

Pronominal licensing in Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian

Introduction: I examine form-to-function mapping in anaphoric paradigms by looking at phenomena pertaining to so-called strong/weak pronominal competition (Cardinaletti & Starke 1999, a.o.) and Binding Conditions B/C (only Condition B will be discussed below). By focusing on the distribution and interpretation of Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian (BCS) strong and weak (i.e. clitics, *pros*) pronouns, I reach several new conclusions. Contrary to observations dating back to Cardinaletti and Starke’s seminal paper, I will argue that it is not the case that strong pronouns are only licensed if focused; rather, I show strong pronouns can be licensed in two ways: either by placing the focus on the pronoun itself or on its antecedent. Further, I will show that the discourse status of the antecedent crucially affects interpretive possibilities for both weak and strong pronouns, even in local domains, and that this observation also captures the behavior of English pronouns. Based on this, I will argue that English also makes a two-way distinction in its pronominal system (strong vs. weak). Finally, I will contest the analyses whereby weak pronouns are treated as a default option (Patel-Grosz and Grosz 2017, a.o.); what’s more, I will show that the behavior of BCS weak pronouns in particular cannot always be accounted for in terms of competition.

Licensing strong pronouns: It is well-established that strong pronouns disallow coreference with a matrix subject in cases like (1a) unless they are focused (1b). The restriction extends to the discourse level (2):

- (1) a. Jovan₁ misli da je *pro*₁/??*on*₁ pametan. b. Jovan₁ misli da je *ON*₁ pametan.
 John thinks that is *pro*/he_{STR.PRN.} smart John thinks that is only he_{FOC.} smart
 ‘John₁ thinks that he₁ is smart.’ ‘John₁ thinks that he₁ is smart (not Mary).’
- (2) *What about John₁?* – Marija je čula da se *pro*₁/ *ON*₁/??*on*₁ preselio u Minhen.
 Mary is heard that *se*_{REF.CL.} he_{FOC./he}_{STR.PRN.} moved to Munich
 ‘Mary heard that he moved to Munich.’

However, I observe that the strong pronouns can be interpreted as coreferential even if they are not focused (3). Crucially, the antecedent in this case has to be new information focus (*Maša*) (note the context favors the topic *Marija* as the antecedent of the pronoun):

- (3) A: *Every weekend Marija invites a colleague from work to her place. Do you know who she invited for dinner today?*
 B: Danas je Marija₁ ugodila [Mašu₂]_{FOC.} [*Ona*_{2/*1}] je napravila veliki nered praveći salatu!
 Today is Marija invited Maša. She_{STR.PRN.} is made big mess making salad
 Today, Mary₁ invited Maša₂. She₂ made a big mess making a salad!’

If the pronoun antecedent in (3) is moved to a position where it can no longer receive main sentential stress (by the nuclear stress rule) and is interpreted as given (*defocalized phrase scrambling*, Stjepanović 1999), the antecedent possibilities flip: the pronoun can only refer to *Marija* which is now interpreted as new information focus by virtue of being in sentence final position rather than in its canonical subject position:

- (4) A: *Every weekend Maša gets invited for dinner by a colleague from work. Do you know who is hosting her today?*
 B: Danas je [Mašu₂] ugodila [Marija₁]_{FOC.} [*Ona*_{1/*2}] je napravila veliki nered praveći salatu!
 today is Maša_{ACC} invited Marija_{NOM} She_{STR.PRN.} is made big mess making salad
 ‘Today, Mary₁ invited Maša₂. She₁ made a big mess making a salad!’

Not just competition: The weak pronoun in (5) cannot refer to the possessor– it can only take the entire NP as its antecedent. Crucially, neither weak nor strong pronoun in (5) can take the possessor as the antecedent – there is no competition. The only way to obtain this reading for a weak pronoun is to set up a

context as in (6) where the possessor is established as a topic of the discourse (note coindexing violations in general are weaker with clitics):

(5) [Milanov₁ prijatelj]₂ tvrdi da *ga*_{2/?21} / *njega*_{*1/*2} Jovan prati.

Milan's friend claims that him_{CL} / him_{STR.PRN} John follows

(6) *Milan is worried about John; he suspects that he is following him.*

[Milanov₁ prijatelj]₂ tvrdi da *ga*_{1/?22} / *njega*_{*1/*2} Jovan prati.

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'Milan's friend claims that Jovan is following him.'

Weak & Strong in a local domain: Despić (2011, 2013) argues that the lack of DP projection in BCS is essential for explaining some major binding contrasts between English and BCS:

(7) a. *[Kusturičin₁ najnoviji film] je zaista razočarao *njega*₁.

Kusturica's latest film is really disappointed him_{STR.PRN}.

b. *[Kusturičin₁ najnoviji film] *ga*₁ je zaista razočarao.

Kusturica's latest movie him_{CL} is really disappointed

c. [Kusturica's₁ latest movie] really disappointed *him*₁.

(adapted from Despić 2013: 245)

I show that, depending on the discourse setting, the pronoun interpretive options change: both weak & strong pronouns can be licensed in this structural environment. Despić (2011) argues that due to the BCS nominal structure, the possessor c-commands out of its NP in BCS. However, no exception should arise for (7a-b) in (8-11) if the antecedent is local & c-commands the pronoun, as Despić argues (based on Bošković 2008). I conclude that binding is not a good test to probe structure here, contra Despić.

(8) A: *Did Kusturica's latest movie disappoint his sister?*

B: Ne. Kusturičin₁ najnoviji film je razočarao **NJEGA**₁.

✓STR.PRN.

'No. Kusturica's latest movie disappointed him₁.'

(9) A: *Who did Kusturica's latest movie disappoint?* (parallel to (7a))

*STR.PRN.

B: * Kusturičin₁ najnoviji film je razočarao *njega*₁.

(10) A: *Directors always admire their own films. Milinković likes all his movies. Dragojević isn't really happy with his recent movies. I don't know about Kusturica – is he more like Milinković or Dragojević?*

B: *Zapravo, Kusturičin₁ najnoviji film ga₁ je razočarao.*

✓CL.

(11) A: *What happened?*

(parallel to (7b))

B: *Kusturičin₁ najnoviji film *ga*₁ je razočarao.

*CL.

English: Pronouns in English behave in a similar way. Note focused pronouns in English pattern with BCS strong pronouns, while non-focused ones pattern with BCS clitics, indicating a similar split for English:

(12) A: *Who hates John?* B: John₁'s friends hate *him*₁ / ***HIM**₁

BCS in this context: ?*ga*₁ / **njega*₁ / ***NJEGA**₁

(13) A: *Who hates who?* B: John₁'s friends hate **HIM**₁ / **him*₁

BCS: **NJEGA**₁ / **njega*₁ / **ga*₁

(14) A: *Do John's friends hate his sister?* B: No, John₁'s friends hate **HIM**₁ / **him*₁.

BCS: **NJEGA**₁ / **njega*₁ / **ga*₁

Selected references: Cardinaletti & Starke 1994. The typology of structural deficiency: A case study of the three classes of pronouns. *Working Papers in Linguistics* 4(2). Despić 2011. Syntax in the absence of determiner phrase. PhD dissertation, UConn. Patel-Grosz & Grosz 2017. Revisiting pronominal typology. *Linguistic Inquiry* 48(2).