonetically empty, must be identifiable in an optimal way. And this implies that it must be identifiable *unequivocally* from the point of view of the interpretation and *locally* from the point of view of the feature-checking relations that it is involved in and identified by. Now, the local identification requirement would amount to occupying the highest position in the θ -domain, i.e. Spec, vP.

It is impossible to review here all the consequences of the present proposal.³³ Let me just say something on its possible consequences on how we view the relation between an object clitic (direct object and dative) and its corresponding θ -position. I would like to point out that, according to what the SLH establishes, clitics should be kept a part from inflection because of the simple

32. More explicitly, if *mirar* ('look', 'watch') has (or can assign) Nominative Case and *pro* is Caseless, starting from a numeration with the items *miren*, *pro*, T and C we could both get an unergative vP, [_{SV} *pro miren*], and an unaccusative VP, [_{SV} *miren pro*], both ultimately converging. It turns out, though, that only the former derivation converges, since *miren* only yields the unergative interpretation. The other one, [_{SV} *miren pro*], which would be interpretatively equivalent to a passive —are watched— without passive morphology, is not obtained. How can we prevent [_{SV} *miren pro*] from converging? What we propose here is that language design must limit *pro* to Spec, vP, precisely to avoid the indeterminacy that otherwise would arise.
33. This proposal on the distribution of *pro* implies that unaccusative sentences with a null (non partitive) subject have *pro* in Spec, vP. I don't think this is necessarily a problem. I would consider exploring the following idea: lexically unaccusative verbs can unergativize in the syntax (by means of raising by substitution to Spec, vP) This option would become obligatory when the argument is *pro*. This would account for the very clear contrast in agentivity perceptible between *Vénen* (come-3PL, 'They come') and *En vénen* (EN-come-3PL, 'Some come') —cf. *Vénen per veure't* ('They come to see you') vs. **En vénen per veure't* ('Some come to see you'). Overt DPs (excluding bare NPs), instead, apparently would be able to appear both in Spec, vP and in V-sister position. (see (17a/a')). In fact, one could speculate that, contrary to what has been previously assumed, the Majorcan verbs *faltar* ('be missing'/'be absent') and *quedar* ('be left'/'stay') are not lexically ambiguous: rather what happens is that the process of syntactic unergativization yields as a result a more neat contrast on the interpretative side. The reason could lie in their lexical meaning. So, the meaning of unaccusative *faltar* implies «non presence», while that of unergative *faltar* would imply «voluntary, controlled non presence». The fact that in non Majorcan Catalan (as in Spanish) *quedar* does not allow unergativization would have the following interpretation: unergativization involves a movement operation that can be spared if another lexical item is available, in this case the pronominal verb *quedar-se*, which is inherently unergative.

fact that only the former can appear in different positions. In the framework of the SLH this would mean that clitics are lexical items, that enter the numerations individually.³⁴ Even more, clitics —this is also incontrovertible— have morphological Case. Given these properties, clitics, as individual lexical items with Case, would merge in their corresponding θ -positions. It seems then reasonable to conclude that in the *MP* framework, a clitic would not be associated to a *pro*; or, in other words, that the relation between verbal inflection and the subject argument is not the same as the relation between a clitic and its copy in θ -position. If this line of argumentation is correct, the *MP* would coincide with traditional grammar in the sense of positing *pro* where traditional grammar talks about an «elliptical subject», and not assuming a *pro* where traditional grammar has never talked about an *elliptic (direct, indirect) object*. In the example: *L'hem vist* (OCL-have-1PL seen 'we have seen it/her/him') there is a *pro* (elliptic subject) and there is a clitic object which is not elliptic (or *pro*).

The non-assimilation of the clitic-object relation to the inflection-subject relation is also a desirable result on conceptual grounds for the following reasons: a) It allows dispensing with the Nominative Case relation, which, as argued, is redundant in $NSL_{S_{UA}}$; b) It is in accordance with the spirit of the *MP*, where morphological features of the lexical items are the activators of the CS_{HL} . In this framework, and all the more if we assume the SLH, it is to be expected that a given inflectional morphology X (say, Inflection) and inflectional morphology Y (say, clitics), they behave differently in the computation; and finally c) It would provide an explanation for why children acquiring $NSL_{S_{UA}}$ reach the adult grammar for the subject much earlier than for the object. It is indeed a well known fact that child grammars for these languages are very early identical to the adult one with respect to verbal inflection and subject (overt or null), while with respect to the object children spend a considerably longer period with non-adult null objects (i.e., they drop clitics).

