

Harvard Working Papers in Linguistics
Volume 5

On the Nature of Pro-drop in Capeverdean Creole

Marlyse Baptista
Harvard University

0 Introduction*

This paper discusses the treatment of null subjects in Haitian Creole (henceforth HC) suggested by DeGraff (1993) and Déprez (1994) and provides comparative data from Capeverdean Creole (henceforth CVC).

Section 1 provides a brief overview of the theory of pro-drop. Section 2 describes the arguments for and against a pro-drop analysis of HC. Section 3 describes some clitic-like pronominals in CVC as phonological rather than syntactic clitics and discusses potential pro-drop phenomena in CVC. There it is argued that CVC is at least a “semi-pro-drop language”. By semi-pro-drop language, it is usually meant that the language allows only null-non referential subjects. The CVC case is a peculiar one as it not only allows null non-referential subjects but also one type of null referential subjects. More accurately, in CVC, expletives are obligatorily phonologically null and only one type of argumental pronominal may be optionally null. Thus, CVC has null expletives with existential predicates, raising constructions, weather and adjectival predicates. Interestingly it also allows one type of argumental pronominal, namely the 3rd person singular pronoun to be phonologically null. We will try to demonstrate how argumental and non-argumental pro-drop are related and discuss the implications of such phenomena for the theory of pro-drop. Section 4 examines the status of pro-drop for CVC while section 5 discusses the phenomena displayed by this particular creole, namely CVC allows 3rd person singular argumental pronoun to be null with individual-level predicates (predicates expressing a permanent property) whereas the argumental 3rd person singular pronoun is obligatorily overt with stage-level predicates (predicates expressing a temporary quality). Section 6 presents a summary.

* All my gratefulness goes to Höskuldur Thráinsson and Sam Epstein for their lengthy, insightful written comments on this paper and their continual encouragement. Many thanks to Ester Torrego for her guidance, to Erich Groat for his feedback, and to Steve Peter for his help in editing.

1 Brief Overview of the Theory of Pro-drop

An early form of the pro-drop theory, as articulated in Chomsky (1981), stipulated that a [-anaphoric, +pronominal] null category (*pro*) is allowed in the subject position of a finite clause if the agreement features on the verb are rich enough to enable its content (the phi-features) to be recovered (c.f. Taraldsen's generalization in Jaeggli & Safir (1989:241)). The difference between pro-drop languages (e.g. Italian) and non pro-drop languages (e.g. English) is assumed to follow from this basic assumption. Thus, Italian allows *pro* in subject position of finite clauses because agreement features (of Infl) are rich enough. By contrast, English does not, because agreement features (of Infl) are not sufficiently rich.

The claim that *pro* is excluded where Agr is not rich enough was challenged by Huang (1984, 1989) where it is argued that in languages like Chinese, *pro* is possible in subject position of finite clauses even though by hypothesis, Agr is absent. By “no Agr”, we mean that no agreement morpheme is generated under Infl. as Huang wrote on this particular topic in a pre-Pollockian non-split IP framework. We must make it clear that to say that agreement morphology on verbs is absent is not equivalent to having “no Agr” in the syntax. The distribution of *pro* is however strictly determined by the availability of the closest antecedent. The basic fact is that there is no morphological subject-verb agreement in Chinese, hence no rich Agr. This led to an interesting modification of the theory whereby *pro* is excluded from the subject position of a finite clause only if an antecedent or a rich Agr are present. This is still consistent with the basic assumption of the standard pro-drop account based on the principle of Recoverability. In this respect, Rizzi (1986) distinguishes between licensing and identification of *pro*. Licensing of *pro* is syntactic whereas identification of *pro* is semantic, namely *pro* is recovered from previous discourse.

At this point, it would be worthwhile to clarify the typology of pro-drop: First, a language can have “genuine subject-pro-drop” only if it allows referential null subjects without an overt antecedent as do Italian and Spanish. Consider the following example from Spanish where the first person singular subject may be absent:

- (1) (Yo) hablo Frances (Spanish)
 (I) speak French
 ‘I speak French.’

