

## Some remarks on the distribution and interpretation of Null Arguments

Despite the fact that null arguments (NAs) are extremely widely attested cross-linguistically and have been the subject of much research over the past 50 years, there is still no consensus on what their precise licensing conditions are. The typological generalisation that is most frequently drawn is that languages fall into one of roughly three categories: i) *canonical pro-drop*, languages which allow only the subject of a clause to be null, ii) *partial pro-drop* languages, which allow only a subset of subjects to be null (generics, expletives, and often person-restricted referential subjects), and iii) *radical pro-drop* languages which allow all arguments to be null. At present, the licensors in all three of these classes of languages have most often been argued to be either exclusively in the syntax (related to verbal or pronominal morphology), or in the pragma-semantics (related to whether a language is ‘discourse-prominent’ or not). Both these types of accounts however, face challenges in that they incorrectly predict either that more languages should have NAs than in fact do, or that in languages that *do* have NAs, their distribution is purely syntactically or pragmatically governed.

In this talk, I would like to propose a novel approach to accounting for the inter- and intra-language distribution of NAs which centres on four parameter settings for a given language: 1) the availability of a special deficient “pronominal” element in the syntax which maps to a null phonological form, 2) whether the “pronominal” has the semantic type of an entity or of a property, 3) the availability of a licensor, and 4) whether a language has just one, or multiple such licensors. I will present some less discussed cases of NAs which cannot be easily accounted for under current analyses, but which would be predicted under my approach.