

ABSTRACT

Pro-Drop in Papiamentu: Syntactic, Pragmatic and Semantic Considerations

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One aspect of Papiamentu Grammar which is still ill- understood is that of “pro-drop,” the phenomenon whereby pronominal subjects may remain unexpressed. Papiamentu differs from both Portuguese and Spanish (its main lexical source languages) in not allowing null subjects freely. This is as might be expected of a language which lacks the rich inflectional system which allows the unexpressed subject to be identified in Portuguese and Spanish. At the same time, null subjects do occur quite frequently in Papiamentu texts.

The existing descriptions of the language states that pro in Papiamentu can only be interpreted as non-referential or arbitrary. However, as the following paper will show pro in Papiamentu can also be referential, having the same range of functions as overt referential pronouns. Further it will be shown that pro can have a definite reading if it is co referenced with an appropriate antecedent.

Keywords: pro drop; null subjects; empty subjects; empty categories; unexpressed subjects.