6.3. Partitive Case, agreement and Nominative Case

One of the controversial points in Belletti's (1987) theory of Partitive Case is that it allows for derivations where, as a result of the general legitimacy of combining inherent and structural Case,³⁵ an NP [sic] marked with (inherent) Partitive Case can also be marked with (structural) Nominative Case. Belletti (1987: 3.2) tries to ascertain whether this conclusion is empirically warranted. To this purpose, she considers the distribution of Quirky Case (an instance inherent Case) in Icelandic. The mere fact that (Dative) Quirky Case appears in the same positions as those normally occupied by Nominative Case or ECM Accusative Case (assigned by verbs like English *believe*) leads her to conclude that structural Case

34. This behaviour leads us to treat differently» standard *pro*-drop and some well-known Italian dialects which have subject clitics. One would in fact expect the basic differences between these two groups to be satisfactorily derivable from the fact that only the Italian dialects have subject clitics.

35. Solà (1992: § 3.3) defends this view too.

(Nominative/Accusative) is indeed superimposed on Dative Case. It is highly questionable, though, that this conclusion is well motivated, especially if we consider that Quirky Case blocks number agreement of the Quirky subject with the verb, which in this situation appears in 3rd person singular. The same happens in Finnish with Partitive assigned by unaccusative verbs: a plural NP with Partitive Case and in preverbal position is followed by a verb in 3rd person singular.

Honestly, I don't see how the obvious incompatibility between inherent Case and verbal agreement can be made to support the idea of Case compatibility between inherent and structural Case, especially if we have in mind that Nominative Case has been considered (within the GTG framework) as being always associated with verbal agreement (or even as being assigned by verbal agreement itself). It seems then that the most plausible conclusion for these cases is precisely the opposite to Belletti's, namely, that the same element can not simultaneously receive two Cases, even if one is inherent and the other structural.

Let us now proceed to consider the facts in Catalan. Curiously enough, in Catalan —putting aside the North-Western variety— presence of Partitive Case does not imply cancelling number agreement with the verb (*Vénen nens* —come-3PL children, *En vénen* (, *de nens*) —EN-come-3PL (of children), vs. **Ve nens* —come3SG children, **En ve* (, *de nens*) —EN-come-3PL (of children)).³⁶ If we are to take morphology seriously, in a framework where verbal agreement is synonymous with Nominative Case, we would be lead to conclude that in Catalan, Nominative and Partitive Case are compatible, unlike what happens in Finnish and Icelandic.

However, this conclusion —which, significantly enough, is not supported by some facts to which we return directly— is not necessary in a framework where agreement is not *ipso facto* Nominative Case. If agreement, as has been argued here makes Nominative Case redundant in NSLs, it is still possible to maintain that a DP/NP cannot have two Cases as suggested by the facts in Finnish and Icelandic. On the other hand, we know that an agreement that can render Nominative Case superfluous must necessarily be «strong» enough, as in NSLs_{UA}. We can lend support to the idea that in these languages agreement is a self-sufficient mechanism, making Nominative Case superfluous, on the basis of constructions like (18), where agreement is «excessive —see footnote 6:

- (18) a. De lingüistes n'hi anàvem quatre.
of linguists EN-THERE-went-1PL four
'As for linguists, there were four of us that went there'
- b. I quants n'hi heu comparegut?
and how-many EN-THERE-have-2PL turned-up
'And haw many of you have turned up there?'

These examples show a «split» argument, manifested by both a Partitive and an inflection which is not the «expected» third person plural. Now, there is evi-

36. In North-Western Catalan instead, *En ve* (, *de nens*) —EN-come-3PL (of children)— is well-formed.

dence that this can not be an instance of compatibility between inherent (Partitive) Case and structural (Nominative) Case, but simply a case of compatibility between Partitive and subject-verb agreement. Consider, to this effect, object clitics. As we argued above, object clitics would indeed be Case-marked for Accusative or Dative, with morphologically overt Case. Therefore we expect object clitics not to be able to be compatible with Partitive Case precisely in the way subjects are in (18). This expectation is borne out. Consider (19) (from Majorcan):

- (19) *Mos n'hi han presentat cinc (d'estudiants, a l'examen).*
 US-EN-THERE-have-3PL submitted five (of students, to the exam)
 a. *(As for students,) they submitted five of us (to the exam)
 b. '(As for students,), you know what, they submitted five of them (to the exam)'

