

**ON WEAK SUBJECTS AND PRO-DROP IN GREEK\***

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*1. Some Background*

Pro-Drop, also known as the ‘Null Subject’ phenomenon, is a well-known property of many (perhaps most) natural languages. Admittedly, there is some vagueness in the way it is used in the literature, oftentimes with any absence of a full or weak subject pronoun in a sentence being referred to as a ‘null subject’ and with other properties, e.g. the appearance or absence of nonreferential, expletive, pronouns as subjects in such constructions as weather verbs, extrapositions, and the like, taken to be diagnostic for Pro-Drop, more so even than the possibility of null subjects in other constructions; still, the Null Subject Parameter can be defined as in (1), based on Jaeggli & Safir (1989), who drew on the ‘Subject Requirement Constraint’ of Perlmutter (1971).

(1) The Null Subject (‘Pro-Drop’) Parameter (NSP)

Null Subject Languages may have phonologically null subjects in tensed sentences whereas non-Null-Subject-Languages require phonologically realized subjects.

The effects of this parameter are exemplified in (2) with sentences from Spanish, which is generally held to be a typical ‘Null Subject / Pro-Drop language’, in contrast with English, given in (3), which is not usually considered to be a ‘Null Subject / Pro-Drop language’:

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- (2) a. Juan/Ø vio ese film “Juan/He saw that film”  
 b. Ø llueve “(It) is raining”
- (3) a. Juan/\*Ø saw that film  
 b. It/\*Ø is raining.

In current versions of Government-Binding Theory, the framework for most recent work characterizing the differences between Null Subject and non-Null-Subject languages, parameters are usually taken to be binary in nature, i.e., either active or inactive for a given language, and absolute in their application. Thus with regard to the Null Subject/Pro-Drop Parameter, a language is either set to allow Pro-Drop (and thus allow null subjects) or is set not to allow Pro-Drop (and thus disallow null subjects), and moreover that setting is valid across the whole of the language, and crucially, is not lexically particularized to individual settings for individual verbs.<sup>1</sup>

This usual interpretation of the nature of parameters was called into question for the Pro-Drop parameter by Morin 1985, who argued that the French deictic elements *voici* “here is/are” and *voilà* “(t)here is/are” (e.g. *Voilà une preuve d’intelligence* “Here is a sign of intelligence!”) are best analyzed as verbs, and more particularly, as finite indicative verbs.<sup>2</sup> Interestingly, then, a deictic sentence such as *La voilà* “Here she is!”, in which there is an object pronoun *la* occurring with the deictic verb, has a finite verb but no overt subject; in other words, it is a null subject construction. Since French otherwise seems not to be a Null Subject Language, as the ungrammaticality of a main clause verb without a subject, e.g. *\*Parlent* “They speak” (vs. acceptable *Ils parlent*) or a subjectless ‘Weather’-Verb construction, e.g. *\*Pleut* “It is raining” (vs. acceptable *Il pleut*) shows, the positive setting for the Null Subject Parameter for sentences with the deictic

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<sup>1</sup>Since the appearance of subject pronouns in tensed sentences is what is at issue, the fact that in many languages that otherwise require subject pronouns, imperatives can occur without an overt subject (as in English) is not a counterexample, under the assumption that in such languages (as in English), imperatives are nonfinite and/or nontensed. Similarly, a language which requires or prohibits the overt expression of a subject in certain syntactic configurations, e.g. in topicless structures (as in some Northern Italian dialects — see Browne & Vattuone 1975), need not run counter to this claim, if there is some syntactic trigger in the structure in question which leads to the need for the expression or suppression of a subject (see below re Bouchard 1988 for an example of how the suppression of a subject might be an indirect consequence of some other property).

<sup>2</sup>See Morin for details about the argumentation, which go beyond the scope of this paper, but focus mainly on the surprisingly many ways in which these elements behave just like finite indicative verbs.

## WEAK SUBJECTS AND PRO-DROP

verbs *voici* and *voilà* means that this parameter is independent of other parameters and so is, in effect, lexically specified, or at least relativized to particular constructions, contrary to the usual interpretation for this and other parameters.