Second, a language can allow only non-referential null subjects—like Modern Icelandic does, and German as well to some extent—i.e. null expletives. Such languages are sometimes referred to as “semi-pro-drop languages”. Consider the following example from German where only null expletives are allowed as in (2a) but referential subjects are obligatorily overt yielding otherwise ungrammaticality as illustrated by (2b):

- (2) a. Er sagte, daß ____ ihm scheint, daß Hans den Hund getötet hat
 he said that ____ him seemed that Hans the dog killed has
 ‘He said that (it) seemed to him that Hans killed the dog.’
 b. * Er sagte, daß ____ den Hund getötet hat
 he said that ____ the dog killed has
 ‘He said that she/he has killed the dog.’

Third, a language might allow null topics (as subjects- or as subjects and objects)—i.e., it is a “topic-drop” language. The general idea would be that in languages without rich agreement morphology, identification of a dropped subject or object would be possible through association with an antecedent—possibly just a discourse-antecedent, though.¹ Let us consider the following example from Chinese:

- (3) Zhangsan shuo [(ta) lai le] (Chinese)
 Zhangsan say pro come ASP
 ‘Zhangsan said that pro came.’ (Huang 1989:188)

In (3) *pro* could not refer to *Zhangsan* but only to someone else introduced in the previous discourse.

The theory of pro-drop whether in its standard or modified form predicts therefore that in the absence of a rich Agr or of an antecedent, *pro* should be excluded as the subject of a finite clause. The pro-drop theory as formulated encounters empirical problems accounting for particular data found in CVC and in other Creoles as will be shown below.

2 The treatment of pro-drop in HC

2.1 DeGraff’s analysis

The existence of null expletives in HC led DeGraff (1993) and Déprez (1994) to examine whether there was pro-drop or not in this Creole. HC exhibits constructions in which the expletive is obligatorily null as with existential predicates in (4) and the raising construction in (5).

- (4) a. gen jwet sou tab la (HC)
 have toys under table the
 ‘There are toys under the table.’ (DeGraff 1993:72)
- b. *li gen jwet sou tab la
 it/there gave toys under table the
- (5) a. genle Jak damou
 seem Jak in love
 ‘Jack seems in love.’ (DeGraff 1993:72)
- b. *li genle Jak damou
 it seems Jak in love

Because one finds sentences like (4)-(5) in HC, DeGraff argued that HC is a pro-drop language. Then the question arises as to why (6a) is grammatical in HC but (6b) is not:

¹ We will consider in section 4 whether CVC could be considered a topic drop language.

- (6) a. *li* *pati*
 he/she leaves
 ‘He/she leaves.’
- b. * *pro* *pati*
 he/she leaves

As discussed in section 1, phonologically null pronominals can be identified only if verbal morphology is rich enough. DeGraff argues that (6b) is not possible because the null argumental subject cannot be properly identified on the basis of verbal morphology. The verbal morphology is not rich enough to identify the pronominal. Hence only the non-argumental “default” expletive null subject is allowed when no agreement marking occupies Infl. But since DeGraff wants to maintain that HC is a pro-drop language, he cannot assume that sentences like (6a) involve an obligatory pronominal subject. Hence he argues instead that *li* here is not really a subject in SpecIP but rather a clitic in Infl, which acts as an agreement element and thus identifies the pro-subject in SpecIP. This, on the other hand, raises the question of why sentences like (7) are not allowed:

- (7) * *Jan li* *ale*
 Jan he *leave*
 ‘Jan left.’ (DeGraff 1993:76)

One might expect (7) to be fine if *li* is in Infl and is in fact only some sort of an agreement marker. But DeGraff explains that *li* in Infl is not an ordinary agreement marker but rather one that “absorbs case”. Thus an overt subject NP in SpecIP would not get case. In other words, (7) is ungrammatical since *li* has absorbed Nominative case assigned by [+Tense] under Infl, rendering *Jan* caseless, violating the case filter. (8) on the other hand is grammatical because the “agreement marker” *li* is not present and has not absorbed the nominative case that *Jak* by hypothesis receives:

- (8) *Jak pati*
 Jak leaves

DeGraff argues that subject pronouns are generated in Infl and provide the rich agreement that is necessary to identify the argumental empty pronominal in SpecIP. Hence, for a sentence like (6a), he assumes the structure in (9).

