The interaction of person and perseveration in a variationist analysis of Caribbean Spanish heritage speaker subject pronoun expression

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Background: Subject pronoun expression (SPE)

Functional factors: Patterns
- Variable use, regulated by a variety of factors
- Of relevance here: switch reference and person

Mechanical factor: Perseveration or priming
- Prime: preceding subject or previous mention of the referent? Travis & Torres-Cacoullos (2012)
- Variable rule analyses:
  - Pronouns lead to pronouns and null subjects to null subjects (Abreu, 2012; Cameron, 1994; Cameron & Flores-Ferrán, 2004; Flores-Ferrán 2002; Travis & Torres-Cacoullos, 2012; Travis, 2007).
- Cross-tabulated data analysis
The interaction of perseveration and functional factors

• Switch reference
  • Priming in coreferential contexts only (Cameron, 1994; Torres-Cacoullos & Travis, 2012)—no need to use subject form as a signal for pragmatic content
  • No interaction in Otheguy (2015): in both contexts, only nulls lead to more nulls

• Person and number
  • Flores-Ferrán (2002) and Cameron and Flores-Ferrán (2004) concluded that priming exerts a similar effect in singular as in plural subjects.
  • Deictic vs referential subjects (tracking reference): is there a difference in priming?
Research question

- How do perseveration, switch reference and person interact?
  - (Crosstabulations and) Mixed-effect analyses
  - Priming more evident in 1sg and in coreferential subjects:
    - Reference tracking and no signal for pragmatic content

Participants: 21 HS of Caribbean heritage

- 4 first-generation HSs (AoA: 9-13)
- 17 second-generation HSs: all born in the US, except for 2 (AoA: 4 months, 3 y/o).
  - Proficiency range: 14-47/50, median = 30. Higher proficiency (N = 9). Lower proficiency (N = 8)
Materials and methods

Materials
- A PowerPoint-guided sociolinguistic interview
- A language background questionnaire
- A proficiency test

Coding
- Dependent variable: subject form
- Fixed factors:
  - Switch reference: same/different referent
  - Person: 1sg, 3sg
  - Perseveration: perseveration, interspersion
  - Proficiency: Advanced, Higher, Lower prof.
- Random factor: participant
Results

• Mixed-effects analysis:
  • General analysis for linear models (Gallucci, 2019) was performed using Jamovi (The Jamovi Project, 2019), which is a graphical user interface for R (R Core Team, 2018).
  • Several interactions, including a switch reference*person*perseveration interaction, $X^2 (1) = 6.505$, $p = 0.011$. 
Results:
Switch reference

Coreferential

Non-coreferential
Disentangling the interaction

• Two separate analyses
  • Two new variables:
    • Combination of perseveration and switch reference
    • Combination of perseveration and person
Results: new variable 1

Perseveration & switch reference by person
Results:
Perseveration&switch reference and person

• New variable: perseveration and same reference, perseveration but different reference, interspersion but same reference, and interspersion with different referent.

• Interaction perseveration&switch reference and person interaction, \(X^2(3) = 26.531, p < .001\).

• Interaction between perseveration&switch reference and proficiency, \(X^2(6) = 15.607, p = 0.016\).
Results:
Perseveration & switch reference and person

Person:
3sg > 1sg, except for interspersion & coreferential

Perseveration & switch reference:

1sg: perseveration and switch reference effect
3sg: Perseveration effect: only in non-coreferential contexts
Switch reference effect: only in Interspersion contexts
**Results:**
Perseveration & switch reference and proficiency

- Same patterns and no differences between speaker groups in each of the levels.
- Differences in the significance of differences between levels within each group.
It is possible that having a lexical form in the previous coreferential subject favors the use of null vs. overt pronouns.

Mi roomate el primer año de la universidad me llamó en enero pasado y me dijo que ella iba a estudiar también.

It would not be the same if they were non-coreferential

Entonces luego que me mudé aquí mi una de mis roommates tiene una camioneta que la verdad que es super práctica porque es una camioneta grande y ahí vamos a hacer compras y ella es muy amable. Cada vez que va a hacer compras ella me dice y yo voy con ella. La otra muchacha también va con nosotros a veces. Ella es la única que tiene carro.

Discussion

- How do perseveration, switch reference and person interact?
  - Perseveration more evident in 1sg and in coreferential subjects
  - 3sg subjects in contexts of interspersion and coreference
Discussion: Interspersion with 3SG

COREFERENTIAL
- Lexical: 28%
- Pronominal: 34%
- Null: 8%
- Other: 30%

59% Null
41% Pronominal

NON COREFERENTIAL
- Lexical: 54%
- Pronominal: 16%
- Null: 8%
- Other: 22%

62% Pronominal
38% Null
Conclusion

• The analyses revealed that overt subjects are favored in contexts of interspersion. Thus, priming was not evident in our data, in line with Otheguy (2015).

• Perseveration (form of the previous subject) effects were modulated by the functional factors: person and coreference.

• 3sg favors overt subjects more than 1sg. However, not in contexts of coreference and interspersion, which is likely due to:
  • lexical subjects precede 3sg coreferential subjects in contexts of interspersion more frequently
  • null subjects are used more frequently after lexical subjects in that context