Morin's analysis and the interpretation it points to for the Null Subject Parameter are not uncontroversial. For instance, Bouchard (1988) has argued that the real issue with *voici/voilà* is that they lack AGR(eement); therefore, since NOM(inative) case is licensed by AGR, these verbs would not be able to have overt nominative subjects. Morin (1988), by way of responding, discusses a French dialect with agreement on *voilà* but with the same null subject properties as standard French, suggesting that the absence of AGR is not what licenses null subjects in such constructions.

Moreover, French may not be the only otherwise non-Null Subject language that exhibits a Null Subject construction. In English, for instance, the idiomatic expression *beats me*, meaning "I don't know", typically occurs without a subject (and for some speakers, can take a subject only when there is an adverbial in sentence-initial position, requiring the subject if the adverbial is suitably 'heavy'):<sup>3</sup>

- (4) — Do you know what the answer to question 20 is?  
— Beats me! / \*That beats me! / ??It beats me!  
(compare: (That) sure beats me! / \*Right now beats me!).

Other constructions in English show similar effects,<sup>4</sup> suggesting, though clearly more study is needed, that languages that usually do not tolerate null subjects in

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<sup>3</sup>Admittedly, one could analyze *Beats me!* as involving the deletion of unemphatic pragmatically recoverable sentence-initial material as in (see Thrasher 1974 for discussion of this process):

- (i) Gotta run! (= I gotta run)
- (ii) Can't get there from here! (= You can't get there from here)
- (iii) Cold? (= Are you cold?)
- (iv) Guy over there is crazy! (= The guy over there is crazy!).

though *Beats me!*, unlike the examples in (i) through (iv), would still show (near-)categorical absence of a subject.

<sup>4</sup>For instance, there is an elliptical construction with *as* that allows, and in some combinations seems to require, a null subject and cannot involve deletion of initial pragmatically recoverable material (see footnote 3), since *as* is in sentence-initial position:

- (i) As Ø is now clear, Pro-Drop is not a simple phenomenon
- (ii) As Ø regards Pro-Drop, we still have a lot more to learn.

This construction too may lend itself to an alternative analysis (it has been suggested, for instance, that *as* is an idiosyncratic lexically specified Complementizer Phrase), but shows

tensed clauses nonetheless can show null subjects in some constructions and with some lexical items. Thus, it would appear that the Null Subject Parameter might not apply absolutely across all the constructions in a language, but instead must be relativized, and so can be switched on for some constructions and/or lexical items but off for others.

## 2. *A Different Problem for the NSP — Modern Greek ‘Deictic’ Verbs*

With this discussion of the Null Subject Parameter as background, it is appropriate now to consider Modern Greek and the possibility of a nonabsolute interpretation for this parameter in this language. Greek is interesting in this regard, for it turns out to provide a challenge to an absolute Null Subject Parameter that is of an entirely different kind from that seen in French or English.

It is relevant first to note that Greek is a Pro-Drop language, allowing null subjects, as expected, in main clauses, in subordinate clauses, and anaphorically across sentence boundaries, and requiring null subjects in such ‘expletive’ constructions as Weather-Verbs; this is all illustrated in (5):

- (5) a. emís/Ø milúsame          me    óla ta pe já  
       we        talk/1PL.IMPF with all-the-children/ACC.PL  
       ‘‘We were talking with all the children’’
- b. o jánis                bíke.                aftós / Ø árxise na        milái Ø  
       the-John/NOM    came-in/3SG    he/NOM        began/3SG    SUBJ  
       speak/3SG  
       ‘‘John came in; (he) began to speak’’ (literally: ‘‘began that (he) speak’’)
- c. \*aftó / Ø xjónise        polí    xtés  
       it                snowed/3SG much yesterday  
       ‘‘It snowed a lot yesterday’’.

Moreover, Greek is well-behaved as far as the Jaeggli & Safir (1989) morphological criterion for null subjects is concerned. They suggest that only languages with ‘morphological uniformity’ in verb paradigms, by which they mean uniform segmentability throughout the paradigm into bare stem or uniform segmentability into stem plus affix, allow null subjects, and Greek shows the requisite uniformity, since all verb forms are analyzable as stem + affix (e.g. *milúsame* ‘‘we were speaking’’ = *milús-*, past imperfective stem, + -

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ostensible null subject effects. See Joseph (Forthcoming a) for more discussion of other such cases from English.