- (9) [pro[INFL' *li*[VP *pati*]]]

DeGraff concludes that HC is a pro-drop language and that its overt pronouns are in fact syntactic clitics occupying Infl as in (9).

2.2 Déprez's Proposal

In contrast to DeGraff, Déprez has argued (1994) that HC is not an argument-pro-drop language. She argues that pronominal elements such as *li* that look like subject pronouns, are indeed subject pronouns. One of Déprez's arguments is that HC has overt expletives in certain constructions, in contrast to typical pro-drop languages like Italian and Spanish which do not. In extraposition structures like (10), for instance, an overt expletive is obligatory:

- (10) * (Li) difisil pou pale ak Jan
 (it) difficult to speak with John
 'It is difficult to speak with John.'

Under Déprez's analysis, HC is not an argument pro-drop language and she assumes that subject pronouns are syntactic pronouns with PF clitic properties. What this means is that subject pronouns occupy specifier of IP and cliticize at PF with no syntactic consequences. By this we mean that there is no syntactic restrictions on cliticization, i.e. that it applies no matter what the syntactic structure is. Hence, she proposes the syntactic structure in (11) for the sentence in (6a):

- (11) [IP li [INFL' Infl[VP pati]]]

HC may be a semi-pro-drop language which permits both non argumental (the *there*-type) and quasi argumental null subjects (the *it*-type as in "it is raining") but not argumental null subjects (pronouns which have a referent in the outside world).

As Thráinsson notes (p.c.), in Icelandic both the argumental and non-argumental pronoun can be dropped but in German, only non-argumental pronouns can be dropped. The distinction between quasi-argument expletives (the *it*-type) and real expletives (the *there*-type) goes back to Chomsky (1981). However, since HC does not allow null expletive *it* with adjectival predicates but does so with 'seem' constructions (cf. (5)), it is neither like Icelandic which allows both *it* and *there* expletives, nor like German which allows *there* expletives only.

At this point, let us take a closer look at various tests that would help determine the clitic status of HC. If pronominal elements in HC that DeGraff considered syntactic clitics really were clitics, then we would expect that they would be inseparable from the verb that they allegedly cliticize onto, as in Northern Italian dialects, which are believed to be pro-drop as the pronominal clitics are analyzed as identifying agreement markers (Rizzi (1986) and Brandi & Cordin (1989)). Syntactic clitics are normally inseparable from their hosts, witness for instance these examples from a Northern Italian dialect:

- (12) a. Ieri la ha cantato a Milano.
 yesterday he has sung in Milan
 'Yesterday he sang in Milan.'

- b. * La ieri ha cantato a Milano.
 He yesterday has sung in Milano (Déprez 1994:7)

(12a) shows that subject clitics must be adjacent to the verb, meaning no adverb can separate the clitic from the verb as illustrated by the ungrammaticality of (12b). In HC, by contrast, pronominal subjects can be separated from the verb, just like non-pronominal subjects can, as illustrated in (13):

- (13) Jan /li toujou ap travay fo. (HC)
 John /he always is working hard
 'John/he is always working hard.' (Déprez 1994:11)

Second, if the pronominal elements under discussion in HC were syntactic clitics, we would not expect that they could be coordinated. This is so because syntactic clitics in general cannot be. This is illustrated by the following facts from Swedish in which only bare pronouns may undergo object shift (14a). Coordinated pronouns behave like non-clitics and cannot be moved by object shift as illustrated by (14b/c):

- (14) a. Kopte Johan den inte?
 bought Johan it not
 'Didn't Johan buy it?'
 b. Dom godkanner aldrig dej och mej som acouldtedare
 they accept never you and me as scoutmasters
 'They never accept you and I as scoutmasters.'
 c. * Dom godkanner dej och mej aldrig som acouldtedare
 they accept you and me never as scoutmasters
 (Holmberg 1986:207)

In HC on the other hand, the pronominal elements under discussion can be coordinated as illustrated in (15):

- (15) Mwen ave l ap fe arye
 He and I will be quarterbacks (Déprez 1994:11)

Third, the pronominal elements under discussion have reduced forms as illustrated by (16).