In (19), the clitic *mos* 'us' cannot be interpreted as an Accusative object (with a Theme θ -role) as would be in the purported gloss (19a) (irrelevantly, since this clitic form is a syncretism between Accusative and Dative, it can be interpreted as an ethical dative, as approximately glossed in (19b)). If *mos* was able to be interpreted as object (Theme), we would have a split argument, distributed between Partitive and Accusative, as would be expected if (18) was interpreted as a case of Nominative/Partitive superposition. Since, instead, this interpretation for (18) is not viable,³⁷ we are led to the alternative conclusions: structural and inherent Case are incompatible; and the subject-agreement relation is not a Case relation, while the object-clitic relation *is*. In short, the contrast between (18) and (19) constitutes a further argument in favour of the absence of Nominative Case³⁸ in NSLs and the consequent differentiation between clitics and verbal inflection, both argued for here.³⁹

37. Curiously, a sentence minimally differing from (19), such as (i)

- (i) *Mos n'hi hem presentat cinc (, d'estudiants, a l'examen)*
 US-EN-THERE-have-1pl submitted five (of students to the exam)
 '(As for students,) three of us have submitted (to the exam)'

is perfectly well-formed with a reflexive interpretation ('submit oneself'). In view of the robustness of the fact that the object clitic *mos* in (19) cannot be Theme, in clear contrast with (i), I think that (i) provides an argument (probably a new one) in favour of the view that reflexive sentences are syntactically intransitive sentences without Accusative Case. Alsina (1996) argues for this position.

38. Elimination of Nominative Case in NSLs_{UA} opens up new perspectives for the analysis of «Nominative» subjects in infinitival sentences in these languages (cf. Fernández Lagunilla 1987, Piera 1987).
39. As the reader can check, Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou (1998: § 6.2), in assimilating the agreement-subject relation with the clitic-object relation, leave Nominative Case assignment to subject as unsolved. Curiously, they point out that in the case of clitic doubling (Kayne's Generalization) an extra mechanism is involved that provides Case to the DP/NP; but they do not draw any conclusion from the fact that there is no comparable mechanism for the subject. The conclusion I would draw myself is that this is further evidence for the impossibility to assimilate the clitic-object to the agreement-subject relations. Notice that it would be incorrect to conclude that there is no Nominative

There is a further aspect of the Partitive-agreement (in)compatibility which should not be disregarded. Consider the well-known facts in (20):

- (20) a. (Avui) *(n')han vingut molts.
 (today) *(EN-)have come many
- b. Molts (*n')han vingut.
 Many *(EN-)have come
- c. Quants *(n')han vingut? / MOLTS *(n')han vingut.
 How-many *(EN-)have come MANY *(EN-)have come

It seems that (20b) (showing that the preverbal subject is incompatible with the *en* clitic) should be interpreted, in Belletti's framework, as an instance of incompatibility between Nominative Case and Partitive, thus as a counterexample for her theory, more compelling than should be the supporting example (20a). The asymmetry stems from the fact that in the classical framework Nominative Case assignment to the preverbal subject is the standard case, while Nominative Case assignment to the preverbal subject is the special (and problematic) case.

In a framework without Nominative Case where the preverbal subject is directly merged with T (or some other functional category), how can the distribution of the *en* clitic in (20) be explained? Essentially, the argument would be as follows: the *en* clitic is categorially a noun, not a determiner, unlike accusative and dative clitics. This is plainly suggested by its their respective dislocated correlates, the substitution test, etc.⁴⁰ This pronominal clitic can be directly merged with V; alternatively, it can be previously merged with a quantifier [_v V [Q [en]]]. Putting aside the feature checking internal to the quantifier-noun syntactic object, *en* then overtly checks its Partitive Case by cliticizing to the (transitive or unaccusative verb) verb. In case it is an unaccusative verb—as in (20)—, the next step would consist in applying *Merge* to this object and T—see however footnote 19—and then subsequent raising of the verb, equipped with its ϕ -features (which are attracted by the strong V-feature of T) and with its clitic host. Number features associated to Q and to the clitic copy would covertly check the ϕ -features of the verbal inflection.