*ame*, first person plural past suffix, *milúse* “(s)he was speaking” = *milús-* + *-e*, third person singular past suffix, etc.):

Just as deictic elements in French provided the point of departure regarding the relativization of Pro-Drop, so too in Greek, the relevant challenge for Pro-Drop comes from the syntax of two deictic elements: the presentational *ná* “(t)here is/are”; which, following the arguments in Joseph (1981), can be assumed to be a different element from the (unaccented) subjunctive marker *na*, and the locative interrogative *pún* “where is/are?”, which appears to be built from the question word *pú* “where?” and a reduced form of *íne* “is/are”.

The syntax of presentational *ná* is given in (6); it can occur in at least five different patterns:<sup>5</sup> with a full accusative nominal, which is marginal and irrelevant here, with a nominative full nominal, with an accusative weak pronoun, with an ostensible weak nominative pronoun, and by itself, with no overt nominal, where it is not necessarily anaphoric but can be:

(6) Syntax of *ná*

- a. *ná* + ACCUSATIVE of full NP, e.g. *ná ton jáni* “Here is John”
- b. *ná* + NOMINATIVE of full NP, e.g. *ná o jánis* “Here is John”
- c. *ná* + ACCUSATIVE of WEAK PRONOUN, e.g. *ná ton* “Here he is”
- d. *ná* + ‘NOMINATIVE’ of WEAK PRONOUN, e.g. *ná tos* “Here he is”
- e. *ná* by itself, e.g. *ná* “Here!”, or *pú íne o jánis? Ná.* “Where is John?”

Here (he is)”

For *pún*, there is similar range in its syntactic patterns, though it seems to be more restricted than *ná*; it cannot, for instance, happily occur by itself (cf. (7e)), and for some speakers, it cannot occur with accusative nominals or with full nominals, though there is some variation on this judgment:

(7) Syntax of *pún* (% = OK for some speakers but \* for others)

- a. *pún* + ‘NOMINATIVE’ of WEAK PRONOUN, e.g. *pún dos*  
“Where’s he?” (with [d] via regular postnasal voicing of /t/)
  - b. %*pún* + ACCUSATIVE, i.e. *pún don* “Where’s he?”, *pún ton jáni*

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<sup>5</sup>There may be more; the occurrence of *ná* with an imperative verb, as in *ná par’ to* ‘Here, take it!’ has been suggested in Joseph 1990a to be a type of serial-verb construction, though it might simply involve the independent *ná* of (6e). Similarly, the type in which *ná tos* is followed by a verb, as in *ná tos érxete* ‘(Look!), here he comes’, is taken here to involve two sentences concatenated (*ná tos* ‘Here he is!’ and *érxete* ‘He is coming’), but could conceivably admit of a different analysis (for Babinotis & Kontos (1967:31), for instance, this is a single sentence with a deictic pronoun *nátos* as subject of *érxete*).

“Where’s John?”

c. %*pún* + ACCUSATIVE full NP, i.e., *pún ton jáni* “Where’s John?”

d. %*pún* + full NP (NOMINATIVE), i.e. *pún o jánis* “Where’s John?”  
(OK for all unreduced: e.g. *pú íne o jánis* “Where is John?”)

e. \**pún* by itself, e.g. *Ná o jánis*. \**pún* “Here’s John! Where is he?”  
(but OK simply as *pú* “Where?” )

Two aspects of the analysis of these syntactic patterns with *ná* and *pún* are especially relevant to the interpretation of the Null Subject Parameter: their syntactic category, and the status of the ostensible weak subject pronouns. The importance of these two questions lies in the fact that if *ná tos* and *pún dos* were each, for example, units functioning as deictic/interrogative pronouns, as Babinotis & Kontos (1967:9, 31) suggest (see footnote 5), then these forms would presumably have nothing to do with the occurrence or suppression of subjects and with clausal syntax in general.<sup>6</sup>