- (16) a. * Li ale
 he left
 b. L ale
 'He left.' (DeGraff 1993:73)

(16) indicates that the pre-verbal subject pronoun forms a unit with the first morpheme of the verb, which might be taken as an argument for its clitic-status. DeGraff uses this observation to argue that reduction indicates location in Infl. However, Déprez remarks

that if reduced pronominal forms were agreement markers that occurred in Infl (as DeGraff argues) to license empty pronominal subjects, no leftwards cliticization to the preceding words would be possible in HC when dealing with object pronouns. In other words, object pronouns would not be able to cliticize onto the host to their left as there is no Infl in such position that would allow the cliticization. However, this is not the case in HC since object pronouns also show reduced forms and so do possessive pronouns in (17) and (18) respectively:

(17) Jak we'm
 Jack saw me (Déprez 1994:12)

(18) kaye 'm
 notebook my
 'my notebook' (Déprez 1994:12)

(17) and (18) show that Infl does not play a role in allowing cliticization. Thus, Déprez argues that subject pronominals in Haitian occupy SpecIP and that they cliticize at PF but not in the syntax, contrary to DeGraff's syntactic clitic analysis described above.

3 Capeverdean Creole

In this section I want to examine Capeverdean Creole (henceforth CVC) and demonstrate how it differs from HC with respect to pro-drop phenomena and properties of pronominal subjects and expletives.

Let us consider expletive constructions in CVC as they appear with weather predicates as in (19), "existential" predicates as in (20), adjectival predicates as in (21) and raising predicates as in (22). In these examples, I show that quasi-argumental *it* expletive and non-argumental *there* are always obligatorily null in CVC:

(19) a. Sta faze friu
 is making cold
 'It is cold.'

 b. *El sta faze friu
 it is making cold

(20) a. Fika dos dias antes di nos viaji
 remain two days before of our trip
 'There remain two days before our trip.'

 b. *El fika dos dias antes di nos viaji
 it remains two days before of our trip
 'Two days remain before our trip.'

- (21) a. E difisil di papia ku Joao.
is difficult to talk with John
'It is difficult to speak with Joao.'
- b. *El e difisil di papia ku Joao
it is difficult to speak with John
'It is difficult to speak with John.'
- (22) a. Parse ki Joao sta na ospital
seems that John is in hospital
'It seems that John is in the hospital.'
- b. *El parse ki Joao sta na ospital
it seems that John is in hospital
'It seems that John is in the hospital.'

The facts introduced in (19)-(22) seem to suggest that CVC is more likely to be a pro-drop language than HC is, because it does not even allow overt expletives with adjectival predicates. This leads us to the following descriptive generalization in (23):

- (23) In CVC there are no overt expletives.

Hence, a first contrast between HC and CVC is that the latter never allows overt expletives.

Having made such an observation, let us now consider whether CVC is like Italian and Spanish in that argumental *pro* is licensed. As illustrated by the ungrammaticality of (24b) and (25b), argumental *pro* is not allowed in CVC :

- (24) a. El ta trabadja duro
s/he Asp works hard
'S/he works hard.'
- b. *pro ta trabadja duro
Asp works hard
'He/She works hard.'
- (25) a. El odja'z
s/he saw them
'S/he saw them.'
- b. *pro odja'z
saw them
'He/She saw them.'

Given the fact that argumental pronouns are obligatorily overt in CVC as illustrated by the ungrammaticality of (24b) and (25b), we may wonder whether a DeGraffian analysis could work, namely whether the pronominal subject-like element *el* in (24) and (25) is a syntactic clitic, hence in Infl (under his analysis). The subject slot would thus be empty.