Case and still keep assimilating these two relations, since a crucial point for making the assimilation plausible is that both relations behave the same for Case. On the other hand, the fact that it remains unclear in their proposal how Case is checked for the lexical subject is less problematic than the fact that (because they consider agreement to be [+pronominal] and to have Nominative Case) they do not explain how the very status of argument is obtained for the (lexical or *pro*) postverbal DP subject and how subject-verb agreement is guaranteed in general.

40. A couple of examples:

- (i) (D') *alumnes* ja no *n'apareixen* per aquí
 (of) students already not EN-appear by here
 cf. **Els alumnes* ja no *n'apareixen*
 the students already not EN-appear
- (ii) —Que han aparegut més *problemes*? —Sí, *n'han* aparegut més.
 WH- have appeared more problems —Yes EN-have appeared more

Thus far, we have checked and erased Partitive Case (VP-internally), as well as the ϕ -features of the verb. We have derived a sentence with an unaccusative verb whose argument is *not* a DP.

From almost the same numeration as in (20a) —only with the extra features: *wh*/focus in the QP, and force in C—, one further step would give (20c). Just assume that MOLTS (MANY) or *quants* (haw-many), as focused or inherently +*wh* elements, respectively, are the active goals of C with a strong feature. So there seems to be nothing mysterious about (20c). Actually, there would be nothing mysterious even in the classical framework if (20b) was well-formed. But the fact is that within this classical framework, taken together with the Internal Subject Hypothesis, the ill-formedness of (20b), has not received a satisfactory explanation.

Let us consider what would happen in a framework where, as argued here, any non-focused preverbal XP would be, in $NSL_{S_{UA}}$, the result of direct merge with T. In such a framework, the problem with (20b) must lie in this last merge operation. Remember that the previous stage (*N'han vingut* EN-have come) gives a perfectly well-formed result. Why is it the case, then, that once this stage is reached, merging of *molts* (many) makes the derivation crash? The reason may be as simple as that: within the complex category T, *molts* cannot find, any matching category, which would be an obligatory prerequisite (previous to any further feature matching operation) for any element merged with T which is not directly interpretable because of being a mere extra copy of a sentence-internal argument (a temporal adjunct, for instance, would instead be directly interpretable). What we are implying is that *molts* is never a *noun* and cannot therefore converge (be interpretable) by merging with a T head which exclusively contains the V, T and N categories.⁴¹

7. Conclusions

The purpose of this article is to show how a truly minimalist approach can account for the cluster of properties that hang from the label «Null subject». The basic idea is that it is the [–interpretable] nature of the ϕ -features of V that derives this cluster of properties. It is to be noted that this approach is to be kept distinct from either those that are placed outside the SLH and treat verbal inflection as an independent lexical item that enters the derivation as an argument, or those that,

41. At first glance, the essential idea behind the explanation for (20) would seem translatable to the classical approach where a preverbal expletive is posited for a postverbal subject and the preverbal subject is derived through raising of the internal subject. Since in this framework the EPP is interpreted as a strong D-feature of T, one could argue that raising of *molts* from the configuration [V [Q [_{SN} en]]] cannot check the D-feature because *molts* is not D in this configuration. It does not mean, however, that *molts* is never D. Observe that (20b), without the clitic *en* is well-formed, which suggests that *molts* can have the categorial feature D to match with a subject *pro*. The same conclusion has to be reached in order to explain the well-formedness of sentences as *Molts ja els conec* (Many already them-know-1SG), where the matching in ϕ -features between the left-dislocated *molts* and the object clitic (*els*) is given (here both are masculine and plural) and the categorial matching (both D) has to be assumed.

even if assuming the SLH, take agreement to be [+pronominal] and enable it to satisfy the EPP, whether by the very operation of V raising to T to check the strong V-feature in T (Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou 1998), or by checking of Nominative Case as a feature of a [+pronominal] inflection (Pollock 1997). Notice that these two views are incompatible with the view that a θ -position can be filled by a mere set of ϕ -features plus the categorial feature D (namely *pro*). In the former approach—the one not assuming the SLH—*pro* is not possible because it is inflection that occupies the θ -position; in the latter, because it is unclear how the argument interpretation is obtained, not only for *pro* but for any DP subject (it is also unclear how verb-subject agreement is guaranteed).

In contrast to these approaches, the facts reviewed in this paper (especially (17)) require both the SLH and *pro*—which can only appear in Spec,_vP—and therefore constitute empirical evidence for it. Nominative Case, instead, would reveal as a spurious Case for NSLs in the minimalist exploration pursued here.

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