With regard to syntactic category, there is evidence indicating that *ná* and *pún* are verbs, or at least are composed in part of verbs. In particular, in the *ná* + ACCUSATIVE pattern of (6a) and (6c), *ná* appears to be an imperative, with the placement of the weak pronoun after the verb being exactly what is expected for imperatives, and with accusative being the expected case for direct objects of verbs; moreover, as reported by Thumb (1910) and Thavoris (1977), in many northern Greek dialects, an ostensible plural form of *ná*, namely *náte* (also *náti*, with the characteristic northern raising of unstressed /e/) occurs parallel in form to a plural imperative like *eláte* “come” (vs. singular *éla*) — if the form is marked morphologically like a plural, with the ending *-te* (*-ti*), the reasonable assumption to make is that it is an imperative, and thus a verb.<sup>7</sup> Treating the *ná* + ACCUSATIVE pattern as containing an imperative verb permits the analysis of the patterns with a nominative occurring with *ná* as showing a finite, indicative verb; such a form would provide a finite counterpart to the imperative form found in *ná ton*. Nominative case, of course, is what is expected for the subject of a finite verb, and if nominative case is taken to be licensed by AGR, as is generally assumed, then *ná* + NOMINATIVE contains AGR.

<sup>6</sup>There are other interesting aspects to the syntax of *ná* and *pún*, for instance the word-order restriction that they are always initial in their clause (i.e., \**tos ná / ton jáni pún*, etc.). This fact could follow from the deictic function of these elements, from the syntactic status of the weak pronouns (e.g. if they are second-position clitics), or some other property, and merits further investigation.

<sup>7</sup>Thavoris (1977), though, does note the occurrence of *-ti* on various adverbials, e.g. *éksuti* (from *ékso* ‘out’); inasmuch as these adverbials have exclamatory functions, analyzing them also as imperatives may well be warranted.

# WEAK SUBJECTS AND PRO-DROP

As for *pún*, the best indication of verbal status comes from the morphological analysis of *pún* into *pú* “where?” and an element *-n* which, since it appears to contribute the meaning “is/are” to the unit *pún*, is plausibly taken as a reduced form of the third person singular/plural form of “be”, *íne* ‘is/are’; indeed, the intuitions of many native speakers accord with this semantically compositional analysis. Moreover, for those speakers who find accusatives with *pún* impossible (i.e. who reject (7b/c)), the analysis of *pún* into *pú* plus *(i)n(e)* explains this fact, for Greek does not allow accusative case on the complement of “be”.<sup>8</sup> It can be concluded, therefore, that *ná* is a verb and that *pún* at least contains a verb.

The status of the forms like *tos*, etc. requires a bit more attention. The first fact to note about such forms is that they are restricted to occurring with presentational *ná* and interrogative locative *pún*, but they seem otherwise to be weak nominative pronouns. Indeed, they show a number of morphological parallels with the third person strong pronominal forms; as 8) shows, the masculine, feminine, and neuter forms in the singular and plural, i.e., *tos/ti/to*, and *ti/tes/ta*, show the same inflectional endings as the strong forms:

(8)	STRONG	'WEAK'				
SG	aft-ós "he" / aft-í "she" / aft-ó "it"	t-os "he" / t-i "she" /				
t-o "it"						
PL	aft-í	aft-és	aft-á	t-i	t-es	t-a

Moreover, from the standpoint of their morphological make-up, the relationship between strong and the ostensible weak third person forms in the nominative, as indicated in (9), would parallel that found in the accusative, with a generalization being possible across both accusative and nominative, i.e. WEAK = STRONG minus initial *af-* (except in some dialects in the feminine accusative plural):

(9)	ACCUSATIVE	NOMINATIVE				
	STRONG	WEAK		STRONG	‘WEAK’	
M	aftón “him” :	ton “him” ::	aftós “he”	:	tos	
“he”						
N	aftó “it” :	to “it” ::	aftó “it”	:	to “it”	
F	aftín “her” :	tin “her” ::	aftí “she”	:	ti	
“she”						
M	aftús “them” :	tus “them” ::	aftí “they”	:	ti	
“they”						

<sup>8</sup>Speakers who accept (7b/c) have probably reanalyzed *pún*, as discussed below in section 3.

N aftá “them” : ta “them” :: aftá “they” : ta  
 “they”  
 F aftés “them” : tis “them” :: aftés “they” : tes  
 “they”  
 (dialectally: tes)

Finally, syntactic evidence for the weak pronominal status of *tos*, etc. comes from the Argument Doubling phenomenon in Greek; just as accusative weak pronouns ‘double’ or co-index an argument object, as in (10a), so too does the ostensible weak nominative pronoun co-occur with a full subject NP, as in (10b) and (10c):<sup>9</sup>

- (10) a. ton vlépo ton jáni  
 him/WEAK.ACC see/1SG the-John/ACC  
 “I see John” (literally: “Him I-see John”)  
 b. ná tos o jánis  
 here-is he the-John/NOM  
 “Here’s John!” (literally: “Here-is he John!”)  
 c. pún dos o jánis  
 where-is he the-John/NOM  
 “Where is John?” (literally: “Where-is he John?”)