One of the structural tests that could help us determine the syntactic or phonological nature of CVC clitics is the adjacency test. More precisely, syntactic clitics may not be separated from the verb by any element. As illustrated by (26) below, pronominal elements in CVC are necessarily adjacent (in some cases) to the verb and no adverb may intervene between them and the verb, as is possible in HC.

- (26) a. El trabadja sempre duro.
s/he worked always hard.
'S/he always worked hard'.
b. *El sempre trabadja duro.
s/he always worked hard.

(26) suggests that, contrary to HC, CVC pronouns form a morphological unit with the verb, hence cannot be separated from the verb by an adverb such as *sempre* 'always'. This could lead us to assume that we are dealing with subject pronouns as clitics. However, this does not seem true because even full NP subjects i.e. R-expressions, e.g. *Joao* in (27) below, cannot be separated from the verb and they are obviously not clitics. Besides, it cannot be concluded that pronominals or non-pronominals subjects cannot be separated from the verb just because one particular adverb cannot intervene, namely *sempre* 'always'. This might be just a fact about adverb placement as will be shown in (34) below.

- (27) a. Joao trabadja sempre duro
Joao worked always hard
'John always worked hard.'
b. ? Joao sempre trabadja duro
John always worked hard.

I have found no evidence one way or the other so far to determine whether or not the pronominal elements under discussion are clitics or not. More structural tests are needed such as subject pronouns coordination as suggested by Déprez. According to Déprez, a good test for cliticness is coordination. If pronouns can be coordinated, they cannot be clitics. CVC subject pronouns can be coordinated as illustrated in (28), which seems to show that they are not syntactic clitics.

- (28) Mi ku el ta fika patras
me with him Asp stay behind
'He and I will stay behind.'

Further evidence for this is that subject pronominals can also occur in isolation and to a question like (29a), we could get answers such as (29b) or (29c):

- (29) a. *Kegne ki sta bai?*
 who ki is leaving?
 ‘Who is leaving?’
 b. *el ku mi*
 s/he and me
 ‘s/he and I’
 c. *el*
 ‘her or him’

On the other hand, like HC subjects, some CVC subjects manifest some typical clitic like properties. They can cliticize onto the first morpheme of the following verb as illustrated in (30).

- (30) *N’ odja ya parentes.*
 I saw my parents
 ‘I saw my parents.’

Following DeGraff’s analysis, we might think that *n’* is a syntactic clitic in Infl. However, reduced forms are found in preverbal as well as postverbal position as illustrated by (31):

- (31) *N’ odja’z*
 I saw+them
 ‘I saw them.’

Hence, reduced forms are not conditioned by the potential location of pronouns in Infl as object pronouns could not be in Infl.

At this point, it is useful to summarize the relevant similarities and differences between HC and CVC. In (32) and (33) below, + means “obligatorily present”, - “absent”, +/- “optional”, and ? means “could not be determined”.

- (32) Null expletives in HC and CVC

	HC	CVC
null expletive with existential predicates:	+	+
null expletives in raising constructions:	+	+
null expletives with weather expressions:	+/-	+
null expletives with adjectival predicates:	-	+

(33) Properties of pronominal subject elements in HC and CVC

	HC	CVC
can be separated from the finite verb:	-	?/+
can be coordinated:	+	+
can occur in isolation in discourse:	?	+
cliticize onto the preceding constituent:	+	+

Having made this comparison, we still cannot reach at this point a definite conclusion about the clitic status of pronouns in CVC. Are they syntactic or phonological clitics?

A standard argument for PF cliticization is that the PF-clitic does not take into account the nature of the element it cliticizes onto—it just cliticizes onto the first element or some linearly fixed element, whatever that element may be. The question is then: If an element is fronted to a pre-subject position in CVC, does the pronominal subject “blindly” cliticize onto it? Let us consider (34) where it is shown that the pronominal may cliticize either to the verb *ben* as in (34a) or to the adverb (34b):

- (34) a. *Onti, el' ben pa ya kaza*
 yesterday s/he came to my house
 ‘Yesterday, she came to my house.’
- b. *El' onti ben pa ya kaza*
 s/he yesterday came to my house
 ‘S/he came to my house yesterday.’

