

# **Anaphoric Reference of Null and Overt Subject Pronouns in Italian and Spanish**

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In this study I investigate cross-linguistic differences between Italian and Spanish in the use and interpretation of personal subject pronouns and I try to identify the possible origins of these differences and discuss their implications in terms of current theories of anaphora resolution.

Spanish and Italian are two typologically related Null Subject languages with many morphological and syntactic similarities, and it has been assumed more or less explicitly that the pragmatic conditions determining the use of null subjects (NS) and overt subjects (OS) in the two languages could be considered equivalent (see for example Sorace et al., 2009). In spite of this, a careful analysis of psycholinguistic and corpus based evidence seems to suggest that while in Italian there is a strict division of labour between NS and OS, this division may not be as strong in Spanish. More precisely, while in Italian personal pronouns signal unambiguously a switch in subject reference, the association between OS and switch reference seem to be much weaker in Spanish at least in certain constructions. From a pragmatic point of view, these cross-linguistic differences are compatible with Accessibility Theory (Ariel, 1990) hypotheses about the cross-linguistic validity of the Accessibility Markers scale.

In this talk I am going to present some of some psycholinguistic evidence highlighting the differences between OS pronouns in Spanish and Italian (Experiments 1 and 2). In a final set of experiments I also explore the hypothesis that the cross-linguistic differences attested are related to the different relative amount of ambiguity of the Spanish verbal morphology regarding the overt expression of person features, compared to Italian, and I present some preliminary data.

Ariel, M. (1990). *Accessing Noun Phrase Antecedents*. London: Routledge.

Sorace, A., Serratrice, L., Filiaci, F., & Baldo, M. (2009). Discourse conditions on subject pronoun realization: testing the linguistic intuitions of older bilingual children. *Lingua: International Review of General Linguistics*.