It can thus be concluded that *tos* (etc.) are indeed weak nominative pronouns, as they appear at first to be. Moreover, even though they are highly selective in their combinatory possibilities (occurring only with *ná* and *pún*), they appear to show no idiosyncrasies, i.e., semantically they are fully compositional in the combinations in which they occur, and they neither trigger nor undergo any irregular morphophonology (*t* → *d* / *n*\_\_ in *pún dos* can be understood as a regular postnasal voicing); thus, in a theory which distinguishes among affix,

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<sup>9</sup>I use the term ‘Argument Doubling’ (= ‘doubling of an argument’), instead of the more usual ‘Clitic Doubling’ (= ‘doubling by a clitic’), for two reasons. First, I believe that the evidence shows the weak object pronouns of Greek to be affixes and not true clitics (see Joseph 1988, 1990b, Forthcoming c, for arguments), so that the term ‘Clitic Doubling’ is technically inappropriate. Second, the strong pronouns, at least in the nominative and at least in the third person, can double a subject NP in the same clause:

- (i) i li a píʔe ke aftí s to anatolia  
 the-Lida/NOM went/3SG and she/NOM to the-Anatolia (College)  
 “Lida too has gone to Anatolia College”.

This sentence came from a personal letter (12/18/89) and neither had the punctuation nor occurred in a context that suggested Left Dislocation (in which a ‘resumptive’ pronoun might be appropriate).



clitic, and word according to the cluster of properties and degree of idiosyncrasy a particular element shows,<sup>10</sup> there is only very weak positive evidence to label *tos*, etc. as affixes, so that they may indeed be true clitic subject pronouns.<sup>11</sup> In any case, it is clear from the facts of (10b/c) that they fill the argument position of subject with the deictic verbs.

The problem Greek poses for the Null Subject Parameter should now be clear. The deictic verbs in Greek present, in an otherwise well-behaved Null Subject language, a set of constructions in which suppression of the subject is either not possible, as in *pún* in its patterns with nominatives, or dispreferred, as with *ná*. Rather, special weak pronominal forms are needed, almost as if a ‘zero’ pronominal were too weak, as it were, even though no other verbs in the language require such forms. Thus even though Greek is a Null Subject Language, in general, the deictic verbs do not show regular Null Subject properties.

Moreover, an account for this otherwise anomalous syntactic behavior of *ná* and *pún* based on the Jaeggli-Safir notion of ‘morphological uniformity’ (see above) cannot work, since *ná* and *pún* each show morphological uniformity in the relevant sense, and in any case, they have really only one form in each ‘paradigm’ and so would automatically show paradigmatic uniformity. Furthermore, Jaeggli & Safir expressly rule out a relativized interpretation of morphological uniformity,<sup>12</sup> so that the morphological composition of *ná* and *pún* vis-à-vis other verbs in the language is irrelevant.

Thus, what is at issue with Greek deictic verbs is not the absence of a subject when the general NSP setting for the language would suggest otherwise (as with *voilà/voici*), but rather the presence of a weak subject contrary to NSP expectations for the language. It is important to note that the deictic verbs appear to have TNS/AGR (*ná* by virtue of its nominative patterns, *pún* by virtue

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<sup>10</sup>See, for instance, the ‘Interface Program’, which informs the analyses outlined in Zwicky 1985, 1987, and Zwicky & Pullum 1983.

<sup>11</sup>It may turn out that this is not a viable classification for *tos* and the other weak nominative forms. The assumption can be made that being a clitic is a highly marked status for an element (see Zwicky 1994 for some discussion), so that even the weak positive evidence of affixal status, i.e. the high degree of selectivity) is enough to warrant treating them as affixes. Possibly also, though this needs more investigation at this point (to be reported on in Joseph (Forthcoming c)), the post-nasal voicing seen in *pún dos* may turn out to be a process that is not available to clitics in post-nasal environments. In any case, a categorization of *tos* (etc.) as true subject clitics is defensible, though ultimately it may prove unwarranted.