In contrast to (26b) where the pronoun could not cliticize to the adverb *sempre*, in (34b) the pronominal subject cliticizes onto the temporal adverb *onti* and to the verb in (34a). This fact allows us to say that cliticization to an adverb depends on adverb placement, in other words, pronominals do not cliticize to all kinds of adverbs but only to some of them. This may provide us with good grounds to believe that subject and object pronouns in CVC are PF-clitics. We would then tentatively reach the same conclusion as Déprez regarding HC pronominals, namely they are also PF and not syntactic clitics.

After this tentative conclusion about the status of pronouns in CVC, we may now wonder where this language fits in the typology of pro-drop.

4 On the Nature of Pro-Drop in Capeverdean

After observing that expletives are obligatorily null in CVC, we are going to explore in this section if there are other instances of pro-drop, namely if argumental pronouns can be null and based on our data, we will attempt to determine where CVC would fit in the typology of pro-drop.

So far we have observed that the only empty subject elements found in this creole are default or unmarked elements. Indeed, the expletive would seem to be a default element par excellence. But it would not be unexpected if we could find some instances of pro-drop involving some sort of generic 3rd person singular subject. And indeed, CVC

also allows one type of argumental subject pronoun to be null. The 3rd person singular pronoun, and only the third person singular, is optionally null with an individual-level predicate but obligatorily overt with a stage-level predicate as illustrated in (35) and (36) respectively. Individual-level predicates express permanent qualities of the subject whereas stage-level predicates refer to temporary properties (c.f. Kratzer (1995)) as illustrated below.

Consider (35), a CVC sentence in which the subject pronoun is optionally null:²

- (35) (E) e un bon omi
 he is a good man
 'He is a good man.'

(35) illustrates an individual-level predicate where "to be a good man" is viewed as a permanent quality. In contrast, (36) expresses a stage-level predicate, a stage that the subject is temporarily going through.

- (36) a. El sta duente
 he is sick
 'He is sick.'
- b. *sta duente
 is sick

The meaning of (36a) is that the subject is temporarily sick and we may observe that a different copula, namely *sta* is used to express the temporary quality of the adjectival predicate. As shown by (36b), the argumental pronoun *el* cannot be null, which would yield an ungrammatical sentence. This leads us to our second descriptive generalization about CVC:

- (37) 3rd person singular argumental pronoun *el* is preferably null with individual-level predicates and obligatorily overt with stage-level predicates.

We may observe at this point that the difference between the copulas *e* and *sta* in CVC seems to correlate with the distinction between individual-level and stage-level predicates. This is best illustrated by the minimal pair in (38) below. Let us say that 'the sky' is the subject of (38a). This example refers to the permanent 'blue' quality of 'the sky' and would be the answer to a question such as 'What is the usual color of the sky?'. In contrast, (38b) would refer to the temporary quality of the sky color in the following context: the sky was cloudy and it is now clearing up.

- (38) a. (e) e azul (CVC)
 (it) is blue

² Although the subject pronoun is optionally null, its deletion is much more prevalent among all of my informants and my own idiolect.

- b. El sta azul
it is blue
- c. *sta azul
is blue

The only possible meaning of (38) is “it or he or she is blue”, a phonologically null subject can only be interpreted as 3rd person singular.

At this point, we need to determine whether CVC is a pro-drop language or a zero topic language. Regarding zero-topic, Huang (1984) stated that some languages allow zero topics, these topics being either subjects or objects. Such languages could have zero pronouns lacking overt syntactic antecedents. Such antecedents can be recovered from previous discourse and for this reason, such languages are considered more discourse-oriented. In this respect, Thráinsson & Hjartardottir (1986)—a diachronic study of Icelandic—provided evidence that earlier stages of the language were more “discourse-oriented”, hence allowed null subjects which could be recovered from previous discourse, which is not possible in Modern Icelandic.