<sup>12</sup>They say specifically (p.29ff.) that their claim about morphological uniformity “will have to be taken in a fairly strong sense ... English [has] uniformly affixed *-ed* in the past tense of regular verbs, but we do not expect expletives to drop in only the past tense paradigm, but not in the present tense paradigm”.

of its composition with *íne* ‘is/are’), and so are not distinguished in that way from other verbs in the language that allow null subjects.

From this analysis, therefore, it appears that the usual interpretation of the Null Subject Parameter as an absolute parameter, holding on all (relevant) constructions in the language, cannot be maintained. Rather, the NSP must be lexically specified, at least for *pún*, but also for *ná*, to the extent that *ná* alone means “Here!” and does not have the specific interpretation “Here (s)he is!”. Moreover, a purely binary setting for the parameter, having either an positive or a negative setting, but not allowing for an intermediate ground cannot describe the Greek facts accurately, given that there is a three-way contrast in pronominal realizations: strong nominative pronoun, weak nominative pronoun, *pro* (i.e.  $\emptyset$ ).<sup>13</sup>

It is only fair to point out that there is a way around the view that the Null Subject Parameter must now be lexically relativized; it seems difficult to avoid indirect recourse to lexical stipulation, but it has been suggested<sup>14</sup> that a solution is possible by altering somewhat the usual view of the Null Subject Parameter.<sup>15</sup> In particular, if the basic setting for a language is taken to be such that a language is NON-pro-drop, then the NSP can be formulated as in (11):

(11) Revised Null Subject Parameter

In a NON-pro-drop language (a non-NSL), every finite verb which can have a subject must have a subject (thus a pro-drop language is a one that is not a NON-pro-drop language).

This formulation would allow individual verbs in a language idiosyncratically to block the ability to have a subject, but the language still to be a NON-pro-drop language. Thus, French *voici / voilà*; and English idiomatic *beats*, for instance,

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<sup>13</sup>Greek would not be unique in having such a three-way contrast in nominative pronouns; various Northern Italian dialects, as discussed by Brandi & Cordin 1989, Haiman 1991, and others (see references in Haiman) show such a contrast, as does Hittite. In Hittite, though, the distribution of weak vs. zero (weakest) forms is governed by a grammatical property, namely the valence (argument structure) of the verb — see Garrett 1990 — with the weak third person subject clitic, e.g. singular *-as*, occurring with intransitives, and the zero subject with transitives (a strong form, e.g. third person singular *apas*, can occur with either verb-type), and thus is different in kind from the lexical specification for the occurrence of *tos*, etc. in Greek with *ná* or *pún*.

<sup>14</sup>By my colleague, Carl Pollard (personal communication, 10/12/92).

<sup>15</sup>The consequences for questions of acquisition and learnability of this altered view of the NSP (and the (near-)categorical absence of a subject with some null-subject constructions in English) are explored in Joseph (Forthcoming a).

could have the lexical stipulation of not occurring with overt subjects, yet French and English could still satisfy the conditions for being NON-pro-drop languages. Greek in this view can simply be a language that is not a NON-pro-drop language, i.e., it is a non-NON-pro-drop language, one that does not require every finite verb that can have a subject to actually have such a subject, even though it might require some verbs to have a subject. In this way, some lexical stipulation is still needed and the stipulation can have a secondary effect on pro-drop, but the NSP itself need not be subject to lexical specifications.

### 3. *The Diachrony of tos (etc.)*

As interesting as the synchronic status of *tos* and *ná* and related elements may be, an equally interesting question can be asked about them, namely what the set of diachronic events were which led to there being such elements in the grammar of Greek in the first place. Accordingly, in this section, the diachronic processes which brought on the presence of weak nominative pronouns in Greek are briefly described.

It is clear that nominative forms *tos*, *ti*, etc. are innovations that have arisen sometime on the way from Ancient Greek into Modern Greek, since Ancient Greek had no weak nominative forms; rather, the relevant contrast seems to have been a binary opposition of strong versus zero. Moreover, in the third person Ancient Greek seems not to have had even a strong pronominal subject form, inasmuch as *autós* (the precursor to Modern *aftós*) in the nominative was not used as the third person singular pronoun until the period of the Hellenistic koine (see Dressler 1966).

It appears that the best starting point from which *tos* could have arisen is the *ná ton* construction of (6c) above. If this pattern represents the original syntax with *ná* in the pre-Modern Greek period,<sup>16</sup> then the emergence of a nominative counterpart, giving *ná tos*, can be motivated (see Joseph 1981 for discussion).

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<sup>16</sup>Note that the chronology of the emergence of *tos* is unclear; it is not known when it first makes its appearance in Greek, but it is safe to assume that it is a relatively recent phenomenon. Admittedly, the etymology of deictic *ná* is somewhat controversial, some (most recently Joseph 1981) taking it to be a Slavic loanword and others deriving it from an Ancient Greek source (e.g. as argued for by Hatzidakis, following Koraes, an Ancient Greek *e:níde* “see here! behold!”, composed of *é:n* “behold” and *íde*, the imperative of “see”, or Ancient Greek *hína* ‘so that’, as suggested by Christides 1987). Important for the discussion here is the observation that either the Slavic loan etymology or the *e:níde* etymology gives the necessary starting point for the development of *tos*, for accusative of weak pronouns with deictic elements is the most prevalent pattern in Slavic and accusative would be expected after the imperative *íde*. See Joseph (Forthcoming b) for more on the diachrony of these weak nominatives.

BRIAN D. JOSEPH

If *ná* + ACCUSATIVE were extended from pronouns to full noun phrases (including strong pronominal forms), then neuter nouns, which show no difference between nominative and accusative forms, occurring with *ná* would have permitted a reanalysis of *ná* + ACCUSATIVE to *ná* + NOMINATIVE. Then, the process for the emergence of *tos* would have been simple analogical creation, based on strong versus weak accusative with *ná*:

(12) *ná aftón* : *ná ton* :: *ná aftós* : X, X → *ná tos*  
him/ACC.STR he/NOM.STR

Once there is *tos* in *ná tos*, then a path for the spread to *pún* is unproblematic. First, because of the variation evident in the syntax of *pún* (see the %'s in (7)), it is safe to assume that it too is relatively new, and involves the influence of *ná tos*, whose syntax seems to have stabilized. The creation of *pún dos* would appear to involve a from *ná tos* generalization based on the semantic connection between locative interrogative *pú* and deictic/existential *ná*, at least as far as pronominal types are concerned; the variation in the acceptability of full NPs with *pún* may reflect incomplete generalization from the patterns with *ná*. Finally, the emergence of the accusative pattern for some speakers with *pún* (e.g., *pún don*) presumably involved a reanalysis of *pún* as not containing the verb “be” and perhaps an analogy involving *ná tos* and *ná ton* as a model, i.e. *ná tos* : *ná ton* : : *pún dos* : X, X → *pún don*.

#### 4. Conclusion

The upshot of all this is that there is more to the synchrony and diachrony of weak subjects in Greek than meets the eye. At first glance, the realization of the Null Subject Parameter in Greek appears to be totally unproblematic and uninteresting, so that Greek would not seem to provide any illumination into the nature of the NSP. However, the happy accident of various interesting and potentially quite revealing diachronic processes coming together to allow for Greek now to have construction-specific weak pronominal subjects means that any further discussion of the NSP cross-linguistically or of weak subjects diachronically must take Greek into consideration and likewise that any further discussion of pro-drop in Greek and the *ná tos* / *pún dos* constructions must take the possibility of a relativized interpretation of the NSP into consideration.

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## WEAK SUBJECTS AND PRO-DROP

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BRIAN D. JOSEPH

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## SUMMARY

The Null Subject Parameter is generally taken to hold absolutely over all tensed sentences in a given language, and at first glance, Modern Greek appears to be an unexceptional Null Subject language, not requiring phonologically realized subjects in tensed sentences. However, two constructions, involving the deictic element *ná* "(t)here is/are" and the locative interrogative *pún* "where is/are", require or prefer the appearance of what is ostensibly a weak nominative pronoun. Argumentation is provided to show that these elements are tensed,

## WEAK SUBJECTS AND PRO-DROP

finite verbs, and that the apparent weak pronouns are indeed weak subject pronominals. These facts thus call into question the absolute interpretation of the Null Subject Parameter. Finally, a diachronic account of the origin of the pronouns is proposed.

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## WEAK SUBJECTS AND PRO-DROP

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BRIAN D. JOSEPH

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Spanish
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Italian
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- p. 10: English  
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