The dropped argumental elements in (35) and (38) cannot be instances of “topic-drop”, as discussed by Huang (1984) as no matter what the previous discourse may be, the antecedent of the pronominal could never be anything else but 3rd person singular. Hence, a sentence like (38) could never get the interpretation, ‘you are blue’, ‘they are blue’, ‘we are blue’ or anything else. Likewise, (35) means only ‘He is a good man’ and not ‘you are a good man’ or ‘I am a good man’ or anything else. Hence, CVC could be considered a “pro-drop” language in which only the argumental default 3rd subject may be null, which is at least in the spirit of the standard pro-drop account—or Rizzi’s (1986) hypothesis that the identification of *pro* can occur on the basis of rich agreement (or on the basis of an antecedent, as in the case of topic-drop)—and if the agreement does not suggest anything different (as it does not when there are no distinctions) the default interpretation prevails.

At this point, it would be interesting to try to explain why only the 3rd person singular pronoun is allowed to be phonologically null in CVC.

5 Discussion

Let us assume that *el*, the third person singular is a typical default value pronoun. We can assume that if there was an overt expletive in CVC, it would be *el* as they would both share the same features. Second, let us assume that there is no more than one expletive in CVC, contrary to English which has both *there* and *it*. The situation would be more along the lines of French which has only the lexical expletive *il* as illustrated in (39):

- (39) a. Il est 4 heures. (French)
It is 4 o’clock
- b. Il y a vingt moutons dans le près.
There are twenty sheep in the meadow

In light of some examples provided by Diesing (1992), we may note that the difference between these stage-level and individual-level predicates is also relevant in expletive constructions, i.e. only stage-level predicates allow expletives as illustrated by (40):

- (40) a. Firemen are available. (2 interpretations)
 b. There are firemen available.
- (41) a. Firemen are smart. (1 interpretation)
 b. *There are firemen smart.

(40a) is ambiguous between the stage-level reading and the individual-level reading, but (40b) can only get the stage-level reading—“There are firemen available now”. Sentence (41a), on the other hand, only has the individual-level reading—“Firemen are smart in general”—and the expletive construction cannot be used with such predicates (41b). In other words, expletives cannot co-occur with individual-level predicates, but they can occur with stage-level predicates.

We have already noted that in CVC, expletives are always null. An optionally null element with an individual-level predicate can never be mis-interpreted as a null expletive since such predicates are never allowed in expletive constructions. This ban does not only hold for English but also for languages with much more extensive use of expletive constructions, like Icelandic for example. So a null subject *pro* with such predicates will be unambiguously identified as an argumental *pro* since it cannot be expletive *pro*. In the case of stage-level predicates, on the other hand, an expletive construction is possible. Hence argumental *pro* is not licensed -the only legitimate instances of *pro* with these predicates are expletive *pro*-.

The chart in (42) will summarize the use of pronominals in CVC and their correlation to stage-level and individual-level predicates, in other words, expletives or non-argumental pronominals are obligatorily null with both individual-level and stage-level predicates. As for argumental pronominals, the 3rd person pronominal and *only* the 3rd person pronominal is optionally but preferentially null with individual-level predicates but obligatorily overt with stage-level predicates.

(42)		null expletives	null argumental
	individual-level predicates	-	+
	stage-level predicates	-	-

6 Summary

This discussion led us to make a few observations.

First, in terms of non-argumental pronominals, CVC has no overt expletive whether with existential, weather and adjectival predicates or raising constructions. Second, regarding argumental pronouns, we noted that although CVC lacks rich verbal morphology, 3rd person singular argumental pronoun *el* is preferably null with individual-

level predicates and obligatorily overt with stage-level predicates. Given that expletives are always null in CVC and only one type of argumental pronoun is allowed to be null, namely a 3rd person singular pronoun with individual-level predicates, we may ask where the language fits within the pro-drop typology. Finally, it seems that the differences between stage-level and individual-level predicates are particularly important in this particular creole and I hope further research will shed more light on the relation between predicate-types and the theory of pro-drop.

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baptista@arches.uga.edu